

The Voice of the Working Woman



50 years of
fight for
class unity

CITU First Conference on Working Women

The Conference while taking note of the increasing participation of women workers in trade union struggles calls upon the unions to pay more attention to the organization of women workers so that they should be able to play a bigger role in the T.U. movement.

This Conference fully supports the following demands of the women workers:

1. Equal wage for equal work ;
2. Extension of the application of the Maternity Benefit Act to cover all working women and modification in the Act by providing additional leave facilities with full payment and more punishment for violation of the Act ;
3. Retrenchment of women workers should be stopped forthwith ;
4. Better crèche arrangement, provision for rest rooms, lavatories, etc. for women workers;
5. Adequate housing facilities ;
6. Provision for proper medical facilities for women workers.

(From the resolution on working women adopted by the foundation conference held from 28th to 30th May 1970, at Kolkata)

Meeting of the General Council tier of AICCWW(CITU)

A meeting of the General Council tier of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) will be held on 6 August 2019, one day prior to the meeting of the CITU General Council. The meeting will be at CITU state committee office, Bangalore, Karnataka.

The agenda is as follows:

1. Review of activities and the implementation of decisions taken by the AICCWW(CITU) working committee tier in October and the CITU WC meeting in November 2018;
2. Future tasks;
3. State and national conventions;
4. Any other with the permission of the chair

The meeting will start at 10.00 a.m.

The Voice of the Working Woman

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BJP Retains Power in Elections to the 17th Lok Sabha

The campaign for these elections has witnessed many not only unhealthy but also dangerous trends, particularly from the ruling party and its topmost leaders including Prime Minister Modi, several of his cabinet ministers and the president of BJP.

The Election Commission chose to look the other way when the model code of conduct was being violated blatantly by the Modi and Shah duo. The Pulwama suicide bombing and the Balakot attacks were used unashamedly to canvas for votes in the name of the sacrifices of our soldiers. Modi was projected as the only saviour of the country from terrorism. Religion was used to polarise the voters. An impression was sought to be created as if Muslims are not citizens of this country. The Prime Minister himself openly sought votes from the Hindu voters on the basis of religion.

The BJP which garnered 95% of the funds through electoral bonds spent huge amounts of money. The corporate media acted as willing agents of BJP, some television channels transmitting Modi's Kedarnath yatra and cave meditation even while the model code of conduct was still in force. Modi thanked the election commission for giving him permission for the yatra. With the increasing use of money power and muscle power in elections and weakening of almost all the democratic institutions, the ruling classes are seeking to turn democracy itself into a mockery.

In these elections the BJP and Modi totally avoided talking about people's issues and development, which was the major plank of their electoral campaign in 2014. The difficulties suffered by the workers, particularly the unorganised sector workers and small enterprises, due to demonetisation, due to the implementation of GST were totally absent. While lack of employment was a major concern for the common people, particularly youth, the issue was totally sidelined.

Despite all this, the BJP succeeded in exploiting the patriotic sentiments of the people and making them believe that only Modi could safeguard the nation.

Before the elections the joint trade union movement had adopted a 'Workers' Charter' with alternate measures and demanded that these be included in the election manifestos of political parties. Except for the Left parties no other political party responded positively to these demands. It is sad that the joint trade union movement, which gave the call to defeat the BJP for its anti worker, anti people and anti national policies, could not campaign effectively on the demand for alternative policies that benefit the toiling people. The strength of the Left parties which have persistently supported these demands from inside the Parliament, despite their limited presence, has been further eroded.

The corporate and big business houses have already started putting forward their demands in the name of immediate measures, including the so called 'labour law reforms' to be taken up to face the economic challenges ahead. The 4 draft codes, replacing the existing 44 central labour laws, were already prepared by the earlier Modi government. It is certain that these will be pushed through once the BJP government takes office.

The coming days will present serious challenges to the working class and the toiling people of the country. These have to be faced unitedly and with determination.

Election CampAYin

R Arun Kumar

Every election is followed by an in-depth analysis of the way the elections were contested. The growth of right-wing forces in the period of continuing global economic crisis has further increased the interest in studying the contributing factors. Apart from who voted for whom and why, analysis of various opinion polls, exit polls and their biases, electoral campaigns too are closely scrutinised to understand the issues raised, the target populace and the reasons behind concentrating only on those issues. The recently concluded elections to our parliament offer us a good example.

The class character of the concerned political party plays a prominent role in defining their campaign strategy. With the corporatisation of elections and campaigns being outsourced to 'consultancy firms' and 'advertising agencies', political parties have become 'commodities' that need to be 'sold' to the electorate, with a guaranteed 'return'. In such a scenario, ideology, issues, citizen concerns – all take a backseat as most of the parties represent the interests of the exploiting classes. And for this reason, even opposing political parties do not have any qualms in approaching the same consultancy firm for devising their electoral strategies.

Of course, even for such a 'corporatisation of elections', issues cannot be completely delinked, as after all, the 'product' is a political party and they are vying for the ultimate prize – access to STATE POWER. So we find issues mentioned, but more as an afterthought or only in a superfluous manner. Money, identities and emotions are given greater importance than the livelihood issues of people. Elections become an elaborate exercise in 'marketing'. So it no longer remains an 'electoral campaign', but becomes 'electoral management'.

With every passing election, elections are becoming a costly affair. Apart from spending the stipulated money on campaigning, a lot more is being splurged to win at any cost. The total value of money and goods seized during this election by the Election Commission is Rs 3,458,57,00,000 (Three thousand four hundred and fifty eight crores, fifty seven lakhs only as per the seizure report put up by the Election Commission on its website on May 21).

According to Centre for Media Studies, social media spending itself is estimated to reach Rs 5,000 crores (it was only Rs 250 crores in 2014). Media reports point out that Zenith India, a firm that arranges for slots on TV and in newspapers, estimated that Rs 2,600 crores will be spent on advertising in these elections, while both the BJP and the Congress together spent around Rs 1,200 crores in 2014. Data published in the *Indian Express* show how different parties prioritised different platforms during the election campaign – '*the BJP outspent all parties on Google and Facebook, while the Congress spent nine times as much as the BJP on Twitter*'. What is leading to this splurge of money in elections? And what are the returns sought by this money or the 'profits' sought by this 'capital investment'?

Lord McAlpine, a long-time treasurer of the British Conservative Party, put it best when he stated that he could 'persuade the public to believe virtually anything, given enough money'. "*A poster campaign costing £1 or £2 million is a waste of money,*" he once told a reporter, "*but give me £8 million and I will deliver whatever you want*". Studies show that more the money you spend in an election, the more are your chances of winning.

Roslyn Fuller, in her book on democracy, states: "*Ahead of the 2015 UK national election, candidate and party spending had previously been capped at £26 million per party. However, the Conservatives had raised about £70 million since the last election, far more than any of their opponents, and therefore they stood to gain the most from increasing spending caps. The Conservatives therefore used their position in government to increase the spending limit to £32 million just months before the election – a move which paid off in electoral victory for the party and a sympathetic ear in government for its financial backers*". Similarly, she quotes a study on the 2011-12 election cycle for US House of Congress, for the 84 seats that went to the election, the candidate who spent more on their campaign won 78.3 per cent of the time. This is the tactic that is now sought to be repeated in our country, with the introduction of electoral bonds that completely camouflage corporate donations (read investments) and having no cap on party spending.

Apart from money power in elections, psycho-analytical tools are also now being used to devise '*mind games*' for the political parties – how to influence the minds of the people and ensure the continuation of their class rule.

India Today's Data Intelligence Unit has analysed Narendra Modi's five poll speeches each during the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and concluded: "*The major thrust of the five speeches combined in 2014 was on the word 'poor'. This word had found 55 mentions in his speeches. It, however, saw a decline to 44 mentions in 2019....The issues of poverty and unemployment are something the BJP hadn't discussed in length in its manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha election and neither have they found many mentions in PM Modi's recent speeches. 'Poverty' that had 19 mentions in 2014, found hardly three mentions in the 2019 speeches. Similarly, 'unemployment' that had six mentions in 2014 found none this time. Corruption was mentioned 10 times in 2014, but only 6 times in 2019*". As this study shows, major issues that are bothering the people of our country – unemployment and poverty – hardly found a mention in BJP's star campaigner's speeches. The same study points out instead what attained focus in his speeches.

"In his 2014 poll speeches, PM Modi had said Pakistan was causing trouble for India and mentioned it four times. In 2019, Pakistan found 15 mentions. Pakistan and terrorism appeared together in Modi's 2019 speeches which were not the case in 2014. The word 'terrorist' found only one mention in 2014. Cut to 2019, words such as 'terror', 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' collectively found 24 mentions". So he had shifted the discourse from livelihood concerns of the people to 'security'. It is nobody's contention that 'national security' should not be discussed in elections. But the problem is with 'security' being made synonymous with 'war' and leading to the 'othering' of minorities, here Muslims. These divisive policies are pursued to break the growing class unity, as witnessed in the working class and peasant struggles and also divert people's angst from their livelihood issues.

Research done by Roy Eidelson, former president of the US Psychologists Association, points out how the issues of security and the lurking danger of 'others' are used by political parties to influence voters' behaviour. He states that *'if fear leaps to the forefront, other thoughts and feelings are quickly pushed aside'*. He further argues that *'emotional arousal can lead us to ignore the actual quality of the evidence being presented to us'* and make us lose our *'capacity to think and see clearly'*. Also, our *'inclinations to either trust or distrust are soft targets for psychological manipulation'* and because of this inclination, we adopt a

'distrustful posture towards those we see as different, or those we have been taught to view as 'outsiders'.

Eidelson makes a detailed analysis of Trump's presidential campaign, which rings some bells to us, after being exposed to the BJP's or rather Modi's campaign. He quotes another psychologist who, through research, established that *'an engaging narrative can change the way we think about things, regardless of whether it's labeled fact or fiction'*. He details how Trump fed on *'public's worries about vulnerability'* and warned people that *'only he could provide protection from a wide range of catastrophic threats'*. He also points how Trump was quick to *'cast himself as an aggrieved victim of injustice'*, portrayed his opponents as *'untrustworthy'* and *'dishonest'*. Trump placed Muslims under a *'cloud of suspicion'* and presented himself as *'the only reliable truth-teller'*. Further, *'Trump aimed to instill a sense of superiority in his supporters'*, presented himself as a *'saviour who would make sure the country and its citizens regained the stature they had lost'*.

In our country too, it is these kind of *'political mind games'* that are fast becoming the decisive factors in election campaigning. Consultants are being hired for this express purpose. Because of this reason, if we closely observe the pattern of election campaigning of any party other than the Left parties, there is nothing much to differentiate them from each other. *Hindustan Times* (May 22), analysing the campaign of both the BJP and the Congress, writes: *"The BJP narrowed down on its key themes for the polls. It began with nationalism and how Modi led a strong government that could give Pakistan a robust response, in comparison to all the 'weak' governments of the past....As the campaign progressed, the BJP's campaign became more bitter and personal....It also assumed a strong majoritarian tone...."* On the other hand, it has this to say about the Congress campaign: *"The Congress, however, carefully stayed away from the secularism-communalism debate for the fear of being labelled 'anti-Hindu'. It initially also kept away from the 'nationalism' issue for fear of being portrayed as anti-national or pro-Pakistan, but eventually put out former prime minister Manmohan Singh who claimed that his government had conducted multiple surgical strikes too"*.

Both the BJP and the Congress are the parties of the ruling classes, the major difference between them being that BJP is a rabidly communal party, guided by the fascistic RSS, unlike the Congress. The ruling classes need both of them to play an important part in any government after the elections so that their interests are protected irrespective of a change in government. Experience shows us that the uninterrupted implementation of neoliberal reforms was possible because of the shared views of these two ruling class parties on this issue.

In order to break this cycle and for a real peoples' alternative to emerge, there is no other way except for strengthening the CPI(M) and the other Left and Democratic forces. Only they can defeat the BJP comprehensively – politically, socially, ideologically, culturally, economically and electorally. It might be a tall order, but one that can be achieved by believing in our strengths – our class and its multifaceted struggles. Even for elections to become truly democratic and representative in character, these are imperative.

We should never forget that a small minority can maintain an oppressive *status quo* only when there is no active resistance and when voices of opposition are silent.

Come what may. Let our voices always sing the songs of the exploited.

‘100 years of Struggles and Sacrifices’ of the Working Class of India

J. S. Majumdar

BEGINNING on 30 May 2019, CITU is going for a year long celebration of “100 years of struggles and sacrifices” of the working class of India, since the formation of the First Trade Union Centre, and “50 years of fight for unity of the working class” since the formation of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

Following are historical milestones of these working class struggles and sacrifices, till the formation of CITU, for the class and people’s cause, class unity, and developing class perspective and orientation. From the lessons of these struggles emerged CITU’s clarion call of “Unity and Struggle”. How, as the legacy of these working class struggles and sacrifices, CITU carried these forward and created historical milestones are dealt with separately.

I

EMERGENCE of the first Trade Union Centre in India has its own background of working class struggles and sacrifices. Class struggle is inherent in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production, remaining dormant among the working class, sometimes spontaneously bursting out in the given situation. The trade union organises, builds movements and leads them in an objective direction.

- ◆ There were several strikes and agitations in the last quarter of the nineteenth and more than one and a half of the first decades of twentieth century. Those were led by workers agitationist groups, welfare centres and mass of workers as trade unions led by individuals and philanthropists. These unions had no regular membership, constitution, organizational set up etc like those of the modern trade unions.
- ◆ But this period was also marked by the political consciousness of the Indian working class, developed along with the freedom struggle. In July 1908, when Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was convicted and sentenced to six years’ imprisonment on charges of ‘sedition’, “Bombay was shut down in protest, ... workers of all textile mills and railway workshops went on strike, army was called out, ... 16 workers lay dead in the streets with nearly 50 others seriously injured,” wrote historian Bipan Chandra in *India’s Struggle for Independence*.
- ◆ On this, BTR writes (*The Marxist*, October-December 1985), “The workers were being drawn into the national protest against British tyranny. This happened in 1908 when Lokmanya Tilak was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment. The workers went on a one-day strike for every year of the sentence. They clashed with the police and the British army. Several were killed. Their resistance galvanised the entire city of Bombay and drew into action small businessmen and the middle classes. This was the first time that the working class used the powerful weapon strike in all industries for a political purpose and revealed its efficacy as the general mobiliser of the people.”
- ◆ On this, Lenin wrote, “The infamous sentence pronounced by the British jackals on the Indian democrat Tilak... this revenge against a democrat by the lackeys of the money-bags evoked street demonstrations and a strike in Bombay. In India, too, the proletariat has already developed to conscious political mass struggle – and, that being the case, the Russian-style British regime in India is doomed!” [“Inflammable Material in World Politics”; July 23 (August 5), 1908]

II

A CHAIN of events after the World War I led to the rapid formation of organised trade unions and the first trade union centre. These were -

- ◆ World War I resulted in grave economic miseries of the Indian working class by way of price rise, low wages, long hours of work and other exploitative measures which led to serious industrial unrest and agitation.
- ◆ Great October Revolution 1917 and formation of first Working Class State in human history galvanised the working class movement and national liberation movement worldwide, including India.
- ◆ Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Rowlatt Act, imprisonment of national leaders and heightened freedom struggle by Home Rule Leagues in 1915, Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919, Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements in 1920-22 also led to resurgence of working class activity in that period.
- ◆ The Great October Revolution and worldwide working class resurgent movement consequently established the tripartite international labour forum of the League of Nations (now a UN agency) – the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919.
- ◆ The first modern trade union was formed as *Madras Labour Union* in 1918 in Buckingham and Karnatic Mills, led by B. P. Wadia, an associate of Annie Besant; with 1600 members in its roll, and organizational set up and leadership team.
- ◆ Gandhiji formed Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association also in 1918 with Gandhian economic thought of 'Trusteeship' between capital and labour for 'class peace' and 'class collaboration'.
- ◆ Rapidly, trade unions developed in industrial centres, mostly in Bengal, Madras and Bombay provinces and in shipping, railways, communications, jute, coal, textiles and engineering industries. The workers were restive and strike struggles were sweeping the country.
- ◆ In the absence of a national body of the unions, the British ruled Government of India nominated N.M. Joshi to represent Indian trade unions in ILO. Many unions protested. Ultimately, it was decided to resolve the dispute by forming an all India body of the trade unions.

THUS, the first all India trade union centre was formed as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in a conference in Bombay on 31 October, 1920 attended by 101 delegates representing 64 unions with 1.40 lakh members. 43 more unions expressed solidarity. A number of political leaders and fraternal delegates from British Trade Union Congress also attended. The meeting elected Lala Lajpat Rai as its President and N. M. Joshi as its General Secretary. The entire leadership, obviously, came from the Indian National Congress. The nascent working class party of India – the Communist Party of India – was just formed at Tashkent on 17 October, 1920.

III

YET, there were two currents in this newly formed trade union centre (TUC). The two currents were best reflected by the textile workers – one in Bombay led by the Girni Kamgar Union going for militant strikes and class struggles going beyond immediate economic demands and for basic policy changes; and the other led by Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association going for class collaboration (reformism) limited to some instant economic issues. These two currents continued to plague AITUC.

- ◆ The trade union movement and national freedom struggle juxtaposed, heightening both in the period after formation of the TUC. Strike struggles were sweeping across the country. In 1921 alone, about 400 strikes took place. More than half of those were successful. Freedom

movement raised its demand from 'dominion status' to 'Purna Swaraj', first raised by the Communist party and the trade unions led by them.

- ◆ For the first time in India's history, to celebrate May Day, the International Working Class Solidarity Day, the red flag was raised by Malayapuram Singaravelu Chettiar on 1 May 1923 in Chennai.
- ◆ To split the unity of the working class; to isolate the revolutionaries of the freedom movement, who were working in the trade unions and leading workers strikes; and also to control the sweeping strike actions; the British Government in India introduced Trade Union Act, 1926 by which the identity of the leading functionaries and obtaining written permission, as certificate, from the British rulers, became compulsory for any trade union activities including in conducting the strike.
- ◆ In 1928 the Simon Commission arrived for 'constitutional amendments' instead of 'Purna Swaraj'. Call of '*Simon Commission Go Back*' reverberated across the country; workers resorted to strikes and staged black flag demonstrations particularly in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore. While protesting at Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai, the first President of AITUC, was killed by police lathi charge. He died on 17 November, 1928; and Saunders, the British police officer who had led the lathi charge, was killed in retaliation by the revolutionaries on 17 December, 1928.
- ◆ To put a stop to the waves of workers strikes (316 lakh man-days lost due to strikes in 1928) and their involvement in the national freedom struggle, the imperial government introduced 'Trade Disputes Bill' and 'Public Safety Bill' 1928 together having repressive provisions. While the Trade Disputes Act was being debated in the Central Assembly on 8 April, 1929, "*There was an explosion in the Assembly and suddenly the Hall was filled with smoke and slogans rose in loud voice by two young men from the Visitors' Gallery. The three slogans raised many times over were - 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Down With Imperialism' and 'Workers of the World Unite'.*" (JNU Prof. Chaman Lal in the *Mainstream Weekly*, 2009). They were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta. The rest is history.
- ◆ 'Inquilab Zindabad', since then, became the war cry of the working class in India to go forward in the blazing path of class struggle.
- ◆ Again, to divide the trade unions organizational unity, isolate the communists from it and to suppress the militant trade union movement joining the national freedom struggle; the imperialist government instituted 'Cawnpore Communist Conspiracy Case', 1924 in which Muzaffar Ahmad, S. A. Dange and others were sent to prison.
- ◆ Yet, the communist influence became stronger in the trade union movement. The British Government struck again in 1929, arresting 31 trade union leaders including two workers of Girni Kamgar Union and British nationals, who stood in international solidarity with Indian working class movement. For minimum publicity, the Government held four and a half year long trial in remote place at Meerut, which is known as Meerut Trial, against allegation of attempt to overthrow British imperial government by inciting the working class.
- ◆ Despite the British government's attempt of minimum publicity, this trial brought countrywide huge protests and international condemnation from celebrities such as Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland, H. G. Wells, the Archbishop of York, Harold Laski. Then the failed government launched an all out offensive declaring the Indian Communist Party illegal on 23 July 1934. This made more than a dozen registered trade unions also illegal as per the Trade Union Act, 1926.
- ◆ Thousands of Royal Indian Navy ratings went on strike on 18 February, 1946 in Bombay. They lowered the Union Jack and hoisted Congress and Muslim League flags and came out on the street. Workers went on spontaneous strike and joined them. They were also joined by ordinary people raising slogans against the British government and saluting by 'Jai Hind'. They were quickly joined by naval revolt in other parts – in Calcutta, Madras, Karachi and Vizag. Earlier,

there were protests in Royal Indian Air Force also. Both signaled the end of British Raj in India.

- ◆ Though massively supported by the workers and the people, both the parties – Congress and Muslim League – refused to support the naval ratings and asked them to return to their duties. History was unmade.

IV

HISTORY of Indian trade union movement is replete with splits and unity efforts. Communists in the trade union movement always stood for trade union unity as the pre-requisite condition for working class unity, the historical force of social change; remaining firmly committed to class struggle as the working class weapon for this social change. They never compromised with reformism in the trade union movement. Hence, the “Unity and Struggle” became the essence of the trade union movement.

FIRST divisions and unity: (1930-1940)

- ◆ Soon after British government launched the Meerut Trial against communists as trade union leaders; the reformists led the first split in AITUC in its Nagpur session in 1929 and formed the Indian Trade Unions Federation (ITUF) in 1930.
- ◆ The specific condition created, after Meerut Trial began, in the trade union movement and the attitude of the reformists, was best explained by Abdul Halim, the main organiser of communist movement in Bengal after arrest of Muzaffar Ahmad in the Meerut case, in his book ‘*Task of the Left-Wing Trade Unions of India*’, published in 1929. In such conditions, Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC) was formed, separating from AITUC in 1931.
- ◆ Amalgamation of ITUF and AIRF (All India Railwaymen’s Federation) gave rise to National Trade Union Federation (NTUF).
- ◆ RTUC merged with AITUC in 1934.
- ◆ NTUF became affiliated to AITUC in 1938 and then merged in its conference at Nagpur in 1940.

SECOND divisions (1947-1970)

- ◆ Just 3 months before Independence, the Congress party engineered a split in AITUC at the behest of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947 “*to extend their influence over the working class and fight the communists as the main enemy...wanted a policy of class-collaboration..*” “*In his presidential address, Sardar Patel said, ‘The irresponsibility and recklessness of these people pass all understanding. Strikes are launched on all conceivable pretexts in utter disregard of the workers’ own interests and well being. Nothing is achieved through these strikes except chaos and misery all round.’*” (Quote from BTR’s writing).
- ◆ This was followed by the formation of Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) in 1948;
- ◆ United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) was formed in 1949, which itself was split in 1958; and
- ◆ The separated group as UTUC (LS) was formed in 1958 (later renamed as AIUTUC);
- ◆ Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), affiliated to RSS, was formed in 1955.

FORMATION of CITU

- ◆ In this background the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was formed in 1970 with the call of “Unity and Struggle”.
- ◆ The historic milestones of its journey since then were detailed in our previous issue.

Imperialist Offensive, Mounting Resistance and Tasks before the Working Class

A R Sindhu

Imperialist offensive and resistance the world over

In the background of the systemic crisis of the capitalist order, CITU noted in November 2018 that *“the hegemonic intervention by the imperialist forces in political, economic and military front has attained a more aggressive dimension. Its aim is to retain and expand its hegemony over the regions rich in natural resources and markets of the developing countries. Indication of inter-imperialist contradiction are gradually surfacing, although quite feebly. Simultaneously, the developing countries are being pressurised by the imperialist powers through multi-pronged routes to surrender their national interests by allowing their markets, natural resources and the economies to be exploited by the multinational corporations.”*

As a result, the offensive on labour has also intensified, to maximise profits. Various governments of both the developed and developing countries pursuing neoliberal policies are introducing more austerity measures, curtailing labour rights and introducing policies of withdrawing public services and increasing price rise. The counter offensive by the working class has also been intensifying as can be witnessed by numerous struggles all over the world, although blacked out by the mainstream media.

The ‘Yellow Vest’ movement in France which started in November last year as a protest by the working class against the sharp increase in taxes for petroleum is still continuing. This has forced the rightwing Macron government to announce an increase of minimum wage of €100 per month and to withdraw the planned tax increase for low income pensioners and the cuts in overtime pay and bonus to the employees. Railway employees in France were already in struggle against the privatisation of French national railway, considered the best in Europe, change in the working conditions of the employees and reduction in the workforce.

The workers in Russia are fighting the so called ‘pension reforms’; in Greece, the working class has gone on struggles including strike against the austerity policies of the Syriza government; in Romania they are demanding minimum wages and in Germany, improvement in the wages and working conditions. Rail staff in northern England went on strike against the extension of driver only operated trains that threaten passenger safety and jobs of 6000 conductors. Construction workers in Switzerland struck work against attacks on their working conditions. Health workers in UK are fighting for better wages and working conditions. The airline workers in Europe from five countries – Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain- were on strike demanding better working conditions. The struggle of teachers in the USA, demanding better wages and increased funds for education, has spread across many states in the country. Teachers in Argentina, England and Iran have also been in struggle with the same demands. Different sections of workers in South Africa including thousands of workers in the plastic industry, the transport workers, fire fighters, municipal workers etc also were on strike on the issues of wages and better working conditions. Around one lakh workers in Melbourne in Australia marched demanding increase in minimum wages.

In many countries the peasants are also protesting against policies favouring agri-businesses corporates. The working class is coming out on the streets against imperialist sponsored civil wars and efforts for political coups. Brazil saw big demonstrations demanding the release of former President Lula whereas the working class of Venezuela came out in support of the Maduro government.

In India

The working class of India witnessed an unprecedented offensive under the authoritarian, communal Narendra Modi government. Within five days of taking office the Modi government amended the Apprenticeship Act to allow apprentices in work without any restriction and just a few days before the Lok Sabha elections were notified, the government tried to lower the minimum wages. To ensure 'ease of doing business' for the corporates, the Modi regime tried frantically to take away the hard earned rights of the working class. Many labour laws like the Factories Act, Child Labour Abolition Act, Furnishing of Returns etc were amended in favour of the employers. Fixed Term Employment was introduced by executive order. Social security schemes like PF and ESI were sought to be dismantled by various methods.

While the productivity has increased manifold, the real wages have fallen. While the wages share in value added has gone down to 9%, the profits share has increased to a staggering 60%. According to ILO's India Wage Report 2018, 82% of male and 92% of female workers in the country earn less than Rs 10,000 per month. The Azim Premji University Report 2018 states that in India, 67% of households reported monthly earning below Rs 10,000. The Labour Bureau reports till 2015-16 revealed that 57% of the self employed, which represent 46% of the total workforce, earn a maximum Rs 7000 per month on the average and over 50 percent of total employees earn barely up to Rs 5000. These are all average figures, actual earnings are well below for the majority of the working workforce, and that too is not received continuously every month. At the same time, the tax rebates and exemptions for the employers amount to more than Rs 5 lakh crore every year and the tax default by the corporates amounts to Rs 7.31 lakh crore (in 2016-17).

These years have witnessed struggles growing in all sectors, at the national level as well as in almost all the states in our country – the Grameen Dak Sevaks, the central and state government employees, the loco running staff, defence employees, teachers, bank employees, the contract and outsourced employees, BSNL employees, road transport workers, electricity employees, the anganwadi employees, ASHA and midday meal workers, safai karmacharis and municipal workers, medical and sales representatives, industrial workers including those in the modern automobile manufacturing units of MNCs, tea garden workers and even the IT employees have all been in struggles on their demands. Strikes with total participation of workers have taken place in many of these sectors. The pensioners are also coming out in struggles against the attacks on pension schemes.

The massive participation and leading role of women workers is a salient feature of all the struggles and mobilisations in the recent past.

This period has seen unprecedented unity on issue based struggles. The unity of the trade union movement had been consolidated with all the central trade unions except BMS joining together in the biggest ever General Strikes against these offensives including 2 September 2015, 2 September 2016 and the 8-9 January 2019 strike in which around 20 crore workers participated.

There were struggles also by various sections of society- peasants, agricultural workers, youth, students, women, dalits and tribals etc. against the policies of the government

Growing Worker- Peasant unity

Another notable feature of the current movement is the growing maturity of the working class movement in India, enabling it to take up the issues and also join the struggles of the peasantry. Raising the issue of Land Acquisition as one of the major demands in the General Strike in 2015, the trade union movement actively supported the cause of the peasantry. CITU took the initiative

to develop the movement in the direction of a strong worker-peasant alliance along with AIKS and AIAWU, from the top to the base in a phased manner, organising 9th August 2018 *Jail Bharo*, 14th August *Samuhik Jagran* and the historic 5th September 2018 *Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally*. The peasant struggles were actively supported by the CITU. The workers charter adopted by the central trade unions includes the demands of all sections of the people.

Consistent movements of different sections of the people helped in the formation of the Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA), the joint platform of class, mass and social organizations, with the strong base of class organizations. These movements resulted in bringing some of the major issues of the working people of the country into the mainstream political discourse in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections in the country.

The Way Forward

For the first time since the advent of neoliberalism, the politics and the movement of the basic classes, the working class, agricultural labour and poor peasants has emerged as the focal point and the other progressive social movements – of youth, students, women, environmentalists, dalits, tribals, minorities, all marginalized sections are joining the stream.

But, as pointed out by the CITU Working Committee, *“This systemic crisis of the neoliberal capitalist order is accompanied, in many countries, by the phenomenon of extreme right wing forces raising their head in the political arena. The right wing forces were able to take political advantage of the growing discontent and unrest among the people against the impact of the neoliberal policies on their lives and livelihood. The reason for the rise of the right wing in most of the countries, despite widespread struggles by the working people, was the betrayal of the social democrats and failure or ambivalence of the weakened left in providing an alternative economic order and class oriented fight with continuity.”*

India is also facing a rightward shift in the political arena. The secular and democratic fabric of the country is under serious attack. Not only the BJP, all the mainstream political parties barring the left are advocates of neoliberal policies. Although the class and mass movements could bring some of the basic issues to the political discourse, there is not likely to be much change in the policies of the Government in favour of the working people even after the elections.

On the contrary, with the systemic crisis of the capitalism aggravating, the offensive on labour is also going to intensify. In India the intensified efforts of capital through various measures for appropriation by both exploitation of labour and through the prices of agricultural products are going to worsen the already miserable conditions of the working people of our country. So the struggles will be intensified in the near future itself.

The challenge before the trade union movement in the country is how to further consolidate and advance the struggles of the working people and to turn them into a political force in order to save democracy and compel a change in policies, rather than only a change of governments from time to time. The strong, widespread base of the trade union movement can act as the foundation of this movement. With the peasant movement joining in, this class alliance (worker-peasant alliance) will not only be the base of resistance against the economic onslaught but also the force against the social oppression and communal divisive politics in the countryside. In the coming days, class politics will play a decisive role in resisting the onslaught, putting forward pro people alternatives and building a new India, ending all kinds of exploitation.

The enthusiasm and class pride earned by the rich experiences of intensified class struggle against the offensive of capital in their daily lives and the imperialist offensive politically in recent struggles will give the working class of India the confidence to play the historic role entrusted to it.

Disproportionately High Death Sentences against Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims

In their joint submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, to meet for the listing of adoption of list of issues at its 126th session, July 1-26, 2019, top Dalit rights organizations have taken strong exception to “*disproportional application of death sentencing by the judiciary of minorities, such as Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis*”.

The caste and religious profile of individuals whose death sentences have been confirmed shows that a disproportionate section comes from the Dalit community and religious minority families. According to the Death Penalty India Report, NLS, 76% (279 prisoners) of prisoners sentenced to death in India belong to backward classes and religious minorities, with all 12 female prisoners belonging to backward classes and religious minorities.

Of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes prisoners, 85.4% were also economically vulnerable. For religious minorities, this proportion was 76%, compared to 64.4% for the general category. While the reporting of crime against Dalits and Adivasis has risen over the decade, there has not been an equivalent rise in the rate of disposal of cases by the police and courts under one of the protective laws for Dalit's and Adivasis i.e, Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 and Rules 1995, as amended in 2016.

In courts, crimes against Scheduled Castes pending trial have risen by 50% over the decade. For Scheduled Tribes, trials completed in a year have nearly halved (by 49%) since 2006 from 2,895 to 4,317 in 2016, while those pending trial has risen by 28%.

The conviction rate in cases of crime against Scheduled Tribes, at 21% in 2016, is even worse, showing a 7-percentage-point decline from 2006 (28%) with the rest 79% acquitted.

In 2016, nearly 16% of the total atrocities against SCs constituted offences against SC women. This figure was double, almost 30%, with respect to ST women

Caste inspired violence against Dalits and Adivasis has become increasingly common across India over the last few years and the audacity with which these crimes are conducted suggests a complete absence of fear of consequences. The crimes range from lynching and mob violence to violence inflicted by vigilantes, sexual assault and even outright murder.

Dalits and Adivasis have borne the brunt of a large chunk of this violence. The trigger is either the suspected consumption of beef or even the whiff of an interfaith or inter-caste relationship, alleged theft, or alleging petty offences.

Could the State explain the discrepancy between the rise of crimes against Scheduled Castes and the low rates of conviction of these crimes, despite the enactment of the Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989?

Dalits in Puri were Turned Away from Shelters at Height of Storm

In a disturbing incident that was reported in the Odisha media, around 25 Dalit families are said to have been barred from entering three shelters at the height of Cyclone Fani, which made landfall in the state on May 3.

After reportedly being turned away from the shelters by upper-caste people who were already inside, some of the families, which included elderly people and children, they took shelter near a

banyan tree that had been uprooted by the cyclone's strong winds. The three shelters were located within a radius of approximately 4 km.

The incident took place in Biripadia village, which is part of Patali panchayat.

"The upper-caste people in the village had us removed [from the shelter] because we are of the Dom caste," claimed Shail Jena, a woman from Biripadia, in the video recorded by a member of the Bahujan Student and Youth Front, who visited the village. *"Trees had fallen nearby so we took shelter near those. All members of the 25 houses, including the elderly, children and women, had to shelter under these trees. People turned on us, calling us 'Harijan' and 'Doms'."* When asked, Odisha's Special Relief Commissioner said that he had heard of this incident. - *"This kind of practice by socially dominant people is common in that area. I can say that it is unfortunate, heinous and the government has to take strong action."*

Gujarat: Upper Caste Women Stop Dalit Wedding Procession

The wedding procession of a Dalit groom, which was held up for over five hours, could not proceed to the marriage venue due to the ruckus created by the Patidar community. Scores of women sat on the road, blocking the wedding procession, singing bhajans and performing religious rituals.

Police had to resort to a baton charge on 12 May, after members of the Patidar community stopped a Dalit man's wedding procession in Gujarat's Aravalli district and the two sides pelted stones at each other.

The incident occurred in the evening in Khambiasr village and officials said a posse of cops had been rushed to the spot to maintain peace. Several people and policemen were injured in the stone pelting.

One of the family members of the groom alleged that they had sought protection, but the police failed in getting the procession to move forward.

Dalit Groom Stopped From Offering Prayers

In another incident on Sunday, the wedding procession of a Dalit bridegroom at a village in Sabarkantha district had to be provided police cover after members of the Thakor community objected to the groom offering prayers at a local temple.

The procession, however, passed off peacefully with police help.

Dalit Youth Thrashed for Sitting on a Chair, Eating at Wedding, Dies

A 21-year-old Dalit man was allegedly beaten to death by upper-caste men for having his dinner while sitting on a chair in front of them at a wedding in Shrikot area of Tehri Garhwal district.

The incident happened on the night of April 26. The next day when the young man fell ill, he was taken for treatment to a Dehradun hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries on April 28.

According to the police, the deceased was Jitendra Das, a resident of Baasan village in Tehri Garhwal. A case was registered on April 29 against seven accused, also residents of the same area, after his sister lodged a complaint against them.

Das used to work as a carpenter and was the sole bread-earner of his family comprising of his mother, elder sister and a younger brother.

One of Jitendra's friends, who tried to save him from the accused, told - "*They assaulted him too brutally after which he left the venue for home. However, they didn't end the matter there and followed to assault him again,*" he added.

Jitendra's cousin brother, Pritam Das, who was also present at the wedding, also confirmed the incident and said, "*He was hit on his head and private body parts. He was so badly beaten that he barely managed to reach his house but couldn't enter it. He slept on the verandah without telling his family members about the incident.*"

"*Next day in the morning, when his mother went to wake him and found him unconscious, they got to know about it,*" he added.

Hapur Horror

A woman from Uttar Pradesh's Hapur lies fighting for her life at a private hospital in Delhi. She received 80 per cent burns on her body after she set herself on fire on April 28. What led her to self-immolate was a tragic tale of human trafficking, sexual abuse and police inaction.

The woman, a widow in her late 20s, was sold off by her father and aunt for Rs 10,000 to a man who raped her repeatedly along with his friends.

Her alleged 'buyer' was in debt and sold the woman's service as a domestic help to his creditors who gang-raped her on multiple occasions.

When the woman approached the police, she was turned away. A letter written by Delhi Commission for Women chairperson to UP CM Yogi Adityanath alleges that police officers, including the Hapur SP, refused to file an FIR in the case.

"*This insensitivity and shameful conduct of the UP police compelled the survivor to immolate herself,*" the letter further claims.

DCW has demanded compensation for the victim as well as an inquiry into inaction by the Hapur police.

Hapur police has finally registered a case against 14 persons for rape. "*We have received a complaint against at least 14 persons and a probe has been set up,*" SHO Baburgarh told.

No arrests have been made so far.

(Courtesy – India Today)

Alwar Gang Rape

Five men allegedly gangraped a woman in front of her husband when she was going with him on a motorcycle on Thanagaji-Alwar road on April 26. Another man shot a video clip of the crime and circulated it on social media.

On May 2 the Police filed a chargesheet against five accused in connection with the rape case, under relevant sections of the IPC and the SC/ST Act. The police later arrested the five accused of rape and held the sixth man, under the IT Act.

The case triggered widespread protests after the victim's husband alleged that there was a delay in filing the FIR with the police officers asking him to wait till the elections were over.

Story of Hope

Amidst the election battle afflicted with communal undertones, the reports of a Hindu family donating their land for a Muslim burial ground brings a sense of relief that our foundational basis of harmony and fraternity yet exists.

Breaking all religious barriers and communal animosity, a Hindu family has donated 0.84 acres of land to the Nahar Pukhuri Kabrastan (graveyard), which is located near the North Lakhimpur railway station in Assam. The donor family has been recognized as that of late Karunakanta Bhuyan which stays at Gorehaga village.

Earlier in 2017, there were reports of a Muslim family donating 1,905 square feet of their land for the expansion of Hanuman temple in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh. Javed Ansari, the donor, had said *“I have donated this land to Hanuman Mandir to send out a message of communal harmony. I believe that such gestures will increase brotherhood between the Hindu and Muslim communities.”*

Recently, in Assam, a group of locals, cutting across religious lines, was tirelessly helping the Muslims shift the 100-year old, two-storeyed minaret in Puranigudam area in Nagaon district after there was a fear of its demolition for the expansion of the National Highway (NH)-37.

While the entire nation is plagued with insecurity, with the brutal Babri Masjid demolition yet fresh in mind and the Gyanpith mosque of Kashi feared to be next in line, such selfless gestures give the hope that no matter how much the religious fanatics try, the urge of most people for communal harmony still prevails. *(Courtesy: Sabrang India)*

‘Shanti’ for Peace

With prayers on his lips, a Muslim man, Maqbool, drove his auto-rickshaw as fast as he could in the curfew-hit Hailakandi, a small town in Assam, so that a Hindu woman who was in an advanced stage of labour could reach the hospital on time.

They made it and a boy was born on May 12 when the curfew was in force following communal clashes just two days ago.

One person was killed in police firing and at least 15 people were injured, while more than 15 vehicles were damaged and 12 shops vandalised and set on fire in some parts of the town during communal clashes on May 10, forcing the authorities to clamp an indefinite curfew in the district.

Two days later, Rubon was frantically calling his near and dear ones for help. He needed an ambulance to take Nandita to hospital as she was writhing in labour pain. Rubon said, *“In between the calls, I was trying to calm my wife down saying someone will surely come to take us to hospital”*

The S K Roy Civil Hospital is a few kilometres away from their village.

However, no help came for them in the curfew affected area and, in the meanwhile, Nandita’s pain increased.

At that time, Rubon’s friend and neighbour Maqbool heard his troubled voice and rushed to his residence with his auto-rickshaw.

As Maqbool was driving the vehicle, speeding along the deserted roads, the only thing haunting him was whether he would make it on time to the hospital.

“I was trying to comfort them.... telling them everything will be fine. But I myself was praying,” said Maqbool.

His timely help paid off and Nandita delivered a healthy boy at around 5.30 pm. Both friends heaved a sigh of relief after knowing that the condition of both the mother and the child was fine. Rubon at once decided to name his son ‘Shanti’ (peace), who was born amid curfew following communal disharmony.

PepsiCo Expression of Intent to Withdraw Lawsuit Against Farmers A Significant Victory Uphold Farmers' Seed Freedoms as Guaranteed by Indian Laws

PepsiCo's expression of intent to withdraw its lawsuit against farmers is a significant victory in the struggle for protecting farmers' seed freedoms. However, nothing concrete has been done by them yet in that direction. AIKS demands that the Company come clear and walk the talk or brace for more intense protests. The Gujarat State Government should also come clear on what are the negotiations that it is having with the Company. The All India Kisan Sabha congratulates the farmers and all organisations and activists who stood against the intimidatory tactics of PepsiCo which filed a lawsuit against 11 farmers in Gujarat to the tune of more than a crore on each on farmer. The '**Boycott Lays/Pepsi**' call, supported spontaneously by people of our country and jointly carried forward by numerous organizations, has helped create the pressure on the Company. AIKS demands that strong deterrent action be taken against PepsiCo for the harassment meted out to farmers including exemplary compensation and revocation of license if the company does not comply with such decision. We also demand an unconditional apology from PepsiCo for such blatant violation of farmers' seed freedoms.

The issue brought to fore the manner in which predatory agribusinesses driven by the sole motive of profit maximization and aiming to take-over agriculture have least respect for the laws of the land or for farmers' seed rights and freedoms. AIKS and numerous other organisations as well as individuals have been pointing out such eventualities under a paradigm of seed laws and intellectual property norms that aid monopolies and corporate profiteering.

The **Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers Right Act, 2001 (PPVFR Act)** Section 39(1)(iv) clearly states *"Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act – a farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into the force of this Act, provided that the farmer shall not be entitled to sell branded seed of a variety protected under this Act"*. AIKS demands that the different State Governments and the Central Government should adhere to this in any matter concerning seed rights and freedoms of farmers. Clear fool-proof mechanism to ensure that the registration accorded to varieties are compliant with the principles enshrined in Section 39 (1) (iv).

A few other questions also need to be addressed in the light of this episode. There is the need to ensure price control, address illegal seed trade, monitoring of contract farming, state governments and agricultural departments should strengthen mechanism for seed traceability and monitoring of agribusinesses and traders. Gujarat state government should ensure that there should be no repetition of this kind of an episode, with exemplary action against PepsiCo and all discussions with the Company should be transparent.

AIKS calls upon farmers, individuals and organisations to remain vigilant and continue resistance to predatory agribusinesses and the neoliberal paradigm that allows such freedom to monopolies. AIKS in coordination with other organisations and individuals will take steps to ensure that State Governments and Agricultural Departments comply with the broad framework of Section 39 (1) (iv) of PPVFR Act.

The boycott call against Lays and other products of PepsiCo shall remain as a strong message that no Company can dare to question the seed rights and freedoms of farmers.

(All India Kisan Sabha)

Clean Chit to the Chief Justice of India

Kirti Singh

In a decision that was criticised by many for the procedure it followed, a Supreme Court “In-House Committee” gave a clean chit to the Chief Justice of India [CJI] in a sexual harassment case filed by a junior ex-employee of the Supreme Court. The “In-House Committee” without following a fair procedure or principle of Natural justice gave its findings on 6th May that “no substance” was found in the allegations.

On 18 April, 2019, an ex-employee/ Complainant of the Supreme Court sent a detailed complaint of 28 pages, supported with an Affidavit and other evidence, of how she had been sexually harassed by the CJI in October, 2018 and the victimization faced by her and her husband and brother-in-law thereafter.

However, instead of institution of an enquiry, an unprecedented and shocking court hearing was called on 20.04.2019. The registry listed this hearing stating that a matter of great public importance touching upon the independence of the judiciary was involved.

In this hearing, apart from two other judges, the CJI was present. The CJI reportedly said that the complaint was a plot to attack the independence of the judiciary and a part of a conspiracy to destabilize the judiciary and said that the Complainant had a criminal background. He then left it to the other judges present to pass the order.

The order asked the press to be careful while publishing on the issue and called the allegations of the ex-employee “wild and scandalous”. The Attorney General and the Solicitor General who were also present in the Court seemed to agree. No one present suggested a proper enquiry should be held regarding the allegation. Thus, the woman was condemned without being heard. The principle of law that no one should be a judge in his own case was also flouted. Womens groups and eminent persons including academicians, lawyers and others protested against this unusual and unjust hearing.

The Supreme Court thereafter on 24th April, formed an “In-House Committee” comprising of three Supreme Court judges. The constitution of this committee itself was in contravention of the spirit of POSH [Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013] and the guidelines laid down by the Vishaka Judgment of 1997 by the Supreme Court itself, as it neither had any external member nor was it headed by a woman.

In spite of this the complainant participated, hoping to get a fair hearing. However, after two hearings, the Complainant withdrew from the enquiry saying that she could not face the three Supreme judges alone without the help of any support person or a lawyer with her. All her requests were denied including a video or audio recording of the proceedings. Surely, the judges failed to understand that a mere ex-employee could not be expected to face an enquiry by SC judges given the vast difference in status and power between the two. The ex-employee said she found the atmosphere unsympathetic and intimidating.

Nevertheless, the “In-House Committee” went ahead with the enquiry proceedings and within 10 days gave its final report exonerating the CJI of all the allegations. It is further very shocking that the Complainant has not even been provided with the copy of final report and the Supreme Court has defended this on the basis of a 2003 judgment given by it. The woman therefore has no way of knowing the basis on which her complaint was dismissed. She also does not know whether other witnesses were examined and what materials/ documents were looked at.

It is necessary that the Supreme Court devise a procedure which is more transparent and fair and just, if it has to be seen as giving justice to the citizens of this country.

Ensure Accountability in Judiciary Implement the POSH Act Effectively in the Complaint Against CJI by SC ex employee

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) expresses serious concern at the recent developments and actions by the Apex Court following the complaint by a former woman employee of the Supreme Court against the Chief Justice of India.

CITU feels that the procedures required as per the POSH, Sexual Harassment At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 have not been followed in letter and spirit in the case.

First of all, the highest forum of the judiciary does not have an ICC (Internal Complaints Committee) as mandated by the Act. The procedure for dealing with a case of sexual harassment, particularly when it concerns someone in a high public position, needs to be credible and transparent. It is regrettable that this did not happen in this case.

The 'In house Committee' set up by the Apex court was not in accordance with the law. It did not have an independent outside representative of any NGO. This was pointed out by several women's organisations, legal rights groups, and lawyers' forums.

The request of the complainant to allow her lawyer or a support person to be present was also turned down.

Even after her withdrawal from the proceedings, alleging unfair and intimidating behaviour, the committee went ahead and gave its finding that there was 'no substance' in the complaint.

Surprisingly, the complainant was not even given a copy of the report of the "In-House Committee" which exonerated the CJI, while the CJI was sent a copy.

CITU affirms that it is necessary that the Supreme Court upholds the principles of transparency, ethics and values to ensure delivery of justice to the weakest sections in our democracy, as envisaged by our constitution, and to prevent erosion of the judiciary's credibility.

The Supreme Court of India must uphold the guidelines of the Vishakha judgment and the POSH Act on sexual harassment at workplace even in the case of a Supreme Court Judge.

CITU demands that appropriate laws and guidelines must be enacted against sexual harassment to include all workplaces including judiciary and legislature and all persons in its purview to ensure justice to all victims.

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On the Ban on Red Clay Brick Kilns

The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change of the outgoing Modi government issued a gazette notification on 25 February, 2019, asking for public opinion within 60 days, on the Ministry's move to issue final notification for (i) immediate banning of new red clay brick kilns within 300 kms radius of all coal / lignite power plants; and (ii) converting all existing red clay brick kilns, in these areas, into coal ash based manufacturing facilities.

If this decision is implemented, most of the red clay brick kilns will be closed; lakhs of workers lose jobs and the people will be deprived of the cheapest building materials – the red clay brick.

The Government proposes to convert the existing brick kilns in these areas into manufacturing coal fly ash bricks, blocks, tiles, roofing sheets using cement as binder, converting the brick kilns into factories operated by machines, replacing the human labour within one year.

On getting a report from its Rajasthan state committee, the CITU wrote to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change strongly opposing the move.

In the letter the CITU accused the Modi government of helping Adani Power Limited of Adanis, the number one private power producer, and the Reliance Power Limited of Ambanis, the second biggest private power producers, just before the elections, displaying crony capitalism at work.

CITU condemned the Modi government's attempt of bypassing the Parliament on such a vital issue; and implementing its decision through the backdoor by an executive order by amending a 1999 notification. CITU accused the Modi government for this move without even consulting the Ministry of Labour and ignoring the central trade unions.

CITU accused the Modi government of ignoring consultation even with State governments who have been made responsible, and also directly the district magistrates under them, for implementation of these decisions.

All CITU state committees will submit the following memorandum to the Chief Minister of their state.

Annexure

Respected Chief Minister of

Appeal to save jobs of thousands brick kiln workers

Sir,

We draw your kind attention to the following and urge your urgent intervention to save the jobs of lakhs of brick kiln workers in the State.

1. The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change issued a gazette notification on 25 February, 2019 asking for public opinion within 60 days, as required under law, on the Ministry's intention to issue final notification for -
 - i. Immediate banning of new red clay brick kilns within 300 kms radius of all coal / lignite power plants; and
 - ii. Converting all existing red clay brick kilns, in these areas, into coal ash based manufacturing facilities.
2. Above decisions, if implemented, will lead to closure of most of the red clay brick kilns causing job loss of vast majority of about 1 crore workers engaged in the industry today across the country.
3. Though the State Governments, and the District Magistrates under them, have been made directly responsible for implementation of the above decisions and monitoring of the same; it seems that the Union Ministry did not hold any prior discussion with the State Governments on this vital issue.
4. CITU has already written to the concerned authority opposing such proposed notification copy of which has already been sent to all state committees.

We therefore urge you to please appreciate the gravity of the issue and write strongly to the Union Government opposing the move and save the most under-privileged workers from losing their jobs and livelihood.

India Should Not Participate in US Economic War on Iran

B Arjun

In yet another attempt to destroy a sovereign nation, undermine its economic well-being, the Trump administration has tightened sanctions on Iran. Under the so-called isolationist Trump, the American empire has become more ruthless, expecting sovereign nations to disregard their own economic well-being and obey imperial instructions.

By targeting Iran, the US wants to manipulate global oil supplies and prices. Today Iran's contribution to the global oil market is in the range of 1 to 1.2 per cent. America is expecting Saudi Arabia and the UAE to fill the gap by pumping more oil from its wells, ostensibly to prevent a surge in oil prices. But both the West Asian nations are reluctant to deplete their oil reserves.

This blackmailing is an American way of conducting international relations. Not just are the US allies in the middle east being forced to harm their own economies to cater to Trump's whims and fancies, but US friends all across the world are being bullied to honour Trump's lopsided policies.

Along with the sanctions on Iran, a diktat was also sent to India, China, Turkey, Japan and South Korea, Taiwan, Italy and Greece to halt oil imports from Iran within six months. Client states like Taiwan, Italy and Greece immediately halted all transactions with Iran. The other five countries were expected to gradually decrease their oil imports from Iran and reduce these to zero by May 2, 2019, the date on which the 'waiver' expired.

All countries and their financial institutions are expected to snap their links with the transactions-chain connected to Iranian oil or face severe economic penalties. US power can make nations genuflect in front of its diktat because it has a vice-like grip over the power elites in most of the countries. It works through diplomatic, business, political and NGO channels to ensure that all fall in line to push the US agenda. Once the US foreign policy directions are announced, the elite networks in various capitals of the world get activated. They work overtime with the help of media companies and PR agencies to create a favourable opinion in their respective countries, both within and outside the government, to justify why sanctions are important to curtail Iran's nuclear ambitions and why it won't make a difference to their countries if they import oil from Saudi Arabia instead of Iran. Data is fudged to substantiate these claims, to sell the idea that Iran is a rogue country.

The US not only controls the global elite but also controls the levers of international commercial, banking and financial networks. The US navy with its colossal presence in the maritime commons can interdict ships carrying cargo in and out of Iran. However, since war has not been officially declared, the US navy can only achieve limited results because the traffic passing through the Straits of Hormuz is large. The US navy does not have the capacity to check each and every merchant ship passing through international waters.

However, the US has a more secure line available to disconnect Iranian banks from the international banking network. The US can effectively browbeat global ports and shipping companies to stop underwriting vessels carrying Iranian exports and imports. The US has threatened the Belgium-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) financial messaging service, (founded in 1973, that connects more than 11,000 institutions in over 200 countries) to block Iranian financial institutions and banks from the international chain.

However, as the US empire crumbles, its power to control all networks is reducing. Recently the three European countries most involved in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, UK, France and Germany along with Russia, China and Iran launched INSTEX (Instrument in Support of

Trade Exchanges) to bypass unilateral US trade sanctions on Iran. To begin with, INSTEX, headquartered in France, will ensure that trade in medicine and food to Iran doesn't stop. The EU has done this to ensure that it keeps getting medicine supplies uninterrupted. "In 2017, the export of drugs from Europe to Iran totalled \$884m compared with \$194m from China and \$52m from India." The US is crossing the red lines drawn by international norms and practices far too often and the world needs to develop an effective counterweight to it. When Russia feared being cut off from the global financial networks at the insistence of USA, due its involvement in Crimea and Ukraine, it started developing its own financial messaging service, an alternative to SWIFT. Russia and Iran are discussing the establishment of an independent payments system linking the two nations. According to an Iranian official, the new blockchain based currency could prove a useful tool as the country seeks to help its financial institutions operate effectively without access to the "dollar, as well as the SWIFT system."

On the other hand, China is also not willing to kow-tow to the US termination of the sanctions waiver because Iran is a key investor in China's Belt and Road Initiative as well as a key energy partner. Besides, building robust financial networks, China is building a new land route with Iran. In May 2016, the first freight train moved from China to Iran, bringing goods from China's eastern Zhejiang province and making the journey through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in 14 days – compared with around 45 days by sea to Tehran. Turkey has also rejected the "unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbours."

However, the Indian stand on the withdrawal of 'waiver' by the US is one of capitulation. It has maintained that it would be able to offset the reduction in Iranian exports, despite its official stand that it only recognises sanctions by the United Nations. India is now deeply entrenched into the US military network and will see its strategic choices reducing. Now, India cannot stand up and protect its interests vis-a-vis Iran, the third-largest supplier of crude oil, behind Iraq and Saudi Arabia. India's huge investments in the Chabahar port, located in the Indian Ocean in the Sistan and Baluchistan province of Iran, was expected as a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries. However, with limited trade from Iran, the Chabahar is likely to be a 'ghost-port', hurting India's strategic and economic issues. India has already started importing oil and gas from the US, the new entrant into the oil-import market. India has displayed its aversion to new trade-routes being built by China under its BRI scheme. At the recently concluded forum, the two main countries that were not represented were America and India.

India may stop its oil imports from Iran but it is to be understood that a challenge to US hegemony around the world is growing. America's indulgence in Iran is likely to prove detrimental to its empire. Iran is likely to do to America what Afghanistan did to the Soviet Union.

When Will This be Understood?

With the US imperialists giving an ultimatum to various countries to snap trade deals with Iran, and also with the latest developments in Yemen, the Middle East is again being turned into a hotspot. The Trump administration is using every device in its armoury to intensify the hotting up of the situation. In addition, Trump finds this a good opportunity to increase American arms sales. Trump has decided to sell arms worth \$ 8 billion (around Rs 56,000 crores) to Saudi Arabia and UAE. The US has also decided to send more armed personnel to the Middle East.

Trade, trade bans, arms sales, troop deployments - all have just one aim- to increase the domination of US imperialism. When will our ruling class understand this?

11th State Convention of Tamilnadu WWCC

The 11th State Convention of the Tamilnadu Working Women Coordination Committee was held at Salem on 18th & 19th May 2019.

The colourful procession from V P C Memorial Hall to Com Saraswathi Memorial Hall (Convention Venue) was flagged off by A R Sindhu on 18th May.

Senior Comrade of Salem District S Kaveri Ammal hoisted the Flag at the Convention venue.

Leaders, delegates from all over Tamil Nadu and other participants paid Floral tributes to Martyrs.

D Daisy, Genl Secy, Tamilnadu Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Federation presided over the Open Session. Condolence Resolution was placed by Com M Girija. T Udayakumar, Chairman Reception Committee welcomed all the leaders, delegates and others in the Open Session.



A presidium comprising of D Daisy, J Lourdhu Ruby (Madurai), A Arya Mullai (Nellai) was elected to conduct the convention. 233 women workers including 220 delegates from 34 districts and ICDS, Electricity, Construction, Tailoring, Beedi, Handloom, Powerloom, Engineering, Garments, BSNL, Insurance, Bank,

ITES, Co-operative wings took part in the convention. There was a large number of young delegates, graduates, post graduates among the participants in the convention.

A R Sindhu, Convenor, AICCWW, inaugurated the Convention. In her address she dwelt on the problems faced by the working class in general; repressive measures taken by government, interventions by the judiciary – all to curtail the rights of workers. She focused on the issues of growing unemployment, exploitation through casual, contract work, and unequal wages for equal work. She spoke about the special problems of working women including sexual harassment at workplaces, lack of complaints committees, lack of basic amenities including creches at work places, dress code, against employing women in night shifts. She stressed the need for struggles to be organised independently and jointly with other organisations to meet all these challenges. She commended the TN Working Women Committee's for its contribution over the years. More and more women workers were drawn into the mainstream movement and a number of women leaders were developed at both state and district level.

R S Shenbagam was convenor of the Resolutions Committee; M Dhanalakshmi, Sara (Virudhunagar), R Malathy (Thiruvavur) constituted the Credentials Committee; M Ida Helen (Kanyakumari), R Krishnaveni (Tuticorin), N AnanthaSelvi (Insurance) were in the Minutes Committee.

The State WWCC Convenor, M Mahalakshmi presented the work report.

On the next day, 45 delegates participated in the deliberations on the report.

The General Secretary of the CITU, TN state committee, G Sukumaran, explained CITU's aim to bring more women workers into the mainstream movement and leadership. An extensive campaign is needed among rural workers. He called for the 50th Anniversary of CITU to be organised in a massive way.

Valentine, AIDWA State President, greeted the Convention. She focused on the issues of violence against women, sexual harassment and the need for a joint movement against these challenges.

R S Shenbagam proposed the Resolutions, including on 33% reservation, maternity benefits, formation of complaints committees, time scale for scheme workers, minimum wage for all, implementation of Domestic Workers Act, regularisation of part-time workers which were passed unanimously.

Malathy Chittibabu, Treasurer, CITU TN state committee, delivered the valedictory speech. Among the future tasks she proposed that a survey be conducted among women workers regarding their problems and living conditions, and the demands for an effective state level agitational programme be formulated.

The delegates ---- Rs.12,000/- for Nirmal School, being run by CITU, Tamil Nadu.

M Dhanalakshmi, who is at present Convenor of WWCC Sub-Committee in Electricity Wing, was elected as State Convenor of WWCC, Tamil Nadu for the ensuing term.

R Vairamani delivered the Vote of Thanks.

The Convention concluded with militant slogans.

(Report from Malathy Chittibabu)

Chhattisgarh Anganwadi Unions Decide to Merge

In a joint meeting of the state committees of Anganwadi Karyakarta evam Sahayika Union(CITU) and Chhattisgarh Rajya Anganwadi Karyakarta Sahayika Sangh, both affiliated to AIFAWH, it is decided to merge both the unions so that the struggles of anganwadi workers and helpers in the state can be intensified to achieve their long pending demands. The meeting was attended by A R Sindhu, General Secretary AIFAWH. Dharmaraj Mahapatra, Secretary CITU, Devendra Patil, leader of the state government employees union, Chhattisgarh were present, apart from the leaders of both the unions, Gajendra Jha, Satita Pathak, Anita Nayak, Maruti Dongre, Samir Khuraishi, Jamuna Bande, Sangeeta Manakpuri, Suneeta Singh, Manoranajani Toppo, Lata Sahu, Manjari Sahu, Dulari Sahu.

Both the unions were affiliated to AIFAWH and had been conducting struggles and other activities jointly in the state. It was the result of the consistent efforts by the AIFAWH and CITU that this merger is going to materialize.

The meeting decided to launch struggles for immediate implementation of the increased remuneration declared by the central government and the retirement benefit announced by the state government. Block level demonstrations will be organized in the first week of June.

On 16 June, a joint convention of the main activists, up to block level of both the unions, will be organized at Raipur. The convention will decide the process of merger and the state conference. The convention will also announce the future course of struggles in the state.

Freedom from Prostitution



Mahananda is from Kappalaguddi, a village in in Belgaum district of Karnataka. Opportunity is hard to come by in Kappalaguddi, especially if you're a woman and certainly if you're a woman who tries to take care of a sick mother.

Mahananda says her uncles helped pay for her mother's medical care. But they told her that they wanted the payment back. The amount was Rs 3,000.

Mahananda was 16. She didn't have the money or a way to get it.

What happened next is tough to read.

"They made me a Devadasi and sold me to a trader for money in Sangli for sex trade," Mahananda recounted.

Even though the practice of having a Devadasi was outlawed in the 1980s, women are still forced to serve as Devadasis across India.

Mahananda spent three years at a brothel. Only after getting pregnant and pleading with the brothel owner was she eventually let go.

But it didn't mean her nightmare ended. *"Once you are made a Devadasi, you cannot marry anyone, People refuse to accept you. You are incorrectly labeled a 'whore'...even parents constantly trouble you and you have no place and no respectable status in society,"* said the activist.

When a mountain of adversity stares you square in the face, you need a little hope, the easiest option would have been to make her daughter a Devadasi. But it did not feel right to Mahananda. So she looked for a way out and met an activist who tries to help former Devadasis assimilate back into some normal sense of life. It is an overwhelming process. She was connected with an organization that trained women like her, and helped them earn back their dignity.

The organisation helped her crowdfund a microloan through one of its partners. With the help of the microloan she has now been running her own sewing business.

Mahananda started with nothing, and was constantly pushed back by society. But she never gave up, and now, her daughters have a good life. She is living testament to the power of a mother's love and a woman's strength.

This has created a new future not just for her daughters, it has empowered her to help other women like herself, former Devadasis who also [want to make a new beginning](#).

(From the Internet)

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Rush Relief Fund to Odisha, Stand in Solidarity with the People hit by Cyclone Fani



As you are aware, Odisha is reeling under one of the worst Cyclones since the Super Cyclone of 1999. The Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm Fani that hit the Odisha Coast wreaked havoc and unprecedented destruction on houses, crops, trees, electricity poles and also took the lives of around over a hundred people. More than 14 million people are estimated to have been affected in a region spread over 16,000 villages. Standing paddy crop, coconut trees, cashew trees and various other crops on 1,52,000 hectares are estimated to have been destroyed. Livestock has also faced the brunt with thousands of animals reported killed. Even conservative estimates suggest that over 30 percent of crops in the state have been destroyed.

Over 1,56,000 electric poles, about 80,000 kms of low tension wires bringing electricity to homes and 48,673 km of high tension cables have been damaged, disrupting power supply. Even after more than a week of the cyclone the affected areas are yet to see restoration of electricity and drinking water services. Discrimination in providing relief has also been reported.

The Odisha State Committee of CITU along with other class and mass organisations are in the field, working to ensure relief for the affected people.

In the wake of such devastation, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) calls upon the working class of our country to rise in solidarity with the people of Odisha and we appeal to all to extend all possible help to the victims.

We urge all our readers to urgently mobilize funds and send the same immediately to the Odisha State Committee of CITU to their bank account given below, as soon as possible.

**Account Name: Sramik Ekta
S.B. Account number – 089510011005488
BANK: ANDHRA BANK
BRANCH: Madhusudan Nagar, Bhubaneswar
IFSC – ANDB000089
MICR CODE: 751011006**

**"To constantly struggle
to replace the present Government,
to initiate and participate
in the democratic struggles
in alliance with the peasantry,
to support the struggles
for agrarian revolution,
and for this purpose
to throw its full weight
for effecting a united front
of all democratic forces -
these are the
necessary tasks of the
trade union movement"**

- B T Ranadive
1st Conference Concluding Speech, 1970