



WORKERS RESISTANCE

Vol. 3 No. 02-03

Monthly Web Magazine of AICCTU

FEB-MARCH 2024

CONTENTS

Page 05
Unionising in Precarious
Working Conditions

Page 09
Struggle of Sanitation Workers
of Karnataka

Page 11
Trade Unions in the U.S. and
Palestine Solidarity

Page 13
Rescue Miner Waqeel Hasan's
House Bulldozed

Page 15
LABOUR SNIPPETS
MARCH 2024

Page 17
Conference: All India Municipal &
Sanitation Workers Federation

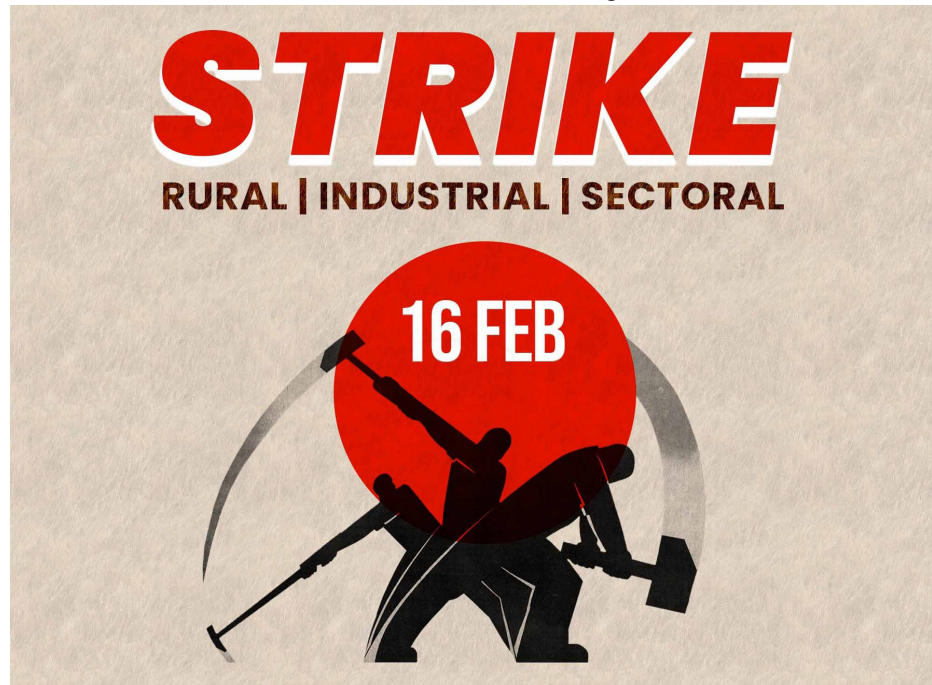
Page 19
Scheme Workers and Feb 16
Strike

Page 20
Mid Day Mean Workers Protest
in Bihar

Page 21
Maharashtra: 54 Days Long
Strike of Anganwadi Workers

Page 22
Odisha State Conference of
AICCTU

Feb 16 - Strike Action of Workers and Farmers Across the Country!



Defeat the Disastrous Modi – BJP regime!

On 16 February 2024, Industrial/ Sectoral Strike and Gramin Bharat Bandh (Rural Strike) called by the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) was successful with the enthusiastic participation of workers, farmers and agricultural labourers across the country. The toiling masses of the country resorted to various actions including protests, marches and picketing rejecting the Modi regime's anti-people policies.

AICCTU, in a statement, congratulated and extended its revolutionary greetings to the working masses for asserting their power of struggle. The working class of the country not only highlighted the burning issues but also resolved to defeat the

CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER

Modi regime in the forthcoming elections. The country witnessed big mobilisations including strikes in various sectors and industrial areas on this day.

The Rural Bandh was enforced all over the country while it was more effective in Punjab, Haryana, Western UP and parts of Rajasthan.

The sectors like Coal and Road Transport, PSUs like NMDCL, BHEL and several major industrial areas and zones went on strike at various levels. The state government employees in many states were in action. Employees of banks and insurance sector, electricity, telecom, steel, copper and oil sector organised protests at workplaces and participated in joint processions and meetings. The jute and cotton plantation workers demonstrated on their demands. The railway unions organised demonstrations outside railway stations in several states and defence employees protested in front of their factory gates. Students and teachers extended support and were part of mobilisations in several states. The taxi and auto drivers in many states took to the streets in support of the action. The hawkers and vendors unions, construction and beedi workers, home based workers and domestic workers were part of processions and road roko at many places. The scheme workers - Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid-day meal - and those working under various other schemes of the governments marched on the streets and waged bigger battles. In fact, these women workers



were one major reason for the great success of the strike.

A mass civil disobedience was organised in West Bengal on 13th February itself due to board examinations commencing on 16th February in the state. It was a successful militant action throughout the state. Comrade Anarul Islam became a martyr of the strike in the brutal lathi charge by police on protesters at Domkal in Murshidabad of west Bengal. The protests were organised by

some unions on the 16th also.

In Assam, workers struck work on 15 February considering the examinations on 16 February. The state witnessed a sectoral strike by scheme workers, construction workers, vendors and hawkers among others. The employees of BSNL and Oil Sector as well as the workers of almost all private industries struck work and resorted to chakka jam throughout the state. There were good mobilisations in rural

and urban areas of the state while the rural bandh was also more effective.

In Delhi, a militant demonstration at the Labour Commissioner's office and another at Jantar Mantar were organised in addition to the joint industrial actions of workers in almost all industrial clusters. In the Wazirpur Industrial area, led by AICCTU, workers resorted to militant actions and enforced the strike defying section 144. Workers also marched through all factory blocks of the industrial area in the course of enforcing the strike.

The central trade unions and farmers organisations resolved to continue and intensify agitations in the coming days. They also condemned the brutal repression unleashed by Modi regime and Haryana government against protesting farmers at Punjab-Haryana border. The protesting farmers were demanding fulfilment of the government's promises of legal guarantee of MSP made during the 2021 farmers movement. In the violence against farmers, till now more than 100 farmers have been injured, including three who lost their vision due to the use of pellet guns. The unions noted that the repression and violence have become a defining characteristic of the ruling party that has lost the confidence of people and that has lost the ground. Modi led BJP government has failed to deliver on every promise made to various sections of the Indian people. The toiling masses will thwart the diversionary and divisive



tactics of the BJP and RSS and will guarantee the ouster of the disastrous Modi government in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

The participation of scheme workers led by unions affiliated to AISWF-AICCTU was impressive in many states, down to the level of blocks and districts, including states like Bihar, Jharkhand, U.P, Uttarakhand, Orissa, etc.

In Odisha the rural bandh was successful. All India Kisan Mahasabha, AICCTU, and AIARLA participated in Puri, Rayagada, Kendrapara, Bhadark, Koraput, Khurdha, Nygarh, Bolangir, Sonapur and Sundargarh. Workers from sanitation, scheme, transport, construction, domestic work joined the strike in good numbers along with picketing in front of

government offices by railway contract labourers and industrial workers. A big rally was also held in front of the Odisha Assembly

In Andhra Pradesh hundreds of workers from various unions and sectors participated in the huge rally in Vijayawada, along with other districts.

Tamil Nadu unit of AICCTU played an active role in enforcing the strike jointly with other unions and farmers organisations across the state while independently staging a Rasta Roko at Tenkasi and a demonstration at Nagercoil and some other places. Hundreds of demonstrators were arrested, detained and foisted cases by the police. Women workers of sanitation and beedi participated in Rasta Roko in full strength along with construction workers.

In Karnataka, sanitation, construction, health, readymix concrete, industrial and workers of other sectors of AICCTU went on strike demonstrations all across the state jointly with other unions and farmers organisations. AICCTU played a significant role in the struggles on 16 Feb both at urban and rural areas. In districts like Mangalore, we also held an impressive demonstration of scheme, port and other workers independently.

RCF Employees' Union, Kapurthala, affiliated to AICCTU and IREF held a big rally at Ambedkar Chowk. Railway workers in other zones and production units also demonstrated in solidarity with the strike action.

In U.P, demonstrations were held in various districts including Allahabad, Kanpur and Lucknow.

The industrial strike action on 16 Feb 2024 was a culmination of series of conventions, struggles and protests of workers for a year since all India workers convention at Delhi 30 Jan 2023. Significantly, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the struggling umbrella organisation of farmers of the country, also joined hands with workers for the first time in August 2023, reinforcing the workers battle for democracy and justice against the disastrous Modi led BJP regime at the centre. The country witnessed militant actions on 16 Feb, not only in urban areas but also in rural

areas in the form of a rural bandh which is of a greater significance of the action. The solidarity and joint action of workers – farmers of the country is the uniqueness of the strike of the action on 16 Feb.

Another major significance of the strike on 16 Feb was that it was not just an economic strike but a political strike because workers and farmers resolved to overthrow the Modi led BJP regime in the coming elections which has turned into a major disaster for their lives and livelihood, in addition to other economic demands.

This is the most significant part of the rural – urban strike on 16 Feb which should be carried forward. ■



Unionising in Precarious Working Conditions

★ AVANI CHOKSHI

At a time of increasing precarity, traditional trade unionizing strategies must evolve to meet new challenges. While precarity is not new by any means, the systematization and entrenchment of precarious labour through all power structures and the steady decline of the permanent worker base necessitates broad-based and innovative unionizing strategy.

I. Forms of Precarious Employment

No strategy can be applied formulaically due to the sheer variety of systems of precarity that have been built over decades. Of course, the largest mass of precarious workers are in the unorganised sector and agriculture. Another developing mass of workers are gig/platform workers, who, as I have previously argued, must also be seen as ‘workmen’ who are ‘employed’ in an ‘industry’, and therefore entitled to be given protections of labour law. This article will focus on a third significant mass of precarious workers in the organized sector, who perform permanent and perennial work but are denied the benefit of regular employment.

Even amongst this mass, there are variations. On the one hand, there are workers who are shown to be employed through sham

contractors. They are mere name lenders to divest the workers of claims against the real employer. This is a deliberate strategy to indefinitely guise such workers as employees of a sham intermediary.

On the other hand, there are other workers in conditions of ‘direct insecure employment’. These include workers who are taken on fixed term contracts, which are extended time and again. Others are shown as ‘trainees’ who do full time production without any training but are deprived of workman status. Yet another common category of such workers are casual or badli workers, whose names are not reflected on the rolls of the establishment. While these workers are to some extent entitled in law to some degree of protection, that protection is absent in reality, and such workers are deprived of equal and fair treatment.

II. Dualisation of the Labour Force

While performing identical work of permanent nature, precarious workers are not entitled to equal wages or benefits. In the case of contract labour, they are even denied the right to claim a relationship of employment with their real employer. With labour laws unimplemented, such workers are denied minimum wages, and denied parity at all levels, including parity of wage,

bonus, increment, uniform, overtime payment, leave, allowances etc. While payment of equal wages and benefits for equal work is a licence condition of the contractor, the consequence of breach of this condition is revocation of licence, which never happened in decades. These workers face daily hire and fire at work and lack social security or other protections. Even the judiciary refuses protection more often than not.

Thus, precarious workers become a class within a class to some extent, or, as Sudha Bharadwaj calls it, ‘another caste system’. This is also referred to as the ‘dualisation of the labour force’. It has been argued that intensified precarity is a characteristic of late capitalism, which resulted in the fragmentation of the workforce into precarious and secure employment.

III. The Example of Contract labour

In 1970, India brought in the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, a law with the avowed objective of abolishing contract labour wherever possible. Prior to enactment, a 45-member Joint Parliamentary Committee was constituted to consider the passage of the Act. The government staunchly defended contract labour along with public sector and private

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

sector managements. An excerpt of the Deposition of BC Ganguli, Member, Railway Board, before the Joint Parliamentary Committee is very telling:

“Labour Minister: If a contractor can afford to have men and then go on from place to place for work, why can such a corporation not do it? Perhaps, the argument may be that when there is no work, the contractor can discharge those people.

B. C. Ganguli: That is the main thing. The second thing is that you will not be able to attract temporary establishments to work for the Government because we have a lot of limitations – payment of bonus and things like that, also the pay scales.

Labour Minister: They are not limitations.

B. C. Ganguli: They are big limitations.

Labour Minister: I am talking from the workers’ point of view.

B. C. Ganguli: I am talking from the Government point of view.”

While this was the stance of the government as an employer, representatives of the CPI and Samyukta Socialist Party, amongst others had issued dissenting notes, noting that firstly, while the Act spoke of gradual abolition of contract labour, the effect would be its regularization and institution; and secondly, that the exclusion of coverage of the mass of casual workers who are treated in an equally discriminatory manner was

unjust. These dissenting notes accurately forecast the present, wholesale institutionalization of precarious labour.

By 2001, the Supreme Court had shifted from calling the contract labour system “nothing but an improved version of bonded-labour” to gutting the 1970 law by denying absorption to contract workers upon abolition of the contract system. Now, through the new Labour Codes, the government is also granting statutory sanction to contractualisation by taking the stance that the contractor himself is the principal employer. In fact, a report issued by the V. V. Giri National Labour Institute and the Indian Institute of Public Administration titled ‘Impact Assessment Study of the Labour Reforms Undertaken by the States’ argued that deregulation by increased thresholds of applicability of beneficial labour legislation would increase formalisation by ensuring that the contractor is treated as the regular employer.

It may be kept in mind that the Government whose policies enable such precarity is also a primary beneficiary in its role as an employer, while also pushing its crony corporate agenda. The outsourcing of permanent government posts results in a transition of a government post to coolie work, for which far from scales of pay, workers are often denied minimum wage. While the Supreme Court has held that “Sanctioned

posts do not fall from heaven. State has to create them by a conscious choice on the basis of some rational assessment of the need” this proposition has not been taken to its logical conclusion, and instead there is institutionalisation of precarity, to an unprecedented extent.

IV. Why are Precarious Systems Preferred in Capitalist Systems?

A. Economic Reasons: Heightened Expropriation of Surplus Value

The reality is that old systems of precarious work are evolving and new systems are being built as a deliberate economic strategy of the corporate state, with the complicity of the judiciary. The government has broadly continued to espouse precarious work for economic and administrative considerations even while turning a blind eye to the shocking indignities meted out to workers in precarity, who are denied all protections. This calculated precarity enables the extraction of maximum possible labour value from the worker, which is devoid of human value. The prevalence of precarious labour is a testament to the fact that the principal employer is perpetrating illegal discrimination of that workforce.

Importantly, it has been found that presence of precarious labour enables slow-down of wage growth of permanent workers too due to the problem

of rampant unemployment.

B. Precarity as a Tool to Fracture Class Solidarity

In the eyes of the employer, apart from economic benefits, precarity becomes a tool to dilute revolutionary movements and workers resistance by fracturing class solidarity by dividing workers into two classes – the stable minority and the precarious majority. To some extent, precarity reveals existing fissures and contradictions of caste, class and gender. Stigmatic occupations, for example, ‘housekeeping’ work that entails manual scavenging is overwhelmingly performed by Dalit women. Now, all such work is outsourced, which is institutionalized in the labour codes, by excluding “sanitation works, including sweeping, cleaning, dusting and collection and disposal of all kinds of waste” from the definition of core activity, where contract labour is prohibited. Now, a Dalit woman who gets a housekeeping post will no longer get scales of pay or benefits of permanency but are in perennial precarity. Similarly, outsourcing of government jobs has a direct impact on reservation, which is not required to be followed by the contractor.

V. Difficulty in Unionising in Precarious Employment

It is a known fact that unionising is difficult for workers in precarity. A report by

IndustriALL Global Union titled ‘Precarious Work in India’ finds that there is a greater resistance to unionising among the workers performing indirect precarious work on vastly inferior terms, who are increasingly made to replace those in permanent direct employment. There is a higher degree of victimisation of contract workers, who are more susceptible to illegal dismissal without any repercussions on the management. High levels of unemployment also result in workers being highly replaceable and less valuable to retain for the management. A dynamic workforce reduces the responsibilities of all those managements that evade legal compliance. A precarious worker often has no economic safety net and is unable to take the risk of losing his job. An atmosphere is created around unionisation as the probable consequence of speaking out is economic death. Class struggles which revolve around collective bargaining, and strike as a weapon of last resort to the working class are thus less available to precarious workers.

VI. Need for Established Unions to Espouse the Cause of Precarious Workers

Traditional unionising was in the context of large permanent industrial workforce, and had burgeoned at a time when there were aspirations of a welfare state with state and judicial support to the working class. With permanent workers

as members, these unions had sufficient resources and collectivisation to be able to fight exploitative managements.

It has been argued that a strictly legalistic understanding of workers’ rights and the relationship of employment has resulted in inertia of mainstream unions towards casual workers who fall out of this framework. It is argued, “for labour to respond effectively to the rise of precarity, it will have to follow capital beyond the legal boundaries of class relations. Where the fewest legal protections exist, we find the greatest potential for innovative class conflict.”

On the other hand, it has been argued that with the growth of precarious employment, traditional trade unions employ a host of new strategies to defend these workers.

It is undeniable that there is some lethargy in espousal of the cause of precarious workers by permanent unions. However, with a rapidly decreasing permanent workforce, unless unions embrace the cause of precarious workers, there will soon be no concept of permanent work.

VII. New Union Strategies in Times of Precarity

Most experiences of organising precarious workers seem to indicate a key role of solidarity and community building. One report finds three broad themes that workers in precarity

face, which include lack of control, commodification of time and creation of mistrust. The report notes that “Unions must recognise that precarious workers often face a double burden with respect to both ‘time poverty’ and ‘financial poverty’, which might limit their ability to engage in union organisation in the traditional way” and finds that “precarity can be harnessed as a shared identity and sense of community”. In another article, the downward trend in union power has been attributed to reduction in economic growth and industrial employment, as well as deregulatory policies, which all increase precarity in a process termed as a ‘vicious cycle’. Escaping this cycle requires stronger institutions and mobilising of unorganised workers through solidarities of similar identity.

It has also been argued that “perceived difficulties for unionisation are fear, lack of knowledge of precarious workers about their rights, status of frustration and lack of interactions with other workers. Reported practices for unionising precarious workers consist of dealing with these barriers in order to build trustful relations and empowering workers through education and inclusion in leadership positions. Actions taken to protect and secure precarious workers are strongly interlinked with their unionisation.

The main conclusions of the study are that precarious work

means a loss of control by workers over their work life stemming from labour commodification and flexibilisation due to increased management control and lack of rights and protections surrounding work. The formation of solidarities needed for unionisation is hindered by the detachment of precarious workers from the work community and by inequality regimes.

VIII. What to Fight for?

In an article titled “Trade union strategies against precarious work: Common trends and sectoral divergence in the EU”, different union strategies regarding precarious work are discussed – first, elimination of the precarious work itself and secondly, bridging the gap between the two classes of workers. It also notes that demands can be claimable against not only the employer, but also against the government or the third-party user agency.

The Global Union Principles on Temporary Work Agencies adopted by Global unions states, “the primary form of employment shall be permanent, open-ended and direct employment. Workers provided by temporary work agencies must be accorded equal treatment and opportunities, including equal pay for equal work, with regular and permanent employees with respect to terms and conditions of employment.” The principles consider a number of other aspects including liability of the principal employer, social

security, regulation etc.

While elimination of precarious labour must be the ultimate goal, it must go hand-in-hand with demands of immediate equality and security of the precarious workforce.

IX. The Way Forward

Bhagat Singh wrote: “Class consciousness is required to ensure that people do not fight among themselves. It has to be made very clear to the poor, working class and peasants that their real enemy is capitalism. That is why they have to safeguard themselves from its stranglehold. The rights of all the poor – be they of any caste, colour, religion or region – are the same. Your wellbeing is in overcoming all these differences and remaining united and strive to take the reigns of power into your hands. With these efforts, you will lose nothing; with these efforts, one day your chains will get cut and you will have economic independence”.

Today, the idea of the welfare state is no more. Workers can no longer rely on benevolent (if flawed) legislation but must rely on their own power to emerge from the anti-worker capitalist regime. Then, working class solidarity is the sole way to build unity and thereby effective resistance. Established unions have the heavy responsibility of building confidence, trust, and solidarity with workers in precarity to establish some level of control over the employer and emerge out of the vicious cycle of increasing precarity. ■

Regularisation and EPFO Benefits of Sanitation Workers of Karnataka

★ MAITREYI KRISHNAN

In two consecutive victories to the struggles of powrakarmikas (sanitation workers) of Karnataka, the State Government has declared that 24,005 workers will be made permanent, and the High Court has directed the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to deposit Rs. 90,18,89,719/- (Rupees Ninety Crore Eighteen Lakh Eighty-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Nineteen only) along with 12% interest to the accounts of pourakarmikas.

Order for Permanency of Direct Payment Sanitation Workers in BBMP

In July 2017, under the banner of BBMP Powrakarmikara Sangha (affiliated to AICCTU) thousands of powrakarmikas across the state thronged the capital city of Bengaluru and demanded that the contract-system be abolished and the workers be made permanent. In response to this in 2018, the state government removed the exploitative contract system, and brought the workers under the direct-payment system, through which the municipal corporations and the local bodies paid wages to the workers directly. However, it was only the sweepers who were brought under this direct-payment system, whereas the drivers, helpers, loaders and other such workers involved in



transport and handling of garbage remained under the contract system. The government, at the time, assured that the workers would be made permanent in a phased manner. Thereafter, the powrakarmikas have consistently launched struggles demanding that the government regularize their services, since the assurances were not kept.

In 2019, a notification was issued by the BBMP inviting applications for a few permanent posts of sweepers. The BBMP Powrakarmikara Sangha fought against the discriminatory and unscientific notification, that would exclude the majority of the existing powrakarmikas from being eligible for the job. After a day-long protest by thousands of workers in 2019, the BBMP

was forced to withdraw this notification. Thereafter, the government had failed to move forward in declaring permanency for the workers. A jatha was also organized to mobilise the workers on the issue over a period of one month in October-November 2020.

In July 2022, the workers launched a state-wide four-day strike seeking that the then BJP government make them permanent. The state government had then given a written assurance that the workers would be made permanent and a notification to that extent was issued by the respective local bodies. However, the then BJP state government failed to keep its promise. A state-level Conference of pourkarmikras held on 6th

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

November 2022 adopted a declaration to fight until workers were assured dignified working conditions.

Subsequent to the 2022 Assembly elections, where the Congress came to power after promising permanent jobs to the powrakarmikas in their election manifesto, the union engaged in constant protests to ensure that the assurance was made a reality.

On February 8th, 2024, the union gheraoed Vidhan Soudha where the workers were detained by the Bengaluru Police and despite the same, stood their ground and sought that the government declare that they will be made permanent. The demand was reiterated in a meeting with the Chief Minister held thereafter. On February 16th, the Karnataka Government declared that 24,005 workers across the state will be made permanent, and the BBMP on February 29th, declared in its budget that 15,000 powrakarmikas in Bengaluru would be made permanent.

It must be noted here, that while the sweepers, under the direct payment system, have been declared to be made permanent, the workers engaged in transport and disposal of garbage, including auto tipper and truck drivers, helpers and loaders continue their struggle for the abolition of the contract system. These workers continue to be plagued with issues of non-payment of wages for several months, non-disbursal of ESI & EPF, harassment of workers, threats of termination, among

others. These workers had launched a protest in March 2023 demanding their rights. The union will continue to fight for their legitimate rights and dignity.

Historic order of the High Court directing BBMP to deposit EPF dues

The Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka has passed an order dated 07.02.2024 in WP No. 16539/2022 c/w WP No. 4449/2018 (L-PF) directing the BBMP to deposit Rs. 90,18,89,719/- along with 12% interest within eight weeks from the date of its order to the accounts of powrakarmikas.

The BBMP Powrakarmikara Sangha (affiliated to AICCTU) had filed complaints seeking for the PF dues of powrakarmikas employed with the BBMP, upon which the EPF Authority had passed an order on 26.10.2017 directing the BBMP to deposit Rs. 90,18,89,719/- into the EPF accounts of powrakarmikas, towards their provident fund, pension fund and insurance fund contribution for the period between January 2011 and July 2017. Since the BBMP had failed to comply with the order of the EPF Authority, the Union had approached the High Court seeking for a direction to the BBMP to comply with the same.

The High Court has recognized the services and plight of working conditions of the powrakarmikas and noted that – “These workers (powrakarmikas) are doing great service to the society and the union has worked for several

years to ensure that all workers shall receive their dues including proper and regular wages... The Powrakarmikas are almost entirely from Dalit Community and predominantly women. They are employed in the most scientifically backward, inhuman and primitive form of garbage-collection and street-sweeping throughout the year, without weekly or national holidays or any breaks at all. They have ceaselessly protected the health of the public and continued to do so each and every day. This has come at the cost of their own health and safety and they suffer from serious and life-shortening respiratory ailments, heart problems, back and knee problems etc.”

The High Court has also given observation on the injustice caused to the powrakarmikas, noting – “The acts of the respondent BBMP have caused financial and mental suffering to the workers who come from extremely poor and marginalized background. The failure of the respondent No.1 to comply with and implement the order dated 26.10.2017 is highly illegal, violative of public policy in contravention to the fundamental and statutory life of the powrakarmikas.”

The powrakarmikas, who have faced triple oppression of class, caste and gender for decades, have stood steadfast in fighting for their rights and dignity, and will continue their struggle till justice is met. ■

A Break with the Past: U.S. Labor Unions in Solidarity with Palestine

★ TAMARAI

Crimes Against Humanity: Israel's Horrific Actions in Gaza

We are watching with horror the genocide that is taking place in Gaza in Palestine by Israel's military supported by the U.S. for more than four months. This has led to the deaths of nearly 30,000 people in Gaza. More than twice that number have been grievously injured. Only one in three hospitals are partially functional as medical facilities and infrastructure have been targeted by Israel. 75% of the 2.3 million population of Gaza are internally displaced.

South Africa with its glorious history of fighting apartheid took Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Hague charging it with genocide. On January 26, 2024, the ICJ ordered Israel to take measures to prevent acts amounting to genocide and ensure that services reach the affected people in Palestine. The Economist/YouGov poll results released in January, 2024 showed that 35% of Americans believed that Israel was committing genocide in Palestine with 29% undecided. 49% in the age group 18-49 agreed with the term genocide and 27% were undecided. The horrific attacks against the people of Gaza are continuing while people all



over the world have taken to the streets in large numbers again and again.

Not On Our Watch: Workers and Unions are Rallying in Support of Palestine

Martha Grevatt, a retired Stellantis worker who served on the executive board of United Auto Workers Union (UAW) Locals 122 and 869 and a long time anti-war activist, spoke to me about her impressions

on the response of workers and unions in the U.S. and their solidarity with the Palestinian people. "While some unions have been silent or, worse, declared "solidarity" with the Zionist state of Israel, the unions with a progressive stance now represent a majority of union members in the U.S.". While she is happy with a significant number of unions in the U.S. who have issued statements calling for a ceasefire in Palestine, she adds that "merely calling for a

CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER

ceasefire is inadequate — unions must honor the call from 30 Palestinian labor organizations for workers to block shipment of weapons to Israel. But given the reactionary, staunchly pro-Zionist position of organized labor in the U.S. until now, calling for a ceasefire represents a significant break with the past.”

AFL-CIO the largest labor federation in the U.S., which represents nearly 13 million workers, finally released a statement on February 8th for a negotiated ceasefire - some say better late than never! The rank and file workers had already pressured several unions like American Postal Workers Union, United Electric Workers, Communication Workers of America, Service Employees International Union to make ceasefire statements soon after Israel started to carpet bomb Gaza and cut off food and water supply. Some like the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 3000 and United Electric Workers started a petition less than two weeks from the commencement of Israeli actions demanding a ceasefire. Starbucks United was also one of the first unions to oppose Israel's actions. The National Writers Union issued a statement on October 13, "... in a massive ethnic cleansing, Israel is forcibly displacing more than a million people as it prepares a ground invasion. All of this violates international law, which the Israeli government has done with impunity for decades and with the material

and political support of the U.S.”.

Not Another Nickel, Not Another Dime, No More Money for Israel's Crimes

On Jan 13, 2024, the Oakland port's operations in California was shut down by 3000 strong workers and activists. The action was co-organized by Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) and International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). The port has been used to transport weapons, technology and other assistance to Israel in addition to facilitating transfer of military aid in U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Jimmy Salameh, a Palestinian longshoreman and member of ILWU Local 10 said to AROC, "I have worked at the port for 10 years, and I can say for a fact that there was no business as usual out here today..."

Zachary Valdez a labor organizer with UAW as reported in prismreports.org said, "Labor movement has the power to disrupt supply chains ... workers can shut down everything".

Masters of War and United Resistance

Israel has received \$300 billion dollars in aid from the U.S. in the last 75 years and most of this is for military assistance. The U.S. has promised another \$4 billion per year until 2028. AFL-CIO has supported Israel for many decades, and has millions of dollars as investments in Israeli state bonds. That said, there is

hope and optimism that change is in the air. Gerry Scoppettuoloi, who is an anti-war activist and the Vice President of the Greater Boston Labor Council, AFL-CIO, official AFL-CIO LGBTQ Constituency Group, spoke to me after attending a rally for Palestine where people from many nationalities came together in thousands, "Organized labor in the U.S. has not been as united in this way since the 1980s when a majority of labor opposed the Reagan/Kissinger support of death squads in Honduras, fascist national police in El Salvador, and the Contras in Nicaragua." Gerry is encouraged by the "flowering of labor internationalism that is showing no signs of letting up" and the countless protests all over the country by youth and the organized left against the merciless bombings of Palestinians by the Israeli forces.

The U.S anti-war movement has seen a resurgence. The demands of the movement include an immediate end to the assault on Gaza by Israel, an end to all of U.S. aid to Israel, reparations to Palestinians, return of all the occupied land, and the Palestinians right to return. Working class organizations, Jewish Voices for Peace, communist parties, faith-based organizations and youth are coming together against the U.S. and Israel's ongoing genocide of Palestinians. And together they are chanting "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free". ■

Rescue Miner Waqeel Hasan's House Bulldozed!



Waqeel Hasan was a part of the team of 12 workers who rescued the 41 entrapped workers in Uttarakhand's Silkyara Tunnel in November last year. He along with his associates worked tirelessly to save fellow workers who were trapped when the tunnel collapsed. After returning from the rescue operation he said that they took the risk for their fellow workers, it was a duty to the nation that they served.

After three months, the central government agency Delhi Development Authority (DDA) bulldozed the house of the Nation's Hero in Delhi's Khajuri Khas.

On 28th February, a team of DDA

and Delhi police reached Waqeel Hasan's house in the morning. At that time, only the children of the family were present. Despite that, the DDA and Delhi Police continued thrashing his door forcefully. It is to note that all officials forcing the children to open the door were male officials. When Waqeel and his wife returned home and clarified to DDA that they have bought the house and have been staying in the house for more than a decade, Delhi Police arrested Waqeel and his wife and kept them at Khajuri Khas police station. In the meantime, bulldozers ravaged Waqeel's house to the ground.

A team of CPIML-AICCTU-AISA-AILAJ team consisting of Sucheta De (AICCTU National

VP), Ramabhilash (CPIML Delhi), Aditya, Vikash (AISA) and Amarjit (AILAJ) visited Khajuri Khas and met Waqeel and his family. We have extended all kinds of support including legal support.

Our team got to know that Waqeel was not served any notice before the demolition. DDA and Delhi Police officials acted completely illegally and forcefully bulldozed his house.

The present BJP regime takes pride in its bulldozer governance. We remember how BJP's MCD Councillors were marking colonies to be bulldozed. We remember Khori Village, Jahangirpuri, Tughlakabad, Gyaspur, Mehrauli, Dhobighat

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)



and Priyanka Gandhi Camp and several other areas in Delhi where thousands of people have been made homeless within one day. Their lifelong investment in the form of their houses were destroyed forcefully. The present law in Delhi prohibits any demolition without prior notice. The DDA almost never bothers to give notice before demolition. The government is mandated to provide rehabilitation. In the case of Waqeel Hasan, the entire demolition was a criminal act performed by DDA and Delhi Police.

Central Trade Unions Protest at DDA Head Quarters

Hundreds of workers from different parts of Delhi and Khajuri Khas joined the protest at DDA Head Quarter on 4th March against Illegal demolition of Waqeel Hasan's house. They demanded punishment of DDA officials and the reconstruction of Waqeel Hasan's house.

Shabana, Waqeel Hasan's wife said at the protest, "DDA officials acted like goons and demolished our house. My husband risked

his life to serve the nation and this is how we are being treated. Manoj Tiwari, MP from the area has met us and assured of house. But where is the guarantee? He should give written assurance of land rights and reconstruction of our house".

Tapan Sen, General Secretary, CITU said, "Today the government has made it very clear whom their bulldozer is targeted at. It is workers like Waqeel Hasan who are the targets of their bulldozer. The trade union movement of the country will guarantee that Waqeel Hasan gets justice and his house is reconstructed."

Sucheta De, National Vice President of AICCTU said, "The government should have guaranteed permanent jobs and proper housing for all rescue miners. Instead Waqeel Hasan's house is being demolished. The DDA is responsible for making thousands of families in Delhi homeless. From Tughlakabad, Mehrauli, Sangam Vihar to Khajuri Khas, the anti-poor bulldozer of DDA continue to destroy lives. All laws of the land continue to be violated by these bulldozer actions."

The Trade Unions have submitted memorandum to DDA officials and demanded Punishment for the DDA official who ordered the illegal demolition, Land rights in the place of residence to Waqeel Hasan, Reconstruction of his house and Adequate compensation for the loss incurred by Waqeel and his family. ■

LABOUR SNIPPETS

MARCH 2024

UP INVOKES ESMA FOR SIX MONTHS

The BJP government of Uttar Pradesh, led by Yogi Adityanath, has invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), essentially imposing a ban on strikes and protests across the state. This comes in the wake of the farmers protest in Haryana and Punjab announced by farmers' organisations. The notice issued by the state government states that if any employee is found in a strike or is taking part in any protest, they would be arrested immediately without any warrant or any charges on violating the Act. Activists have stated that ESMA has been invoked for the past 10 years. Every year in January, a new ESMA notification is issued which is valid for six months, and then again in July it is extended for the next six months, they stated. Unions in power sector, pensioners, and others have condemned this move to suppress democratic voices and stated that this will not stop them from continuing their fight for rights.

TRANSPORT WORKERS STRIKE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Transport workers across the country have been striking work as a protest against the provision in the new criminal laws that impose 10 years jail term and fine of Rs. 7 lakh in hit-and-run cases. They have been demanding the provision to be withdrawn. Thousands of transport workers protested in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in various forms including the sit-in protest. Workers in Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu joined protests. All forms of public transport, including buses, trucks, auto rickshaws, e-rickshaws and tankers, excluding ambulance, school vans and government vehicles, have been part of the protest.

WORKERS PROTEST AT APPLE INC. SUPPLIER PLANT

Hundreds of workers at the Tamil Nadu plant of Flex – a company manufacturing chargers for Apple Inc., held a day-long protest demanding higher wages and recognition of union. About 4,000 workers are employed in the plant. Only 750 are permanent workers and the rest are contract workers. The workers are fighting for their dues and demanding increase in wages for high inflation and increase in basic expenditure like house rent, education fees, etc. It maybe recollected that in December 2021, thousands of young women workers at Foxconn's iPhone assembly plant in Tamil Nadu blocked the Chennai – Bangalore highway demanding improved working and living conditions and decent employment. In Karnataka's Wistron iPhone assembly plant, hundreds of workers went on a strike demanding pay parity for the factory's new employees. The same plant had witnessed protests regarding wage theft by the management and severe violation of labour laws, which led to the management and police incarcerating hundreds of young workers.

GARMENT WORKERS SEEK HIKE IN MINIMUM WAGES

Thousands of garment workers in Tamil Nadu held a protest outside the Labour Commissioner's office seeking an increase in the minimum wages, which at present ranges from Rs. 9,875 for the lowest category to Rs. 10,514 per month for the highest category. The workers stated that the minimum wages have not been revised for the past 10 years, even as the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, stipulates for revision once in every five years.

In 2016, the Madras High Court upheld a wage notification and directed textile manufacturers to pay the revised minimum wages immediately along with inflation-linked allowances and back wages from December 2014. However, the manufacturers

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

chose to appeal to the Supreme Court, which then directed the Tamil Nadu government to revise the wages for the last nine years and to initiate corrective measures. With the new minimum wages, the monthly wages will be in the range of Rs. 15,211 and Rs. 16,379. The protesting garment workers were demanding the same wages.

NMMC CONTRACT WORKERS TO GO ON HUNGER STRIKE

Thousands of contract workers employed with the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation will go on a hunger strike demanding pay parity. The workers expressed that despite the adoption of the 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' policy in 2007, in reality, pay parity remains on paper only. The workers demanded i) the implementation of equal pay for equal work with retrospective effect from November 2007, ii) the pump operators, welders, multi-purpose workers, gardeners and insecticide spraying and chemical fumigation workers to be brought under the skilled category iii) ensuring equal wage increase for permanent and contract workers in future iv) extending all the benefits provided to permanent workers to contract workers including gratuity, earned leave, medical leave, compensatory leave, reimbursement of medical expenses, provident fund, uniforms, etc.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKERS PROTEST IN GERMANY



Verdi, a public transport workers' union in Germany, called for a strike action across the country, demanding more appointments to overcome severe labour shortage, table pending wage negotiations, provide longer break time and holidays, among others. Buses and trams came to a halt for 24 hours with shorter strike period in the capital city of Berlin. Workers and ground staff at Hamburg airport halted work too. It has been stated that the average age of employees in the transport sector is 55 years, and owing to labour shortage there is work overload on the older employees.

FINLAND WORKERS PROTEST LABOUR REFORMS



Close to three lakh workers held a two-day strike on February 1st and 2nd in Finland against the labour market reforms and cuts in social welfare by the right-wing government led by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo. Workers stated that instead of consulting and negotiating with the workers and trade unions, the government was forcing the implementation of the labour reforms and has irked lakhs of workers. The strikes shut down kindergartens and pre-schools, disrupted air traffic and postal services, closed public transport and shut down factories across the country, along with grocery stores, hotels and restaurants. The trade unions of Finland have stated that they are up for a long fight with more strikes in the pipeline, if the government doesn't back down. ■

3rd National Conference of All India Municipal and Sanitation Workers Federation (AIMSWF)



The 3rd All India conference of the All India Municipal and Sanitation Workers was held on 3-4 February 2024 in Bengaluru. Around 150 delegates from 11 states of the country like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Delhi participated in the conference.

Comrade Rajiv Dimri, National General Secretary of AICCTU delivered the inaugural address and insisted that municipal and sanitation workers should defeat the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The RSS-BJP dream of Hindu Rashtra is an attack on workers and Dalits. It is aiming to replace the constitution with the Manu Smriti of barbarian era. Modi is washing the feet of sanitation workers only to use

it for publicity blitzkrieg. The government has not made any efforts to improve the living and working conditions of sanitation workers while trumpeting about Swachh Bharat. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has only perpetuated caste discrimination and manual scavenging. We must defeat the BJP in 2024," he added. He also emphasised the need for municipal workers to take an active part to fight against the anti-worker policies of the Union Government.

The report was presented by the General Secretary of the federation Comrade Shyamlal Prasad and delegates actively and enthusiastically joined the deliberations. The conference was conducted by a presidium elected by the house consisting of comrades Uday Bhat, Chandrasekhar Kumar, Santosh

Kumar, Sobha, Balasubramanian, Mahendra Parida, Srinivas Rao, Nirmala, Sucheta and Mahesh Kumar Singh in a most democratic manner. The deliberations were translated into three languages, Hindi, Kannada and Tamil, on stage.

As part of the conference, a cultural session was organised, which was attended by hundreds of sanitation workers from Bangalore. 'Porakeya Haadu' (Song of the Broom), a theatrical performance on the lives of sanitation workers was staged, followed by a musical performance by Pragati Kala Tanda. Com Maniyamma and Com Suresh, safaikaramchis working in the city of Bengaluru, and leaders in the AICCTU-, affiliated BBMP Powrakarmikara Sangha, were the main protagonists in the play. The conference report was

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

unanimously adopted by the house after due deliberation in a democratic manner.

The conference resolved to change the name of the federation to “All India Municipal and Sanitation Workers Federation (AIMSWF) in order to synchronise it with the expanding practice among sanitation workers that extends beyond municipalities too. The conference also resolved to launch an all India campaign against the BJP which is deceiving municipal and sanitation workers with its rhetoric and lies. The campaign is expected to begin on 15th March or so which will be subsequently decided by the newly elected committee soon.

The Conference also unanimously elected a 39-member National Executive Committee which, in turn, elected 18-member committee of Office Bearers. Comrade Uday Bhat was elected as the President, Comrade Nirmala as the Working President and Comrade Mahindra Parida as the General Secretary. Comrade Shyamlal Prasad, the founding General Secretary of the federation paved the way for the election of new faces into the committee and its leadership. Comrade Shyamlal was directly leading the federation, since its inception, to spread its wings all over the country, until the age of 91 and will continue to inspire and guide the organisation as the Vice President.

Comrade Shankar, All India President of AICCTU, in his concluding address to the conference said, “Defeat Modi!

Save Workers!” shall be the slogan of an all-India campaign from Mar 15 or 23 (day of comrade Bhagat Singh memorial), to the date of elections, probably on 16 April.

Com. Shankar said: “We keep saying that Modi should be defeated. We are told that the BJP enjoys popular support and they manage to win elections, so why do we keep on speaking out against the Modi regime. The reason is, if Modi comes back to power, there is no question of regularisation which is one of the most important demands of sanitation workers today. If sanitation workers should get minimum wages, Modi should be defeated in 2024 elections because the Labour Codes say that minimum wage is not mandatory and only floor wages to the tune of Rs 4500, as on date, is sufficient for workers. Hence, Modi should be stopped at any cost. We talk about dignity. But Modi is dreaming of Manu Smriti in place of the constitution written by Dr Ambedkar. The fight for the dignity of sanitation workers includes a sustained campaign against Manu Smriti which is nothing but a script for slavery of the working class, particularly the sanitation workers who are the most downtrodden in the society. We should expose Manu Smriti and carry the message among the municipal and sanitation workers.” He added, “We always talk about permanency and wages. But, that’s not enough. We should also talk about health, education of children and housing. The caste ordained tradition of children of sanitation workers becoming

sanitation workers has to be destroyed in all comprehensive ways. But we have heard Modi saying that workers should only engage in the occupation of their parents and the family. Vishwakarma Yojana is nothing but a conspiracy to maintain caste-based occupation and the caste hierarchy which should be opposed tooth and nail.”

AIMWF President Comrade Uday Bhat said, “It is only due to the working-class movement that the Modi Government has not been able to implement the anti-labour codes. The workers must unitedly fight against the BJP and RSS to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of sanitation and municipal workers. The dignity in the life of sanitation workers is not a charity to be awarded by someone but a right of all sanitation and other segments of the working class as a whole.”

Comrade Clifton D’ Rozario, all India secretary of AICCTU, proposed a definition of sanitation workers to cover all sections of workers who are related to solid waste management. He also emphasised how outsourcing is enforced by employers to escape from their responsibility to guarantee workers’ rights. Comrade Maitreyi Krishnan honoured the volunteers who tirelessly worked for the success of the conference.

The conference ended with a positive note of marching ahead steadfastly to implement the resolutions of the conference. ■

Scheme Workers Participate in Large Numbers in the Nation-Wide Rural Bandh and Sectoral Strike

★ SHASHI YADAV & RANVIJAY KUMAR

Thousands of scheme workers, including ASHA, anganwadi, mid-day meal, mamta, courier and other scheme workers, responded to the national call for rural bandh and sectoral strike on February 16th, 2024.

The participation of women workers was notable across all states of the country, which is adding a new dimension to the country's labour movement. Women workers, have historically been part of labour movements, and have had a significant impact on labour policies. Despite the double bind, they come out with all strength to challenge the present regime. Importantly, scheme workers across the nation have been giving a fitting reply to the Modi government through their consistent struggles with their demand to be recognised as workers, to provide them with permanent jobs, pay minimum wages, etc., especially since they provide essential services to the people of the country and ensure that the health and other benefits reach to the last person.

Scheme workers in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Uttarakhand, Delhi and other states took part in the February 16th protest call, in a move to show their strength against the BJP-RSS, which is bringing in labour

laws that would thwart the long-struggles of these workers. The scheme workers who came to the protest in their uniforms, took to the streets and such an organized participation of lakhs of women put the corporate-backed Modi government on a backfoot. This strike exposed the anti-worker nature of the government, which has undermined labour laws. The strike further proved that this government is deceiving the workers in general and the women workers in particular, through its lies and rhetoric.

It has been firmly established among the scheme workers that despite the risk they undertook during covid to protect the lives of the people, the Modi government has disregarded them by not increasing their wages in the past 5 years of being in power. The nation-wide strike by workers and farmers, along with the on-going farmers' protest at Delhi borders, has busted the Modi's narrative. The massive and enthusiastic participation of workers, especially in backdrop of the recent consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, is quite significant. The workers and farmers have been able to successfully establish their agenda over the religious propaganda of the BJP.

In Patna, scheme workers, especially ASHA workers, along with mid-day meal and anganwadi workers, affiliated to AICCTU, participated in large numbers in the procession, which were held on the city's main routes. In several districts, ASHA workers participated under the joint banner of AICCTU and other independent unions. In many PHCs, ASHA workers declared strike and held demonstrations. The newly formed 'Bihar State Anganwadi Workers Union' affiliated to AICCTU also participated in several districts. The significant anger among the scheme workers who feel betrayed by the Modi government was visible through their participation in the protest. The workers are also angry that the Bihar government has not implemented the promises made to the ASHA workers. The Bihar government, which has not yet arrived at any decision in regard to the monthly wages of mid-day meal workers, who are being paid less than Rs. 50 a day, i.e., Rs. 1,650 per month, and are only paid for 10 months a year, showed their anger during the protest.

From block-level to Patna, AICCTU, All India Scheme Workers federation, Employees' Federation (Gop Group), including AHSA, mid-day

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

meal, contract workers, and government employees, along with AIARLA, MNREGA Workers Union, Farmers' Unions participated in the rural bandh and sectoral strike.

Comrades Shashi Yadav, Saroj Chaube, Ranvijay Kumar, Rambali Prasad, Premchand Kumar Sinha, Manoj Yadav, Jitendra Kumar, Murtaja Ali, Surendra Yadav, B-Swan leader Rishav Kumar, ASHA leader Archana, Jalash Devi, Sushma Devi, Anuradha Kumari, Anita Raj, mid-day meal worker leader Sona Devi, Anganwadi leader Poonam Yadav, AIPWA General Secretary Meena Tiwari, state secretary Anita Sinha, Anuradha Devi and others participated in the protest.

In Jharkhand, mid-day meal workers participated in the strike on a large scale in districts like Garhwa, Dumka, Latehar, Deoghar, and Giridih. In three districts of Odisha, mid-day meal workers of Rayagada, Kendrapara and Sonpur joined the protests. In Assam, ASHA workers joined the protest, whereas in Uttar Pradesh, demonstration were held in several district on the issue of honorarium for ASHA workers in PHCs, who submitted memorandums addressed to the Prime Minister. In Uttarakhand, protest marches were held in Haldwani, Nainital, Rudrapur, Almora, Ranikhet, Dwarahat, Chaukhutia, Sialde, SALT, Bhikyasain, Champawat, Lohaghat, Tanakpur, Patti, Barakot, Okhalkanda, Dhari, Hawalbagh and Bhainsiyachhana, Pithoragarh, among other places, where the Uttarakhand ASHA Health Workers Union, Uttarakhand Anganwadi Employees Union and Mid-day meal Workers participated.

In Delhi, due to the imposition of Section 144, ASHA workers decided to strike work in the hospitals, and a signature campaign is being undertaken in regard to their demands. In Maharashtra, thousands of anganwadi workers participated in the protests, while observing a protracted strike for increased honorarium. ■

Mid-day Meal Workers Protest at Bihar Legislative Assembly



With a 13-point demand, thousands of mid-day meal workers working in schools under the banner of Bihar State School Mid-day Meal Workers Union (affiliated to AICCTU) held a protest during the on-going session of the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The workers, who put forth their demands for their socioeconomic and legal rights, demanded that the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar increase their honorarium to Rs. 10,000 per month, to provide permanent jobs, among other demands. The workers at the protest said that the Modi Government had failed to increase their honorarium in the past 10 years, and hence must be defeated in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The mid-day meal workers play a significant role in ensuring that children are given nutritious food and do not drop out of school. Their services are essential in a country like ours, which is marred with caste and class oppression, where right to food and proper nutrition and right to quality education are distant dreams.

The mid-day meal workers also demanded the Nitish Kumar-led government to eliminate the involvement of NGOs in the process of preparation of midday meal and

CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER

its delivery. The workers urged the government to take responsibility of these workers. They demanded that the Bihar Government implement its promise to increase the honorarium as was assured in their previous protests, and that they must be paid for 12 months, instead of 10 months as is being paid currently. They sought that the retirement age be increased to 65 years, to provide retirement benefits of Rs. 10 lakh rupees for each worker.

CPI(ML) MLA Sudama Prasad, who addressed the protest gathering, read out the notice that would be given in the Assembly, which sought that the honorarium of Rs. 1,650 be increased to Rs. 10,000 per month. He said that the present honorarium is disrespectful to the workers. Meanwhile, due to the change in government, the progress that was made to increase the honorarium of the

workers had come to a standstill, said the other MLAs. They said that Bihar is now being run by a double-engine government that does not want to talk about the demands of the extremely poor mid-day meal workers who belong to Dalit and bahunjan communities and called upon the workers to defeat the Modi-Nitish government in the upcoming elections if they do not increase the honorarium. In pursuance of the "Modi Guarantee", the speakers demanded a written assurance by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister to increase the honorariums of mid-day meal workers and other scheme workers to Rs. 26,000 per month. In the Assembly, the demand to release CPI(ML) MLA Manoj Manzil was also raised.

Meanwhile, Comrade Saroj Chaube warned the Nitish-BJP government to immediately fulfil the 13-point demand failing

which the 2.3 lakh mid-day meal workers would launch a relentless campaign to ensure their defeat.

After staging a demonstration near Gate Public Library, thousands of mid-day meal workers from across various districts reached Gardanibagh protest site, while raising slogans against the Modi-Nitish government. The General Secretary of the union Saroj Chaube, President Vibha Bharati, ASHA leader Shashi Yadav of All India Scheme Workers' Federation, AICCTU State Secretary Ranvijay Kumar, Mahasangh (Gope) leader Ram Bali Prasad, AICCTU Vice-President SK Sharma, AIPWA leader Anita Sinha and others led the demonstration. CPI(ML) MLAs Sudama Prasad, Mahanand Singh, Ram Bali Singh Yadav, Amarjeet Khushwaha, Gopal Ravidas and others addressed the protest gathering. ■

Maharashtra Government Feels the Heat of 54 Days Long Strike of Anganwadi Workers

More than 2 lakh Anganwadi workers of Maharashtra observed a strike for 54 days in the month of February 2024. The strike was a culmination of consistent movement of Anganwadi workers for dignified honorarium and other working class rights like guarantee of pension and gratuity.

The movement of the Anganwadi workers was reinvigorated after the honorarium of ASHA workers in Maharashtra were increased to Rs 15,000 per month. The Anganwadi workers have a legitimate claim to increased honorarium until they are guaranteed monthly wages and recognition as government workers. Presently, the Anganwadi workers get Rs

10,500 per month in Maharashtra and the helpers are paid Rs 5,500 per month. The Anganwadi workers of Maharashtra have been demanding a honorarium not less than Rs 18,000 per month. The massive strike of the Anganwadi workers manifested the power of independent assertion of women workers. The

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

labour that women give in running the most crucial government schemes are made invisible by the government that treats them merely as volunteers and not as workers, thus depriving them of their rights. It is through the strike and vibrant participation of workers in the strike that the government was sent a very clear message that invisibilization of such a major part of the workforce will not be tolerated. The workers ran such a protracted movement and successfully managed all necessary arrangements with collective funds created by workers themselves. The strike was an exemplary show of unity of the workers and independent assertion of the women workforce. While the Maharashtra government was steadfast in deploying all tactics including

spreading fake news and creating a threatening atmosphere to break the strike, the workers showed their resilience against all such odds and continued the strike for 54 days.

Despite such a long battle, the Maharashtra government refused to heed to the demand of increasing the honorarium of Anganwadi workers to Rs 18,000 per month. Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis even went to the extent of saying that the government cannot ensure two increments in a year, otherwise the workers will go into strike every now and then to demand increment. Firstly, Mr Fadnavis should know that the Anganwadi workers who run the crucial ICDS scheme of the government deserve to be treated as government

employees and paid accordingly. The Anganwadi workers have only been demanding remuneration for their hard labour that goes into ensuring nutrition, health and per-primary training for the children of the country. The way the Deputy CM of Maharashtra belittled the demand of the Anganwadi workers of the state is symptomatic of a regime that alters labour laws to facilitate further exploitation of Indian workers.

The Anganwadi workers of Maharashtra have decided to actively engage in campaigning against the NDA government presently ruling the country that has consistently refused to respect and recognise the rights of Anganwadi workers. ■

Fourth Odisha State Conference of AICCTU

Gearing Up Working Class against Corporate Loot and Rampant Contractualisation

★ MAHENDRA PARIDA

The fourth Odisha State Conference of AICCTU was held on 21st February successfully at Balugan in Khurdha district. Around 200 delegates from 10 districts of the state took part in the conference. Representatives of the working class from sanitation, railway, construction, health and scheme work participated in the conference. Representatives

from fraternal organisations like AITUC, CITU, HMS and AIUTUC also participated in the conference.

The ruling party in Odisha, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has time and again shown its affinity to anti-worker policies of the Modi Government. It has backed the Modi government in most of the anti-people legislations passed

by the parliament. At the same time, it has time and again gone back on its own promise made to the workers of Odisha like that of regularisation and abolishing the contract system. The BJP also has a disastrous track record of giving away Odisha's ecologically sensitive forest lands to private companies for mining, not only at the cost of lives and livelihood of the tribal

[CLICK HERE TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN BROWSER](#)

population living in these lands, but also of the rights of the workers in these projects. The conference was an opportunity for the working class in Odisha to reassert their commitment against corporate loot and violation of working class rights.

Comrade Rajiv Dimri, National General Secretary of AICCTU said while addressing the conference that the conference is being done at a very difficult time for the working class when all their hard earned rights are being taken away and flood gate for privatisation has been opened up by the present regime. He added that the trade union movement must guarantee that the anti-worker labour codes are not implemented in

the country and the workers must be mobilised to ensure a resounding mandate against the government that passed the codes from the parliament in the first place. Comrade Dimri also emphasised the role of working class unity to push back the communal polarisation engineered by the present regime.

The conference elected a 41 member state committee and 19 member office bearer team. Comrade Radhakant Sethi was elected as the state president and comrade Mahendra Parida was elected as the State Secretary of AICCTU.

Comrade Radhakant Sethi called upon AICCTU Odisha to initiate unionising processes

in different sectors and reach workers with a campaign exposing the real character of the Modi regime. Comrade Mahendra Parida said that after the conference, AICCTU Odisha will engage in expansion of membership and build up strong unions among Scheme, Sanitation, Mining and Public Sector workers.

Comrade Yudhistir Mahapatra, Secretary of CPIML Odisha greeted the conference. Other leaders like AILKM Odisha State Secretary Comrade Ashoke Pradhan and AIARLA general secretary Comrade Tripathi Gomango also expressed their solidarity with AICCTU's struggles. ■





All India Central Council of Trade Unions

Workers Resistance

Editorial Board

Editor

Shankar V

Assistant Editor

Sucheta De

Editorial Board

Rajiv Dimri

Clifton D' Rozario

Uday Bhat

Maitreyi Krishnan

V. Arun Kumar

Atanu Chakravarty

Saurabh Naruka

Radhika Krishnan

Poarkodi Natarajan

Correspondents

Abhishek

Desikan KG

Uday Kiran

NN Banerjee

Rambali Prasad

Web Management

VKS Gautam

Art, Design and Web

V. Arun Kumar

Published by

Rajiv Dimri, General Secretary

on behalf of

**All India Central Council of Trade Unions
(AICCTU)**

Head Office: U-90, Shakarpur, Delhi 110092.

Phone: +919205642035

Contact:

editor.workersresistance@gmail.com,

aicctu@gmail.com

