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THE WORKING CLASS

— Monthly Journal of CITU —

THE HISTORIC

NOVEMBER

REVOLUTION

LONG

LIVE!



STOP ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS!

STAND WITH

Release Prabir Purakayastha
and Amit Chakraborty

NEWS CLICK

**NO TO
WAAPA**



Even the Dead is Not Safe in Their Regimes of Political Far-Rights

While the world proletariat is getting ready to celebrate 106th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution, we are witnessing the horrific burning of West Bank and Gaza Strips in Palestine, immediately following the Manipur massacre in India, lest it be forgotten as Modi did. The situation in Gaza strip has become so catastrophic, since there is acute shortage of food, water, and medicine for children, pregnant women and elderly in the entire Palestine. Over one million Palestinians have been forced vacate from their home land besides the gruesome killing of thousands of civilians. The threat of Israel ground attack on Gaza is looming large. The 'The Working Class' is in solidarity with Palestine people.

The ugliest far-rights are in power in both Israel and India. Even the dead is not safe in their regimes. As Aijaz Ahmad says there is something strangely obsessive and pathological about the manipulation of human memory by the counter revolutionary forces of capital in our time. The capitalism is in protracted systemic crisis. The political right thus emerged in this context to serve the dead-ended neoliberalism aggressively attacking the people.

That's why those who are fighting for their home land and for the legitimate rights of their own in Palestine and, similarly, those who are fighting for the rights of their fellow citizens in India are being branded as "terrorists" and "anti-national" respectively by the fascistic political dispensation in India. The arrest of *NewsClick's* Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty under the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) smacks of fascistic authoritarian manipulation to camouflage their failure to mitigate the sufferings of ordinary people. 'The Working Class' reaffirms its stand with the *NewsClick*.

The exacerbating geopolitical volatilities coupled with the broad-based contraction of core industrial production have dented the private investments in current Q2. The public investment has already lost its steam. All these factors have added fuel to the weak demand situations. True to their Goebbelsian method of propoganda, they use all- from the space odyssey of Chandrayaan to G20 meet to Asian Games to Ahmedabad World Cup Cricket Match against Pakistan to divert people's attention from their livelihood matters. The silence over Manipur killings and euphoria on Israel-Palestine conflicts also not exception to them. Our observance of Red October Day and followed by the series of independent as well as the joint movements should be undertaken with this understanding so as to prepare the working people to oust BJP led government from power in order to save the nation and its people.

WORKING CLASS

NOVEMBER 2023

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The Great October Revolution and Its Contemporary Relevance

The rapid strides and the unthinkable achievement made by socialism in Russia had confirmed the superiority of socialist system. It catapulted the once backward Russian society into mighty economic power.

BY R. KARUMALAIAN

Comrade Lenin announced on November 7th 1917 (or October 25th by the old Julian calendar, hence referred to as the October Revolution) that the Bolsheviks had seized the state power of Russia. It was the first time in human history, the impoverished and exploited working class seized the state power. It was the alliance of workers, peasants and soldiers that had captured the state power under the leadership of proletariats. Never before, in the human history, we witnessed such event. It was neither the results of some momentary actions nor a coincidence of some stray circumstances. It was not like ordinary changes of one party or ruler by another one as we have been witnessing today. Nor it was the transfer of state power from one exploiting class to another exploiting class. But it was altogether different one. In the words of Lenin "it ushered in a new era in the world history, the era of the rule of new class- a class which is oppressed in every capitalist countries, but at the same marching forward towards a new life- towards emancipation of humankind from the yoke of capital".

As Prof Prabhat Patnaik used to say that it was the first revolution in the human history that was theoretically conceived and executed according to a plan, given the objective and subjective conditions prevailed then. Comrade B T Ranadive also said in one of his earlier writings in 1967 that "the 1905 revolution in Russia followed by the mighty October Revolution led by the great Lenin were the direct outcome of the inspiring revolutionary ideas and guidance given in the Marx's magnum opus- *Capital*".

The situation that was evolving in Russia in 1917 had contributed to the overthrow of the Czarist Tyranny with February Revolution and its transformation into a socialist one in October. In the vanguard of this world shaking revolutionary process was the Bolshevik Party led by V.I

Lenin responding to the aspirations and wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people.

Russians were at the midst of First World War- the horrific barbarity of capitalist response in crisis. Thus, in 1917 they were longing for Peace, Bread and Land. The bourgeois democratic February Revolution had only offered the abolition of Czarist Autocracy and could not meet the popular demands. Hence, the Great October Socialist Revolution led by proletariat that stormed the Winter Palace overthrowing the Provincial Government headed by Kerensky, put an end to dual power and heralded to the historic assumption of all power to the Soviets of working people, peasants and soldiers.

The first legislative action of Soviets was the Decree on Peace- the day 8th November (26th October) after storming the Winter Palace, that was addressed to 'all warring people and their governments' to declare ceasefire and to begin negotiations aiming at ending the war and signing of a just and democratic peace without any annexations and compensations.

Within eighteen hours, Lenin had issued the second Decree on Land- giving land to the poor and landless tillers. It proclaimed that the lands are 'social property'- calling for the abolition of private property. This event shook the entire capitalist world; whereas it was received with the sign of hives by the proletariat, peasants and soldiers- because it ushered a new era for entire humanity. That era was marked by the possibilities of overcoming of the inhuman capitalist barbarity- social system of exploitation of man by man. It has also opened up a new opportunity for the oppressed, colonized and downtrodden people and nations as well. It had set in the trajectory of collapse of colonialism- the ruthless instruments of imperialism then. It led to the liberation of

many third world countries like India. Thus it was an epoch-making event in the sense that human marching forward to end the system of exploitation of men by men was made possible and had been vindicated. And it proved the validity of Marxism as well- as the ideology of working people to liberate themselves from the yoke of capitalism. Here it lies not only the relevance of the Great October Revolution but the eternal relevance of Marxism as well.



Accordingly, the state led by the working class functioning for the interest of the people had emerged. All means of productions- land, labour, capital were planned to be brought under state ownership in prelude to be socialized later stage. The production was done under the planning of state for entire peoples' consumption as per their needs and not for individual capitalist's profit-greed. Thus non-exploitive social order was established. It becomes reality. The rapid strides and the unthinkable achievement made by socialism in Russia had confirmed the superiority of socialist system. It catapulted the once backward Russian society into mighty economic power. The political governance trajectory had been changed since October Revolution as socialism became a determining factor in all aspect human life. The concept of social welfare state got currency among the capitalist states. The decisive role played by the Union of Socialist Soviet Russia (USSR) in defeating fascism and the consequent emergence of the East European socialist countries had a profound impact on world developments. The victory over fascism/nazism in Second World War, achieved mainly due to the decisive role played by the Soviet Red Army, provided the necessary impetus to the process of de-colonization that saw the liberation of countries from colonial exploitation. The historical triumph of the Chinese revolution, the heroic Vietnamese people's struggle, the Korean people's struggle and

the triumph of the Cuban revolution made a tremendous influence on world developments.

Then the achievements of the socialist countries – the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, the elimination of unemployment, the vast network of social security in the fields of education, health, housing, pension etc. – provided a powerful source of confidence and inspiration to the working people all over the world in their struggles for the betterment of society.

Following the defeat of fascism and the triumph of socialist revolutions noted above, there was an erroneous tendency to overestimate the strength of socialism and underestimate the strength and capacities of capitalism. Capitalism remaining in the advanced capitalist countries and that too in two-third of the world meant that its control over production forces remained intact. Adapting itself to the changed global order, capitalism continued to consolidate itself while mounting a relentless offensive – militarily, politically, economically and ideologically in terms of propaganda – against socialism.

While USSR and world socialism met this challenge of imperialism, its internal strength was weakened by certain mistakes and shortcomings in the process of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. There were basically four areas where major shortcomings can be seen in retrospect. These four areas were: (a) class character of the State under socialism, (b)

socialist democracy, (c) socialist economic construction, and (d) neglect of ideological consciousness. *It needs to be underlined that socialism was embarking on an uncharted path of human advance. There were no blueprints or specific formulae for socialist construction.*

Due to these shortcomings, a situation arose where counter revolutionary forces, both external and internal, acted in concert to dismantle socialism. These reverses to socialism, therefore, have occurred not because of any inadequacies in the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. On the contrary, they have occurred primarily due to departures from the scientific and revolutionary content of Marxism-Leninism; incorrect estimations of the relative strengths of world capitalism and socialism; a dogmatic and mechanical interpretation of the creative science of Marxism; and also due to major shortcomings during the course of socialist construction. Hence, these reverses do not constitute either a negation of working class ideology- that is Marxism-Leninism or of the socialist ideal.

The Soviet Union or East European Socialist countries – the products of the Great October Revolution do no longer exist. Despite this setback to socialism the abiding relevance of October Revolution remains and continue to guide us in the following aspects;

a) Going back to early twentieth century there was an understanding that in the countries coming late to capitalism, the newly emerging bourgeoisie was no longer capable of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution against feudalism. They confronted a new situation that it was afraid that any attack on feudal property could well rebound into an attack on the bourgeois property itself. Therefore they did make a compromise with old feudal order. The task of carrying forward the unfinished task of bourgeois democratic revolution that is freeing the peasants from the yoke of feudalism fell on the shoulders of proletariat, despite its relative small in size and belated appearance on the historical scene.

This necessitated a worker-peasant alliance under the leadership of the working class. As Lenin put it in his *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, “the proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy’s resistance by force and paralyse the bourgeoisie’s instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie’s resistance by force and paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.”

In this connection it is all the more relevant to recollect Prof Prabhat Patnaik’s words... “This concept of a proletariat-led worker-peasant alliance with changing class composition over time, carrying the democratic revolution to completion and moving beyond it to socialism, was not just a major step in understanding the conjuncture. It represented a fundamental advance within Marxist theory itself in several ways: first, it was a shift in the attitude towards the peasantry, an inclusion of it within the ranks of the revolutionary forces which the working class could lead”.

We must take note of the fact that the victory of any revolution in the relatively backward countries like India is conditioned by evolving and strengthening the worker-peasant alliance. Lenin clearly demonstrated these aspects in his revolutionary practices. Thus, the worker-peasant alliance, under the leadership of the working class, is not a mere slogan or empty rhetoric but a potent weapon in the hands of the present-day revolutionaries for social transformation.

b) Earlier there was a proposition that transition to socialism would take place only in the advanced capitalist countries. Lenin developed his theory on imperialism by analyzing the contemporary world material conditions prevailing then, on the

basis of laws governing development of capitalism. He noticed that laws of concentration and centralization of capital in the realms of finance and industry. This immanent tendency under capitalism had led the formation of monopoly in both sphere, eventually reaching the stage of imperialism. Lenin, through October Revolution, broke the weakest links in the imperialist chains- that was the Russia, a relatively backward economy then. Accordingly, Comrade Sitaram Yechury says that, Lenin advanced the theory of stages of revolution to prepare a backward economy in the transition towards socialism. The democratic stage of the revolution and its transition to the socialist stage that emerged from the October Revolution experience continues to remain relevant to us in the present context.

c) After the second world war- due to the peaceful development of global capitalism, the capital accumulation has reached to a new height. It was further augmented following the setback of socialism. These entire erstwhile east European socialist countries including Soviet Union fell onto the lap of capitalism. It paved the way for the emergence and consolidation of International Finance Capital to a new ever-seen height. Finance Capital, in this new situation, was keen to have an unrestricted freedom to move around the globe. It succeeded in its efforts and accordingly the regime of globalization came into being.

The contemporary phase of globalization is leading to the further capital accumulation to a higher level. Thus it led to the emergence of the hegemony of international finance capital. Such a reordering of world for profit maximization under the dictates of international finance capital defines the content neo-liberalism. It implies that the all nation-states are one way or other have to accede the demands of finance capital. They should follow the economic policies favoured by international finance capital. The world is now caught into the vortex of globalized finance. It

changed the character of nation-state also. It will not serve the interest of the people rather serves the profit maximization interest of finance capital. This predatory character of capitalism has sharply widened the economic inequalities by imposing greater miseries on the working people. This immanent tendency of capitalism has resulted in the recurring crisis of capitalism. Now triumphalism of capitalism has ended. Capitalism has entered into the stage of protracted systemic crisis. The rising discontent provided the fertile ground for emergences of fascistic political right across the globe. It is the political tool of capitalism to divert people's anger and discontent. All these trends gave us the both challenges and opportunities. It is well demonstrated that capitalism cannot give succor to the people. Socialism is the only alternative!

Lenin said, "We have made the start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown'.

With this understanding and the revolutionary visions and rich lessons from the Great October Revolution, CITU adopted its Constitutional aims and objects as".

"CITU believes that the exploitation of the working class can be ended only by socializing all means of production: distribution and exchange and establishing a Socialist State. Holding fast the ideal of socialism, the CITU stands for the complete emancipation of the society from all exploitation"

On this 106th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution, let us take pledge to march ahead to save humanity by transcending capitalism

Long live the Great October Revolution!

(Author is National Secretary of CITU)

'Did You Report People's Struggles?' Corporate-Communal Witch hunt on News Click

Large media corporations are the primary shapers of Indian public opinion, and through that, they are a major influence on government. Whether politicians are elected or reelected and whether their issues are publicized, depends on their treatment in the news. BY **ARKA RAJPANDIT**

The recent raids and witch hunt by Delhi police on 46 journalists of the news portal 'News Click' and arrests of its Editor-in-Chief Prabir Purakayastha and HR Head Amit Chakravorty are yet another organised attempts to stifle the voice of the free independent media who speaks

questioned and their electronic devices seized. News click's founder and Editor-in-chief Prabir Purkayastha and human resources head Amit Chakravarty have been arrested. In addition to that a team from the Central Bureau of Investigation's Economic Offences Wing went to the 'News Click' office and house of editor Prabir Purkayastha in Delhi on 11th October morning and conducted a search. The team of about eight was at his residence and questioning his partner, renowned author Githa Hariharan, the search at the office continued for longer.

Purkayastha is currently in judicial custody in an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act case filed by the Delhi Police, along with 'News Click' human resources head Amit Chakravorty.

The journalists were interrogated about the Delhi communal riots and the CAA agitation of 2019-20, the farmers protest of 2020-21, and whether they used encrypted phone messaging applications such as

Signal. The phones and laptops of all the employees, contributors and consultants of the news portal were also seized.

Delhi Police invoked provisions of the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and penal provisions relating to conspiracy and promoting enmity between different groups. Quite notably, it does not mention any overt act that may be described as unlawful activity or a terrorist act. There is a general description that foreign funds were infused illegally into India by forces inimical to the country with the objective of causing disaffection against the government, disrupting the sovereignty and territorial



**OF COURSE YOU WEREN'T SPREADING RUMOURS!
THE CHARGE IS THAT YOU WERE SPREADING FACTS!**

the truth. The 'News Click' raids and arrests are part of a growing authoritarian trend in India to harass and intimidate media by misuse of police and state agencies to suppress the critical journalism who asks questions to the power.

On 3rd October, 2023, a special cell of the Delhi police conducted raids on offices and residences of journalists, commentators and activists connected with the online news portal 'News click'. The raids were conducted in more than 30 locations in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad, where journalists and contributors were

integrity of India, and threatening its unity and security. The resort to UAPA is also a tactical aid to prolong the incarceration of dissenters and the disfavoured, and send out a chilling message to the wider media fraternity. There is also the likely electoral spin-off in its potential for the ruling BJP to milk the 'Chinese conspiracy' theory in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls.

In February 2021, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided several locations linked to News click on charges of money laundering. In June 2021, the Delhi High Court directed the ED to not take any coercive action against News click and Purkayastha until July 5 in the money laundering case. The latest round of investigations was triggered by a New York Times (NYT) piece, published on August 5 that alleged that News click received its funds from American National Neville Roy Singham, and "sprinkled its coverage with Chinese government talking points."

As per the News click, all bank statements, invoices, expenses incurred, sources of funds received by News click in the last several years have been scrutinized by different agencies of the government from time to time. News Click also said issuing a statement they do not cover the news at the behest of Chinese government or Neveli Roy Singham. Having found no discrepancies or irregularities the government at centre is only selling a 'conspiracy theory'! Worldwide Media Holdings (WMH), the US-based for-profit group whose investment in NewsClick is the basis of the Delhi police's terror case against the news portal, said in a statement that it "has never received any funding, nor taken direction from any foreign individual, organisation, political party, or government".

Press freedom in India has been under severe strain under the Narendra Modi regime with journalists being criminalised and surveilled, and news outlets being crushed into silence or being taken over by government friendly powerful business houses, besides the co-option of news outlets to turn them into vehicles of

government propaganda, fake news, disinformation, hate speech and vilification campaign of dissenters. This year, India slipped to the 161st rank among 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index. According to Free Speech Collective, 16 Indian journalists have been charged under UAPA, and seven are currently behind the bars. Reporters San Frontier, last year, declared India as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists.

Why news click or other independent media are being targeted by Modi Government? To find this critical question we have to first understand the role of monopoly capital in consent manufacturing and shrinkage of free press under neo-liberal regime. World wide it has become a general phenomenon for last couple decades the monopoly capital has been able to buy all the big media outlets in order to have their control in the editorial policy and nature of news coverage.

In a democracy, the answer to great power is accountability to the public. Accountability in business life in some cases requires government regulations to prevent monopoly or to make natural monopolies meet public service standards. But for most commerce, accountability is self-induced because there is enough diversity and competition so that consumers have real choices. In the media, "real choices" means a rich variety of political and social content in news, entertainment, and other public information, and enough competition in content and prices so that the average consumer has genuine alternatives. It means equitable distribution of economic power in the marketplace so that a few dominant leaders cannot prevent true competition or the reasonable entry of new enterprises. Today, the primary political advantage of concentrated media power is no longer to gain high political office for the media executive. The primary danger of excessive media power is not promoting candidacies of the anonymous men and women who run corporations, but of

promoting the politics and economics of the capital. The desire of most corporate leaders is not to become Prime Minister of the India, but to influence the Prime Minister of India!

Large media corporations are the primary shapers of Indian public opinion, and through that, they are a major influence on government. Whether politicians are elected or reelected and whether their issues are publicized, depends on their treatment in the news. Consequently, government leaders tend to be extraordinarily attentive to the corporate wishes of the media that is owned by globalised capital. Never in the annals of Indian media have so few profited, so much, from so many, while giving them so little. The total value of ALL the industries linked to media owners is impossible to calculate. But just the value of the Media & Entertainment (M&E) sector alone is staggering. An Ernst & Young-FICCI report out in March 2022, estimates that the M&E sector, even with all the setbacks of the pandemic, was expected to grow 17 per cent in 2022 and hit a total value of Rs. 1.89 trillion (\$25.2 billion). The E&Y-FICCI report further predicts that the sector will move at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 13 per cent to notch up a value of Rs. 2.32 trillion (\$30.2 billion) by 2024. This sector is just one, but critical, organ of the growing behemoth the political opposition will largely be up against in that election year.

Indian mainstream media owned by big capital always get favour from the government of the day, particularly in advertising, the primary revenue of the media houses. In this period, some of the most regressive labour legislation in the country's independent history were rammed through first as ordinances by state governments, then as 'Codes' by the Centre, then the centre enacted them as laws by suspending opposition MPs. Corporate media remained silent in these times rather they advocated at the behest of capital. The corporate media tried to demean historic farmers movement in

same way. In Indian corporate media, there is no labour correspondent or agricultural correspondent, Indian mainstream media do not cover 70 percent of the population! On the contrary the corporate ethic of profit at any cost is the parent of India's current paid news scandal. Paid news is not about Manufacturing Consent, it's about Manufacturing Content. Nor is it merely paid content – advertising too, is paid content. Paid news is much more.

The principle of profit-first, ensconced in that alliance of religious and market fundamentalists, is now a given. And there is not even a pretence of the media playing the role of a pillar of democracy. That has of course, all but killed critical coverage of our realities in most of the media. There are television channels that cheer lead Prime Minister Modi and his government in ways his party's own PR people would be too embarrassed to attempt.

News Click is swimming against the stream, so they are being attacked. The viciousness of the attack on News Click also stems from the fact that it is a news website with a left leaning and pro working class orientation. The News click extensively covered the farmers movement, they cover the strike actions, they cover the working class movements and peasants movements on regular basis. The attack on News click is not an isolated from a concerted ideological attack on left movement.

A corporate power whose strength grows in sync with India's consolidation as a Corporate-led state. Meanwhile the arbitrary raids on media and arrests of journalists, of dragging them into jail on charges of 'money-laundering' will only intensify. It is part of the growing authoritarian attacks on democracy and fundamental rights of the people. It must be resisted with all vigour and determination.

(Author is Working Committee Member of CITU)

Cry Freedom! Palestinians rise again

Israel's lethal plan to wipe out Gaza faces challenges beyond the resistance from Hamas. Ongoing clashes with Hezbollah at the Lebanese border warn that it may open a second front to aid the Palestinian resistance.

BY **SHASWATI MAZUMDAR**

What happens when a people are expelled from their homes, herded into ever shrinking ghettos, made into refugees in their own native land, denied basic necessities and imprisoned, bombed, murdered, humiliated on a daily basis? How long can a people endure such a “death by silence”?

Subjected to such a “death” for 75 years, the Palestinian people tried peaceful protests and armed resistance. Each time they faced the same escalating violence from Israel with the full backing of US imperialism and its allies. Israel arrogantly believed it could crush Palestinian resistance with its military might. This belief was strengthened after the fall of the Soviet Union and Israeli aggression expanded and accelerated beyond imagination. But the Palestinians have risen time and again to challenge this belief.

On 7 October 2023, Palestinian resistance fighters led by Hamas launched a spectacular offensive against Israel. Breaking out from Gaza, they penetrated deep into Israeli territory by land, sea, and air, humiliating the mighty Israeli military and stunning the world with their extremely well coordinated and organised operation. Using paragliders, motorbikes and simple means, they successfully entered Israeli territory for the first time, inflicting large-scale damage on Israeli military bases and settlements and capturing over a hundred Israelis, including senior military officers.

The fraudulent narrative of a war on terror

The extreme rightwing Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu responded as Israel has always done to Palestinian

resistance, whether peaceful or armed: with carpet bombing of Gaza, killing hundreds of civilians - men, women and children -, destroying schools and hospitals. It ordered a complete blockade: “No electricity, food, water or gas” and called Palestinians “human animals”, “savages”. In order to justify its murderous assault, it portrayed the Palestinian offensive as a terrorist attack by Hamas. This is the narrative espoused by US imperialism and tom-tommed by the servile mainstream media. The truth is that the offensive has the support of all Palestinian political parties and factions - religious, secular, nationalist, socialist-, who all published statements on the launch of the offensive, calling on Palestinians to intensify resistance.

Oppressors have always sought to justify their means by inverting the accounts of conflict with those they oppress, by portraying themselves as the victims. This, we may recall, was how British colonial rulers portrayed the 1857 Revolt in India. To deny the Revolt any legitimacy, the British called it a mutiny whose “perpetrators” had “massacred Europeans without regard to age or sex”. By focusing on the violence of the Revolt and describing it as a clash of “barbarism against civilisation”, they sought to obscure from view the immeasurable violence of colonial rule. This is exactly what the Netanyahu government and its big brother US imperialism are trying to do.

Gaza, the West Bank and the rise of Hamas

Gaza, the world’s largest open-air prison, is like a “huge concentration camp.” With one of the world’s highest population densities, it is home to over 2 million people with 75% of young people unemployed

.Though Israeli forces and settlers formally withdrew in 2005, Israel remains the occupying power. It has sealed off Gaza's land and sea borders and controls all movement of people and goods across these borders. Palestinians in the West Bank are physically separated from Gaza and confined to 165 ghettos, isolated from each other and shrinking as a result of the systematic encroachment by Israeli settlers, facilitated by the Netanyahu government. These ghettos have been compared to the bantustans for Blacks during Apartheid in South Africa .The West Bank is officially under the Palestinian Authority but in reality Israel controls all movements between the ghettos and between the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli permits are needed for nearly every aspect of Palestinian life including marriage. The UN designates both Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem as Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Among the political groups in Palestinian society, Hamas is the largest and most organised. It emerged as the dominant political force in Gaza after its victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative election. Its steadfast opposition to Israeli colonial rule and its militant resistance has won it popularity even in the West Bank. As a resident of Gaza puts it: "It is not the resistance that protects the people of Gaza, it is the people of Gaza that protect the resistance."A 2021 poll found a dramatic rise in the popularity of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. In 2018, a US-proposed resolution to label Hamas a terrorist organisation was voted down by the UN General Assembly.

The hypocrisy of US Imperialism

Just a week before the attack, US national security adviser Jake Sullivan had claimed with satisfaction:"The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades". The US was also hopeful of clinching a peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel. These hopes have been

dashed. The US and its allies rushed to declare support to Israel. As in the case of Ukraine, the US has promised billions in military aid to Israel. Like Ukraine, Israel cannot fight the Palestinians without US arms support. Moreover, even the most superficial comparison of the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Palestine conflicts have laid bare US hypocrisy and its misuse of the rhetoric of "democracy and human rights" to pursue naked self-interest.

Indeed, US influence has been on the decline, generally and particularly in the Arab world. Its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, its unilateral sanctions, its weaponising of the dollar, its wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria - bringing death, destruction and chaos to the region- and its unceasing support to Israel's dispossession and genocide of the Palestinian people have weakened its grip over the region.

Responses from Hezbollah, Iran, Arab states

Israel's lethal plan to wipe out Gaza faces challenges beyond the resistance from Hamas. Ongoing clashes with Hezbollah at the Lebanese border warn that it may open a second front to aid the Palestinian resistance. Formed in 1982whenIsraelinvaded Lebanon and backed by Iran, Hezbollah has become a powerful political and military force in Lebanon with the aim of fighting US and Israeli imperialism. Hezbollah has declared that they are 'fully prepared' to join the fight against Israel. Arab leaders in the region also cannot be indifferent to the massive popular support for the Palestinian resistance.

Several BRICS countries are calling for a just peace based on an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. In contrast, Modi's shameful declaration of support for Israel, apart from being a servile signal to US imperialism, will only make him irrelevant in the region.

(Author was former professor at the Department of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of Delhi)

National Convention of Handloom Workers

As part of its continuous efforts to strengthen and expand its grassroots and organisational activities across various segments of the working population, the CITU secretariat organised a national convention of handloom workers.

Representatives from handloom unions from all major handloom cloth producing states were invited to participate in the convention, to discuss their problems and plan for future course of actions among the handloom workers.

The national convention of handloom workers took place on September 22, 2023, at the Sundarayya Vignana Kendra in Hyderabad. The convention commenced with the hoisting of the red flag by CITU President K Hemalata, followed by revolutionary songs performed by Telangana troupe. The presidium, composed of R Singaravelu (Tamil Nadu), Arakkan Balan (Kerala), and Pillalamarri Balakrishna (Andhra Pradesh), leaders representing key handloom centres, presided over the convention.

The opening inaugural session witnessed a substantial turnout of handloom workers hailing from the prominent handloom centres throughout the state of Telangana. V Shanthy Kumar, president of the Telangana State Handloom Workers' Union, delivered the welcome address. The open session was addressed by K Hemalata, M Saibabu, CITU treasurer, Ch Seetharamulu, former MLC, and Paladugu Bhaskar, general secretary of CITU in Telangana.

The delegate session was attended by 178 representatives from six states: West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Telangana. Due to the repression by the ruling BJP against Left parties and trade union activists, the delegates from Tripura were unable to attend the convention. During this session, R Karumalaiyan, national secretary of CITU, presented a concise report on the handloom

sector in general, highlighting the challenging working conditions faced by handloom weavers. He also discussed the state of unionisation in this traditional industry known for its unique designs and textures that have been an integral part of the Indian subcontinent for centuries.

The handloom sector represents one of India's largest unorganised sector economic activities, playing an integral role in rural and semi-rural livelihoods, engaging over 35 lakh individuals. Notably, this sector employs more than 25 lakh female weavers and related workers, making it a significant driver of economic empowerment for women.

With approximately 23.77 lakh looms, the handloom industry plays a crucial role in India's economy, catering to both domestic and international markets. The handloom industry primarily exports a wide range of products including fabrics, bed linens, table linens, toilet and kitchen linens, towels, curtains, cushions and pads, tapestries, upholstery, carpets, and floor coverings, among others. The major countries importing handloom products from India include the USA, UK, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Australia, the Netherlands, and the UAE.

According to the 4th Handloom Census (2019-20), there are 28.2 lakh handlooms dispersed across various states in India. However, it is worth noting that this number may actually be higher as the census figures may not accurately capture the actual count of handloom weavers. While a significant portion of them is affiliated with cooperative societies, there are still a considerable number who do not have access to any benefits. The census report reveals a significant concentration of handlooms in Assam (47 per cent), followed by West Bengal (13 per cent), Tamil Nadu and Tripura (6 per cent each), and Andhra Pradesh (5 per cent), with the remaining states accounting for 15 per cent.

Reportage

Since 1985, and particularly following the liberalisation of the 1990s, the handloom sector has confronted several challenges. It has had to contend with competition from inexpensive imports and the replication of designs by power looms. Furthermore, government funding and policy support have significantly dwindled, and the cost of natural fiber yarn has risen substantially. In comparison to artificial fibers, natural fabric costs have surged, rendering them unaffordable for many weavers. Remarkably, the wages of handloom weavers have remained stagnant for the past decade or two. Consequently, numerous weavers have found it impossible to compete with cheaper, synthetic-mixed fabrics, forcing them to abandon weaving and seek unskilled labour jobs, which has plunged many into extreme poverty.

Most handloom weavers serve as both workers and owners of their handlooms, and they grapple with several primary challenges, including:

1. Access to affordable raw materials: The availability of raw materials such as yarn, dyes, cotton, silk, and jute is crucial, as their costs have been rising due to production and processing taking place in distant locations.
2. Lack of sectoral development investment: Insufficient investment in the handloom sector, coupled with the need for essential resources like land, water, and electricity for manufacturing, poses a hindrance to growth.
3. Enhancing export opportunities: Special measures are required for the import and export of handloom textiles. Handloom products need greater visibility and an expanded market network, both domestically and internationally.
4. Boosting rural employment: To protect rural jobs and address the sector's challenges effectively, there is a need to allocate a larger budget and implement new programmes aimed at its development.

5. Promoting sustainability: Encouraging the use of organic cotton and yarn, natural dyes, and advancing loom productivity through research and innovation are essential steps to enhance the value addition of handloom products.

6. Social welfare and minimum wages: Some groups of handloom weavers find themselves in vulnerable living conditions with no homes or assets. The government must address these issues and enforce the Minimum Wages Act to provide better living standards and job security to these weavers.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, handloom wage workers consistently grapple with issues such as low wages, absence of guaranteed social security, occupational health concerns, and the often cramped working conditions in their home-based setups.

During their discussions, the delegates highlighted and deliberated upon these issues and problems. The convention subsequently endorsed a comprehensive charter of demands encompassing these issues. It was decided to observe November 16, 2023, as "All India Handloom Workers Demands Day," following an extensive awareness campaign in all handloom centers throughout the country. A 27-member All India Coordination Committee of Handloom Workers' Unions was established, with E Muthukumar from Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, as the convenor.

Delivering the concluding address, CITU President K Hemalata exhorted the delegates to recognise close link between their problems and the policies of the government, particularly in the face of comprehensive attacks on petty production driven by the neoliberal trajectory. She emphasized the need to mobilise workers against anti-people politics and cautioned about the communal divisive strategies employed by the BJP and Sangh Parivar forces.

CWFI West Bengal Holds Second Women Construction Workers Convention

-SWATI SIL



The second West Bengal state convention of women construction workers was successfully held on 15th October, 2023 at Comrade Sujit Mukherjee and Comrade Shyama Prasad Roy Nagar and Comrade Anju Das Chatterjee Manch, Berhampore, Murshidabad in West Bengal with a heightened resolve to organize women construction workers with vigor and determination and scale up the struggles engaging more women construction workers to achieve their basic demands. The Convention started with flag hoisting. Md. Nizamuddin, President, CITU Murshidabad district committee, hoisted the Red flag amidst thunderous slogans; delegates and guests paid floral tributes to the martyr's column.

Inaugurating the convention, CITU Murshidabad district general secretary Jyotirup Banerjee said, the convention is being held at very critical juncture when both the governments at centre and the state are unleashing unbridled assault on working class in general and women workers in particular. All the heard own rights of the workers are being snatched away for the sake of corporate profits.

BOCW Act and construction workers welfare board is a product of persistent struggles of CWFI. He highlighted how under this Modi led BJP regime, registered workers are being deprived of getting stipulated social security benefits, and how therefore it is the class duty of the members and activists of the CWFI to link up the issues with policies of ruling class and expose the politics behind the policies. He said, women construction workers are the more vulnerable sections of the working class, they have to bear the brunt of this policy attacks.

Criticizing the anti workers role of TMC government, he said on policy matters there is no difference between BJP government at centre and TMC government at state, TMC government is siphoning off the crores of money from construction workers welfare board, women construction workers of Bengal are being deprived from stipulated benefits. Emphasizing on importance of organizing women workers in the movement, he said it is duty of entire working class movement; it is duty of CWFI and CITU leadership to raise the class consciousness of women workers to strengthen the organisation.

The convention was presided over by a presidium comprising Sarswati Das, Jaba Mandi, Swati das and Asmina Khatun.

Swati das, state committee member of CWFI, moved the condolence resolution. Sonali Das Sharma, Convener of the women sub-committee, placed the report for discussion. The convention report highlighted the dwindling participation of women in labour force. For the age group 15 years and above, in the year 2020-21, LFPR for men was 77.2 per cent while for females it was 32.8 per cent. This shows how difficult it is even today for women to participate in the labour market and only roughly one-third of the total women in the working age group participate in the labour market. In regard to employment, that is proportion of people being employed or the worker population ratio (WPR) for different age segments, the gender gap continues to be significant. The report highlighted the gender gap in wage. Women construction workers have to face severe forms of attack from patriarchy driven ruling classes. Sexual harassment in the workplaces are getting increased, they are being deprived from basic facilities in the worksites, even the employers or contractors are not willing provide separate toilets for the women workers. The report self critically assessed there is a persistent weakness in organizing women workers. There are also shortcomings on the part of concerned working women representatives in the concerned CWFI committees. Many do not take the necessary initiative and assert their roles and responsibilities in the concerned CWFI committees in keeping the working women sub- committees collectively active and functional.

A total of 15 women workers and organizers deliberated upon the report. Women workers shared their experiences at the worksites; many workers expressed their concerned regarding growing trend of domestic violence at home, as well as sexual harassment at the worksites.

Addressing the convention, CWFI National Vice-President and West Bengal State President Debanjan Chakraborty said, despite of exercising serious efforts, we have not been able to organize the women construction workers into organisational fold, compared to the numbers of workers involved in the construction industry, our membership among women workers is very tiny. Construction has traditionally been a male-dominated industry, but an army of invisible women remain the backbone of the workforce. Most women laborers are illiterate and married off at a young age, often joining their husbands in cities where they are recruited by contractors. They work as concrete mixers, diggers, stone breakers and brick haulers, but are never considered skilled enough to work as masons or carpenters. Yet even at those lower levels, women are paid less than their male counterparts. Highlighting the Kozhikode document of CITU, he stressed upon the importance of organizing women workers and elevating them in the leadership role. He called upon the all the leadership at various level of the committees to undertake serious efforts to overcome this long haul.

CWFI West Bengal State general Secretary Pranab Mazumder and veteran CITU leader Tushar Dey also addressed the convention. The convention unanimously passed six resolutions: On price rise, against sexual harassment at worksites, defeating communal divisive forces, defending democratic rights in West Bengal, legal assistance to the women workers. Chinmoy Bhattacharya, convener of the credential committee placed the credential report. 72 women participated from in the convention from 14 states, out of that 54 were workers. The convention unanimously adopted a 12 point charter of demands and decided to have a statewide extensive and intensive campaign on the basis of this charter of demands. The convention vowed to intensify the struggles of women construction workers in achieving their basic rights.

WFTU Affiliated Six Indian Trade Union Confederations Held Protest Demonstration in Solidarity with Palestinian People

The World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU) affiliated six central trade union confederations of India- AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, TUCC and UTUC jointly held protest demonstration at Jantar-Mantar, heart of the national capital in Delhi on 14th October, condemning the most barbaric inhuman occupation of Israel state and extending unwavering solidarity with people of Palestine in general and people of Gaza in particular. Hundreds of trade union activists assembled at Jantar-Mantar and demanded immediate cessation of the ongoing conflict.

WFTU affiliated six Indian trade union confederations condemned the decade's long occupation of Israel and its systemic crimes committed against the people of Palestine with the support of imperialist powers- USA-EU-NATO and their allies. The leadership asserted that endless occupation and umpteen attempts of annihilating the Palestinian people from Gaza, West Bank and other Palestinian territories are the root causes of present day escalation. Gaza is under complete siege with no fuel, no food, no water, and no medicine. At these difficult times, the entire world is witnessing the nude hypocrisy of Israel and West.

The speakers said that, no one really cared while Gaza's Palestinians were subjected to a blockade imposed by Israel that denied them the essentials of life. No one really cared when it emerged that Gaza's Palestinians had been put on a "starvation diet" by Israel - only limited food was allowed in, calculated to keep the population barely fed. No one really cared when Israeli snipers targeted nurses, youngsters and people in wheelchairs who came out to protest against their imprisonment by Israel. The leadership

empathically condemned the hypocrisy of Imperialist west.

WFTU affiliated Indian trade union federations also denounced the hypocrisy of Modi government over the present conflict. They said the Indian Government's position on this present conflict stems from



the 'strategic partnership'; at the heart of the strategic alliance is a military and security collaboration with Israel which reinforces the colonial occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people. The speakers said in the demonstration that, the Hindutva outlook of the BJP has close affinity with the ethno-nationalist stream of Zionism. The rightwing ruling Likud party and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are ideological soul-mates of the BJP and Narendra Modi.

WFTU affiliated Indian trade union federations reiterated their demands to end brutal Zionist Israeli occupation and free Palestine. The extended their international working classes solidarity with Palestinian workers and its people and their right to defend. WFTU affiliated Indian trade union confederations demand that United Nation must ensure immediate cessation of the conflict and must implement UNSC resolution for a two nation solution.

India Ranks in 111 in Global Hunger Index 2023

Global Hunger Index 2023
India slips Four places
Ranked 111
out of 125 countries



India has been ranked 111 among 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index report released by two European agencies on October 12, 2023. India slipped four positions as compared to last year. The only countries ranking lower than India are Timor-Leste, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Haiti, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Niger, Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Madagascar, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Burundi and Somalia.

All these countries, which India has barely fared better than, are very small economies as compared to India. India is among one of the fastest growing ones. Every other assessed country, besides these nations, had better outcomes than India.

India stands in a group of 40 countries where the scale of global hunger has been termed as 'serious'. The overall GHI score of India, according to the current report

is, 28.7. The calculation of this score is done on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the worse the performance of the country. According to the report, India has the highest child 'wasting' (low weight for height) rate across the world, at 18.7%, reflecting acute undernutrition. In fact, 'wasting' is considered to be the worst form and indicator of all forms of child undernutrition.

If a country has more than 15% of the children 'wasted', it has been marked as 'very high' level of concern in the report. India is the only country, thus, where the wasting has been put in the category of 'very high'. The Indian government has rejected this report this year too, like it has done on previous occasions. Issuing a statement on October 12, the government has termed the methodology of the report preparation faulty, and has raised concerns about the selection of the four parameters used.

US Economist Claudia Goldin Won Nobel Prize in Economics

The Nobel Prize in Economics for 2023 was awarded Monday (October 9) to Claudia Goldin, a Harvard University professor, for

"having advanced our understanding of women's labour market outcomes". Goldin's pathbreaking work has shed light on the

participation of women in the labour market over the past 200 years, and why the pay gap between men and women refuses to close even as many women are likely to be better educated than men in high-income countries. Over more than three decades of exploration with mainly US data, Goldin has focused on the big picture questions of how women's labour force participation (LFP) and gender wage gaps have evolved historically. She is well-known for suggesting the U-shaped relationship between economic development and women's LFP based on cross-sectional data from over 100 countries. Countries at low levels of economic development have relatively higher levels of female LFP as women are engaged in agriculture, often as unpaid workers on family farms. As incomes rise, due to industrialisation and introduction of new technologies, women withdraw from paid work and retreat into the home. Their hours of work do not change but their



“I have always wanted to be a detective and have finally succeeded.”

CLAUDIA GOLDIN
Prize in economic sciences 2023

labour force participation does. In her 2021 book, *Career and Family: Women's Century Long Journey towards Equity*, Goldin examines the gender wage gap among college-educated US women over a century. She shows that since the 2000s, especially, the wage gap between college-educated men and women has stagnated. While in earlier decades, men earned more because they were better educated, that is no longer the case. Women today are more likely to have a college degree than men.

New Investment Dropped Again in Q2 of FY24, Drops by 13%

Fresh investment announcements in the July-to-September quarter, the second quarter of 2023-24, have dropped to Rs.6.9 lakh crore, 13% lower than the first quarter, and 21.5% down from a year ago, driven by a sharp dip in proposed outlays by the Union government and foreign investors, and a broad-based contraction across the manufacturing, mining, infrastructure, and electricity sectors. The decline in investment commitments during Q2 comes on the back of a 45.8% sequential decline recorded in the first quarter, as per Projects Today's latest investment survey. A total of 2,238 new projects with an aggregate investment intention of Rs.6.88 lakh crore were announced in Q2, as against 2,745 new projects worth Rs.7.91 lakh crore in Q1, with the projects' tally contracting 18.5%. Private investment

plans shrank for the second quarter in a row, albeit at a slower pace of 0.24% compared to the 62.5% contraction in Q1. Within the Rs.3.93 lakh crore of private investment projects in Q2, announcements from foreign investors shrank 66.5% from Q1 levels to around Rs.28,000 crore. Though domestic private players announced 17.8% larger outlays in Q2, the number of new projects fell to 844 from 1,180 in Q1. While public capital expenditure has been driving the investment cycle in recent times, government investments also seem to have lost steam in the first two quarters of this year. Fresh investment intentions sequentially declined 25.6% in Q2 to about Rs. 2.96 lakh crore from Rs. 3.97 lakh crore in Q1, which marked a 3.2% fall from the previous quarter.

Five Day Strike of the Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBC) of Delhi Ends in Victory: A Big Milestone in the Struggle for Regularization

The successful five day strike of the 3500-odd Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBCs) of Delhi between 31.07.2023 to 04.08.2023 has ramifications for the struggles for regularization and against the policies of contractualization in government departments not only in Delhi, but across the country. Strike led by Anti-Malaria Karmachari Ekta Union (affiliated to CITU) was successful in galvanizing vast sections of non-unionized workers as well with observance being as high as 95% across the five days.

After the five day strike the MCD Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti was forced to agree that the corporation will itself take necessary steps to create permanent posts for DBC and this put an end to the dilly dallying between the corporation and the Delhi Government. The administration also agreed to give 10 lakh compensation for the workers who die while on service and clear all applications for jobs on compassionate grounds.

3500 DBC workers of the now unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) have been discharging the crucial duty of control of deadly diseases such as Dengue and Chikungunya in the national capital for the last 28 years. However, over the years the

job requirements of these workers expanded enormously to include not only the control of life-threatening diseases; but also House Tax and Toll Tax collection, various tasks related to the Building Department, Swachh Sarvekshan Abhiyan and DDA to name a few.

In spite of the perennial and hugely diversified nature of work DBC workers continue to be treated as daily wagers and are paid notified minimum wages for the semi-skilled category. Numerous workers who have retired or died in the last 28 years haven't been paid any gratuity or compensation by the Municipal Corporation. Even the basic rights of Bonus, PF and ESI were won solely through the struggle of workers in 2016.

After another phase of struggle last year, the authorities of South Delhi Municipal Corporation were forced to issue a written order on 09.03.2022 through which all DBC employees were given the post of MTS (PH) on contract basis.

The present phase of strike in the form of indefinite strike since 31.07.2023 was necessitated primarily by the non-implementation of the order of 09.03.2022.

Palledars of Gandhi Nagar Garment Market and Naya Bazar Win Wage Hike Through Strike Action

Palledars (head loaders) under the leadership of Delhi Transport Karmachari Lal Jhanda Union went into direct strike action in Gandhi Nagar area on 13.09.2023 (with concentration of garment units) and Naya Bazaar area on 28.09.2023 (mainly with concentration of grain dealers). This was preceded by intensive campaign and group meetings among the workers.

Strike action had to be undertaken when the demand notices to various transport owners remained unaddressed.

Transport owners of Gandhi Nagar area had to agree to have weighing machines (until now items weighing much more than 100 Kgs were paid rates for 100 Kg only) and also increase the rates per item for delivery by Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- per 100 Kg. Similarly transport owners of Naya Bazar area had to agree to increase the rates per 100 Kg by Rs. 1/- to Rs. 2/-.

Other notable advances

- Street Vendors near Nizamuddin Dargah secure their livelihood

through consistent movemental, agitational and legal struggles under the leadership of the Delhi Pradesh Rehti, Patri, Khomcha Hawkers Union over the last 3 years. This has also created possibilities for expansion among other unorganized sector workers of Nizamuddin-Bhagal region.

- Employees' Union of Mani Tau Pvt. Ltd. (a multinational modern technology industry in Greater Noida) forced the management to agree for regularization of 17 contractual workers of the industry. This becomes even more important in the

backdrop of the attack on the union last year (as a ploy to break the unity of permanent and contractual workers) and the subsequent successful counter offensive by the union.

Similarly, 7 contractual employees workers of another MNC industry Vibracoustic have been regularized due to continuous struggles by the union.

- Airport Employees Union ensured that 27 contractual employees of Oberoi Flight Kitchen were regularized.

National Coordination Committee of NHPC employees Union Placed a 9 Point Charter of Demands in the Bipartite Meeting

A national level bipartite meeting of NHPC held on 10th October, 2023. All recognized trade unions of NHPC met with Director Personnel, NHPC, in that meeting leadership of National Coordination committee of NHPC employees union (CITU) placed a 12 point charter of demands. Prior to this bipartite meeting, chairman and MD of NHPC had also conducted such introductory meeting with all trade unions, in which CITU affiliated NHPC employees union raised most important demands of NHPC regular and contract workers, but still some important issues pertaining to the contract workers and regular employees are still pending and resentment among the workers are brewing. NHPC employees union reiterated their 9point charter of demands by writing

a letter to the Director personnel, NHPC. National coordination committee of NHPC employees union demanded management should immediate drop illegal, unconstitutional provision from the form-H that pose a hindrance to the right to strike. The workers working in the underground power houses should be given underground wage that is 20% of the minimum wage, the bonus should be given to the contract workers at 20% instead of 8.33% because NHPC being profitable, contract workers are the main workforce. The medical facilities to the parents of REHS schemes should be brought as per employees instead of general ward. The leadership demanded the NHPC management to immediately adhere to the basic demands.

Steel Workers Protest Against Victimization

Steel Workers federation of India under the banner of CITU has been spearheading movements in all steel plants demanding bonus and implementation of other long pending demands. In Durgapur steep plant, all trade unions operating in DSP are unitedly leading the movement. To suppress the TU rights and workers right to protest, DSP management resorted to

vindictive measures. The DSP management is trying to suppress the all in united struggle of the steel workers at Durgapur steel plant by imposing vindictive suspension order on Simanta Mukherjee of HSEU , CITU and Sukanta Rakshit of HMS union. The CITU unions of all other steel plants have immediately responded through protest letters to management



against such vindictive suspension and onslaught on the constitutional and democratic rights of the workers. On 16th October, steel workers in all the steel plants and workers of mines, held

solidarity actions with the workers of Durgapur steel plant workers. By extending solidarity, the workers demanded immediate withdrawal of suspension on victimized leadership.

Punjab: Transport Strike

The transport contractual workers working in Punjab Roadways/Punbus and Pepsu Road Transport Corp. Numbering more than 6 thousand went on lightening strike on 20th September for implementation of some already agreed demand and for acceptance of vacating of victimizations. 92 % strike was reported.

arranged with the Chief Minister and the designated group of ministers formed for this purpose. The meeting took place on 4th October. The notification where handed over to the union leader after prolonged meeting. In this notification the annual increment of 5% is implemented w.e.from 1st September 2023.

The workers who were on long routes in other adjoining state and some regular employees who are at the verge of retirement. All threats given by administration and political heads became futile. Ultimately at 2 p.m the Transport Minister arranged a meeting with the sole union namely Punjab Roadways /Punbus/ P.R.T.C.contract workers Union(CITU) . In the meeting he agreed to accept the major but immediate demand and requested to withdrawal the strike. When he signed a press note in this respect than the strike was postponed till the next call or the notification by the state gov't.in this respect. Ultimately the next meeting was

2ndly, all 500 workers discharged from duty due to alleged deficiency in their documents were taken on duty with immediate effect and 3rdly All 157 workers suspended on minor/filthy charges were also taken back on duty with continuity in service.

The amount of increment is already added with the disbursed salary for September month paid on 10th October. This whole development enhanced the prestige of the CITU led union. In this strike, govt public sector transport in the state CITU has become a major force. The negotiation is going on for the remaining demand.

AIKS Demands Roll Back of Tariff Reductions on US Agri Products

The Narendra Modi led union government and the US government decided at a joint meeting in June to resolve the pending trade disputes between the two countries at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Among the multiple disputes, the last to be clinched was regarding the import restriction on poultry products such as frozen duck and turkey from the US because of concerns regarding Avian Flu, filed by India in 2012. In the name of dispute resolution, the Indian government has surrendered interests of Indian farmers. It has provided tariff reductions on some US products, which includes chickpeas, lentils, almonds, walnuts, apples among others. This was announced in a congratulatory note by the office of the US trade representatives, which said, "These tariff cuts will expand economic opportunities for US agricultural producers in a critical market and help bring more US products to customers in India." The United States and European Union is known to have used the dispute resolution mechanism of the WTO to raise cases against developing countries in order to garner compromises to its advantage.

Further, in an effort to salvage the Indian government's position following strong protests, the ministry of commerce issued a press brief noting that "Most Favoured Nation duty of 50 per cent and 100 per cent continues to be applicable on US apples and walnuts as only additional 20 per cent duty is removed". The note claims that removal of the additional 'retaliatory tariff' on US apples, nuts and lentils would not hamper the Indian producers. However, this comes as false assurance and this closed door 'dispute resolution' bulldozes the livelihoods of hundreds of Indian farmers. Previously in 2020, India had agreed to open up its poultry and dairy markets to seal the Indo-US Free Trade Agreement.

These reductions in tariffs indicate a kow-towing of the Indian government to the wishes of the United States at the cost of Indian farmers, whose prospects of a remunerative income will be further compromised as a result of inflow and dumping of cheaper agricultural products from the US.

At earlier times, India along with other developing countries have raised questions regarding the lopsided WTO's agreement on agriculture and the most favoured nation (MFN) clause, which are biased in favour of developed countries, who provide huge levels of subsidies to its farmers while targeting the subsidies and price support such as MSP provided to poorer and marginal producers of the developing countries. The further reduction of tariffs based on the distorting MFN clause, besides the challenges of production and infrastructure tightens the noose for the Indian apple growers, spread across the mountainous states.

India has seen a deficit in production of masur and other pulses for some time. Reduction in tariffs for American lentils adds to the disincentives for Indian small and marginal producers to grow pulses which anyways suffer from low market prices due to lack of procurement by the government.

The All India Kisan Sabha demands immediate roll back of the tariff reductions provided to various US origin agricultural commodities, including poultry, apples, nuts and lentils. It also demands that the Indian government should not enter free trade agreements in agriculture which has been detrimental for the Indian farmers. AIKS reiterates a long standing demand to bring agriculture out of the WTO's agreement on agriculture.

First National Power Sector Women Convention Vowed to Take on Contemporary Challenges

DEEPA K RAJAN



The first national convention of Power Sector Working Women organised by the Electricity Employees Federation of India was conducted on 2023 October 14th in Chennai, Tamil Nadu pledged to intensify struggles against privatization in the name of power reforms enaging more women workers in the movement.

The Convention was hosted by COTEE Tamil Nadu in the Madras Kerala Samajam Hall and it was attended by 110 women delegates including 5 women Working Committee members of EEFI. Representation from 7 states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Pondicherry and Haryana – and 10 unions participated in the convention.

Since the formation of EEFI in 1984, it took almost 40 years to form our Womens' workers Sub Committee. The 9th Conference held in Chandigarh on 2022 October 13-15 took this historical decision and in our 2nd Working Committee Meeting held in Amravati, Maharashtra, a Sub Committee was formed with Deepa K. Rajan as convenor and comrades Bela Patra, Vijayalekshmi, Baishakhi Kundu and Salath as members along with the President and General Secretary as ex-officio members of the committee.

The first historical convention began with flag hoisting by the senior most delegate comrade Bela Patra and after paying tributes to the martyr's column, delegates and guests paid floral tributes. The Condolence resolution was moved by Jasmine Banu and welcome address was given by EEFI Secretary Vijayalekshmi.

The Presidium of the convention was comprised of one representative from each participating state. The Convention was inaugurated by the Senior leader and Working President of EEFI and also the National Secretary of CITU, Swadesh Dev Roye in the presence of EEFI President Elamaram Kareem M. P., AICCWW Convenor Com. A. R. Sindhu, EEFI General Secretary P. N. Chowdhury and other leaders of EEFI. Inaugurating the convention Dev Roye quoted B T Ranadive and E. Balanandan, the founder leaders of CITU and EEFI and emphasised on the role of women in trade union movement. He said, how BJP led ruling government is trying hard to convert our nation into Hindu Rashtra by advocating Manuvaad.

The convention report was placed by the Convenor Deepa K. Rajan. The report dealt with a comprehensive global, national context of working class scenario as well

as industry and present challenges. The detailed status of working women as per World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, Labour Market and Working Conditions of women were also highlighted in the report. The available data of working women in power sector was also presented. The work report of existing women sub committees in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal were also included in the report. 15 delegates deliberated upon the report, they shared their field experiences.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women Convenor A. R. Sindhu gave the Key Note address. She elaborated on the unpaid and under paid work of women in India, work place discrimination, violence against women and the working class responses on these issues. The EEFI President Elamaram Kareem greeted the convention and explained the political situation in India and he stressed on the importance of defeating BJP from centre. The General Secretary of EEFI P. N. Chowdhury also greeted the first Working Women Convention of EEFI. Tamil Nadu AICCWW Convenor. Dhanalakshmi conveyed greetings. Malathy Chittibabu Vice President CITU, Sudip Dutta, EEFI Secretary, Com. M. G. Sureshkumar, EEFI Secretary were also present.

The convention unanimously 4 resolutions: on Solidarity to Palestine people in the face off inhuman attacks by Israel, Withdrawal of Electricity Amendment Bill and Smart Metering on TOTEX model and on faster implementation of 33% Women's Reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies. The Credential Report was presented by credential committee convenor Baishakhi Kundu.

The Convenor replied to the discussions after summing up the observations and suggestions raised, and adopted the Plan of Action to be implemented. The convention decided that, All unions under EEFI should form the working women sub committee where it is not formed. The elected convenor of sub committee shall be co-opted as the Office Bearer of the union. An all India Action Day will be observed after 3 months demanding important issues like maternity benefits, creches for children, toilet facilities etc., for all power sector women especially the contractual workers. A meeting of the newly formed committee will be convened after 2 months. A new sub committee with 15 women members was formed in the convention. EEFI Working Committee member M. Salath presented the vote of thanks and the Convention was concluded.

(Author is National Secretary of CITU)

AIITEU organised ' Pravda Cup'

In lieu of the State's multiple anti-people stances, Bhagat Singh Brigade and Kanailal Brigade under All India IT and ITES Employee's Union, jointly hosted a football tournament, namely "Pravda Cup", at Kalitala Ground, Konnagar, Hooghly, West Bengal on 1st of October, 2023. The intent of the tournament was to bring the unorganized working class together to showcase their solidarity with the people's fight against anti people policies like the new National education policy, National monetization pipeline. It also aimed to promote voices like - right to disconnect from extensive and exhaustive work hours and to promote social and religious harmony with respect to the present unrest that is being witnessed by the citizens of India in Manipur. "The Chief guests of this tournament - democratic movement leader Debabrata Ghosh, Hooghly CITU General Secretary Tirthankar Roy, AIITEU General Secretary Sauvik Bhattacharya, AIITEU State President Surajit Dasgupta and AIITEU State Secretary Cheenangshuk Das were present at this event. Six teams, namely - Prajasakthi, Loklaher, Marxist, People's Democracy and Ganasakti (All names of democratic voices across India taking a stance against the anti people laws) participated in this tournament. Team Marxist emerged as the winner of the tournament against the runner's up of the tournament - Team Ganasakti in the final.

Homage to Comrade Anathalavattom Anandan

Centre of Indian Trade Unions(CITU) pays respectful homage to veteran trade union leader, All India Vice President and Kerala State President of CITU, Comrade Anathalavattom Anandan who passed away today (5 October 2023) at Thiruvananthapuram. He was under treatment for cancer. He was 86 years old.

Comrade Anandan was born on 22 April 1937 in Anathalavattom in Thiruvananthapuram district. Anandan started his political activities during his school days itself. He worked as a coir worker and organized the coir workers. In 1958, he has organised a mighty struggle of coir workers demanding an increase in wages. He led the famous Coir Strike in 1975. He took the lead in forming cooperatives of coir workers as well. He served as the General Secretary and President of the Coir Workers' Centre, Kerala since 1973. He was also the general secretary of Travancore Coir Thozhilali Union from 1970 to 1995.

He had organised many sections of the most downtrodden sections of the working class in Kerala. An uncompromising leader to the cause of the working class, he led many unions of various sections, ranging from the traditional sectors, unorganized sector as well as the most modern organized sector. He led unions of Press Workers, Sawmill Workers, private transport workers, toddy tappers, Serified Employees, SIDCO Employees and so on. He served as the president of Kerala State Road Transport Employees Association (KSRTEA), Kerala Financial Corporation Officers' Association, Kerala State Co-operative Bank Employees Federation, Khadi Board Employees Association, and Travancore Titanium Officers' Association.



Comrade Anandan was actively involved in CITU since its inception and had attended all the All India Conferences of CITU from the foundation conference and he was elected as the President of the CITU Kerala State unit in 2013. He has also been a member of the All India Working Committee of CITU since 1979 and was elected as an All India Office Bearer in 2013 and continued in the position till date.

Comrade Anandan was a member of state secretariat of CPI(M).

He lived a very simple life and was a popular leader of the people. He served as the President of Chirayinkeezhu Grama Panchayath from 1979 to 1984, and was then elected to the Kerala Legislative Assembly three times from Attingal Constituency in 1987, 1996 and in 2006. He

always raised issues of the working people in the Assembly. He was the Chief whip of the Government from 2006 to 2011 in the Left Democratic Front ministry.

Anandan served as the director of the Kerala State Coir Marketing Federation (Coirfed) from 1979 to 2001, and was the Chairman of Coirfed in 1989. He has also served as the Chairman of Foam Mattings India Ltd and Vice Chairman of National Coir Research & Management Institute (NCRMI). He is married to Laila and has two children.

At this political juncture, losing a comrade like him who was uncompromisingly dedicated to the class struggle and the working class ideology is a great loss to the working people of Kerala, CITU and the working class movement in particular. CITU dips its red flag in salute to the memory of the departed leader and conveys our heartfelt condolences to his family and the comrades.

REPUBLIC OF HUNGER

**INDIA RANKED 111TH OUT OF 125 COUNTRIES
IN THE GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX-2023!**

'By the relief office I seen my people
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?'



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GAZA UNDER SIEGE



"And the storm comes a-rumblin' in and I cannot lay me down
The drums are drummin' again and I cannot stand the sound
But I believe there'll come a day when the lion and the lamb
Will lie down in peace together in Jerusalem."

~ Joan Baez