

# EMPLOYEES' FORUM

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06

**Carry Forward the Worker-Peasant Alliance in Action**  
Tapan Sen

10

**Working Class on Struggle Path across the World**  
Dr. K. Hemalata

16

**Strengthen struggles for workers emancipation and the abolition of the capitalist exploitation**  
George Mavrikose

19

**Emergency 2.0**  
Jayati Ghosh



21

**Say No to Simultaneous Elections; Strengthen Democratic Polity**  
Dr. A. Suhruthkumar

24

**Employees March to Vidhan Sabha, Haryana**  
Sabitha Malik

26

**State Level Womens Convention West Bengal**  
Sutapa Hazra

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## FUEL PRICE HIKE - A CRUEL BLOW

Our country is witnessing an unprecedented hike in the prices of petroleum products. The NDA Government, like the erstwhile Congress led UPA Government, is responsible for the inflationary crisis. The market driven neo liberalist policies that are mounting unbearable economic burdens on the vast mass of the Indian people is the root cause of the huge price rise.

Modi Government totally failed in controlling the price of Petrol and Diesel which are resulting in escalation of prices of essential commodities. The worst victims of these anti people policies are the toiling masses, both urban and rural.

India has one of the most iniquitous tax structures for petroleum products. Nearly half of the price of Petrol per litre is the tax component. When the international oil price fell in sharply in 2014, the BJP government began to increase the excise duty of Petrol and Diesel. Between Nov. 2014 and Jan. 2018, excise duty was increased nine times. Thus the benefit of the steep fall in international oil price was not passed on to the people. Though in the budget of 2018, excise duty was cut by Rs Two per litre, and additional excise duty of Rs Six per litre was abolished, in its place a road Cess of Rs Eight per litre was imposed, nullifying the reduction. If the government had rolled back the successive hikes in excise duties, this burden could have been alleviated. But the Modi government has refused to do so citing specious reasons such as maintaining fiscal stability. Having reduced tax rates for the corporates and the rich, the only way it can maintain revenues is by taxing the poor.

The astronomical rise in the price of Petrol and Diesel would have a back-breaking impact on the ordinary people and also have a cascading effect on the essential commodities. The whole sale price index of July 2018 was 5.09 percent above that of the same month last year. This is set to rise further. The increased cost of transportation will add to the cost of goods. The uncontrolled, rising price of Petroleum products is having a crippling effect on the livelihood of crores of Indians. The farmers, already passing under mounting agrarian distress, see their production costs further escalated. This price rise has a cascading all-round inflationary impact. This is contributing to a further economic slowdown, reducing existing employment and any other new opportunities. The unprecedented fall in the value of Indian Rupee also reflects the deep economic crisis created by the Modi Government.

Ever since Petrol and Diesel prices were deregulated, the consumers have been fleeced, while the oil companies have raked big profits. The recent depreciation of the Rupee vis-a-vis the Dollar has added more fuel to fire.

The NDA Government has failed to deliver on the promises made to the country. The Rupee has never been weaker in 70 years of independence. The

fuel prices are skyrocketing in the country, even as the Union government is silent. Rising prices of Petrol and Diesel every day have burnt a hole in the pockets of consumers. It is a big burden on the common people and they are scrambling and cutting household expenses to adjust with the impact brought on by rising fuel prices.

The entire people in the nation are deeply concerned over the spiralling price of Petrol and Diesel and the prices of essential commodities in the country and the utter failure of the Central Government to provide any relief to the common people.

The people are not going to easily forgive the NDA government for burdening them with rising prices when already they are suffering from the effects of the agrarian crisis, eroding incomes and unemployment. The massive participation of workers, peasants and agricultural workers in the 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, in the national capital is an expression of the anger of the toiling people against the anti worker and anti people policies of the NDA government. Through relentless struggles the working class of India will defeat the neo liberal policies and defeat this anti people government. □



## Carry Forward the Worker-Peasant Alliance in Action

**Tapan Sen**

**T**he historic and massive ‘Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally’ before parliament on September 5, 2018, led by the CITU, AIKS and AIAWU was preceded by a series of countrywide campaigns, mobilisations and agitations. Now the struggle against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of the government at the centre has entered a new phase with altogether a new dimension. The enthusiastic response the call has received right from the preparatory phase itself to the massive participation of workers, peasants and agricultural workers in the September 5 rally from every part of the country, extreme south to north, east and west, is itself an indication

of the warm welcome accorded by the people to this new feature – organised resistance by the working class along with its main class ally, the agricultural workers and peasants against the neoliberal order.

This is for the first time in the history of the country’s democratic movement that such joint worker peasant actions could be organised at district and even lower levels in several states, culminating in the massive national rally. Post independent India has now witnessed, perhaps, the historically mandated initiative of building joint class resistance by the workers, agricultural workers and peasants, who are the real creators of national wealth, the principal





contributors to the national exchequer both directly and indirectly, besides keeping the wheel of the national economy moving. If they stop working concertedly, everything will collapse –and that speaks about their central role in keeping the country moving. The assertion of the class alliance of the workers and peasants will help the entire toiling class realise and discover their inbuilt potential and strength to fight the crisis-ridden system of exploitation for complete transcendence of the system itself in favour of the toiling class.

This new dimension of workers-peasant alliance has to be strengthened and carried forward with a continuity – that is the direction given to all of us by such huge spontaneous response to the massive rally of the toiling people of the country at the national capital.

Efforts to build joint campaigns and agitations have been going on for the last several years. CITU has taken the initiative for a joint campaign including the AIKS and AIAWU to ‘Save ICDS’, a comprehensive scheme for child development, from privatisation and ultimate dismantling. Efforts were

made to involve the peasants and agricultural workers who were the beneficiaries of the scheme and the anganwadi employees who implement it at the grassroots level. Similar efforts were made on the issue of the electricity bills.

Since the last three years, CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have been jointly observing January 19 every year, as workers-peasants martyrdom day, to commemorate the death in police firing, of 10 people including workers, agricultural workers and peasants, on the occasion of the first joint countrywide strike after independence, on that day in 1982. The demands of this strike included the major demands of the peasants and agricultural workers – remunerative prices for the peasants and comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers.

Besides, the joint trade union movement extended active solidarity and support to the countrywide struggle by AIKS and other peasant organisations against the retrograde land acquisition ordinance followed by the related bill by the BJP led Modi government. The joint trade union movement opposed that ordinance and bill in all its agitations and struggles. The strong opposition of the peasants with firm solidarity of the working class movement ultimately compelled the Modi government to allow the ordinance to lapse and to shelve the bill, at least for the time being. The struggles of the peasantry on their other demands like minimum support price, loan waiver etc also received support and solidarity of the trade union movement.

The initiatives for such joint actions got a new momentum in the current year. The peasants’ struggles facing police repression in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and their Long March from Nasik to Mumbai inspired workers across the country. The massive country wide general strikes and the unprecedented three day ‘mahapadav’ of the workers enthused peasants. CITU general council held in March 2018 welcomed the

AIKS call for countrywide jail bhara on August 9, 2018 and decided to participate in the programme throughout the country shoulder to shoulder with the peasant-folk. AIKS and AIAWU welcomed the initiative of CITU to organise a massive March to Parliament on September 5, 2018 and agreed to join it, making it a Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally.

The enthusiasm generated by the joint call is reflected in the massive participation of more than five lakh peasants and workers in the jail bhara on August 9, 2018 in at least 540 locations in 393 districts across the country. It was also reflected in the night long 'samuhik jagaran' programme on the night of August 14, 2018, on the eve of Independence Day, which was observed in 395 locations covering all the states by over 62,000 workers and their families; peasants in many places joined the programme. In addition, the three organisations joined together in the campaign at the grassroots level in several states to expose the anti-people and anti-national policy regime.

These joint activities and campaigns demonstrate the commitment of the toiling people for countrywide united struggles against the neoliberal policies to safeguard their rights and living conditions. They hold the promise for developing militant joint struggles aimed at reversal of these policies and bringing in pro-people policy regime. This has to be achieved through sustained efforts to continue the struggle and take it to new heights.

The worker-peasant alliance's determination to carry on joint struggle with a continuity, right from its preparatory phase itself started tempering the atmosphere of struggle countrywide, drawing organisations of other sections of the common populace, irrespective of affiliations in the battle line. Already the united platform of central trade unions and federations have been conducting several agitations including numerous strike actions against the neoliberal policy regime

since decades and in that process the platform of unity got consistently widened to draw almost all central trade unions and federations in the country to the united platform of struggle. In that background, the worker-peasant alliance initiative has added momentum to the urge for loud expression of unrest and anger among the mass of the populace drawing various segments of the society in the frontline of struggle against the grievous impact of the anti-people policies on their lives and livelihood.

The Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) decided to organise a day-long dharna at district headquarters all over the country before the offices of the central government establishments on September 15, 2018 followed by a big rally of around 50,000 youth before parliament on November 3. These programmes will expose the employment killing policies of the government and its fraudulent campaign on employment generation.

The All India Kisan Sanjukta Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSSCC) comprising various farmers and agricultural workers' organisations in the country has decided to organise a 100 kilometre long march to parliament from 7/8 locations in and around Delhi in which farmers and agricultural workers from all the parts of country will participate.

All the major central trade unions and almost all national independent federations of employees in services and establishments in state and central governments, defence-manufacturing, banks and insurance, telecom and workers of almost all strategic sectors of the economy viz., coal, steel, electricity, petroleum, engineering, port & dock, road transport, etc, both in public and private sector, have jointly decided to go in for nationwide campaign at the workplace level against the destructive economic policies of the government at the centre and its nefarious design to impose slavery on the working people through pro-employer change in labour laws, which will culminate





in a two days countrywide general strike by the end of the year. The National Convention of Workers to be held at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on September 28, 2018, will draw the details of the action programmes including countrywide general strike. Besides above, many more sectoral struggles are in the offing.

We are fighting against the neoliberal policies of an extreme right-reactionary government at the centre which is spearheading the worst onslaught on the lives and livelihood of the toiling people in every sector and segment of the economy. It is the most heinous political gang which is carrying on a poisonous campaign as a part of its governing strategy to cultivate communal and divisive polarisation to weaken and disrupt the unity of the people. We are fighting against a venomous as well as an authoritarian outfit, which, with the use of state machinery under its command, is seeking to curb the right to dissent and right of free expression which is an inseparable ingredient of democracy. All these are integral to the singular strategy of the neoliberal capitalist order and its operator in the governance to sustain itself in the midst of deepening crisis in which it is engulfed.

Our struggle has to be directed comprehensively against the neoliberal capitalist order and the authoritarian as well as poisonous machinations on the society by their extreme right wing operators in the seat of governance. The worker-peasant alliance in this struggle will definitely widen the unity of the toiling class in its entirety and cementing and broadening this alliance in every phase of struggle is the crucial task before us. This needs more proactive role of the class oriented trade union movement to assert and actively involve with solidarity action in every phase of the struggles and activities of the peasants' and agricultural workers' organisations, be it at local, state or national level. It is the prime responsibility of the working class movement to carry forward this alliance in action towards a more stable platform of action against neoliberal capitalist order and the politics of neoliberalism with a consistent continuity. Let the huge success of August 9 Jail Bhara and September 5 Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally give us the confidence and arm us with the resolve to discharge that responsibility. Let all the organisations of ours be charged with that confidence.

We will overcome.□



# Working Class on Struggle Path across the World

**Dr. K. Hemalata**

**T**he working class across the world is on struggle path against the attacks of neoliberalism on its jobs and working and living conditions. Big struggles have been taking place all over the world including in the advanced capitalist countries in Europe against the attempts by the ruling classes to destroy the hard won rights, wages and benefits of the workers, in the name of austerity measures.

Thousands of workers and employees in several countries in Europe, in Latin America, Asia, Africa – in all continents, joined struggles including huge strikes against the so called labour law ‘reforms’, flexibilisation of labour, privatisation and austerity measures that attack their basic and hard won rights. Auto workers, civil

servants, teachers, nurses, retirement home workers, rail and road transport workers, water and sanitation workers, in large numbers participated in these struggles.

## **Growing discontent among the working class**

These struggles by the working class, across the globe, are a reflection of the growing discontent and anger among the workers against the mounting attacks on their working and living conditions by neoliberalism. The capitalist system has been trying to come out of the global crisis that started in 2008 by increasing the attacks on the wages, benefits and working conditions of the workers, curtailing their trade union rights as well as the democratic rights of the vast majority of the people.



## **No respite for workers despite growth in ‘full swing’**

International financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank are trying hard to paint a rosy picture of the world economy. The IMF made an optimistic estimate for the global GDP growth but at the same says that ‘risks continue to be tilted to the downside’. According to the World Bank, growth is at its ‘full swing’ for the first time since the crisis started but warns that the upswing would be short term without prospects for improving the living standards of the people or reducing poverty.

In the US and many European countries, despite the recovery and job growth, wages remained stagnant. The increase in employment has not led to the slow down or reversal of the decline in the share of wages in the national income. Common people do not have adequate purchasing power to absorb the output. The concentration of income in the hands of the few through profits and high CEO wages does not ensure stable growth of the economy. Several eminent economists have expressed apprehensions about another crisis looming ahead

## **Inequalities increase further**

The following figures will exemplify the extent of widening inequalities and concentration of wealth in fewer hands:

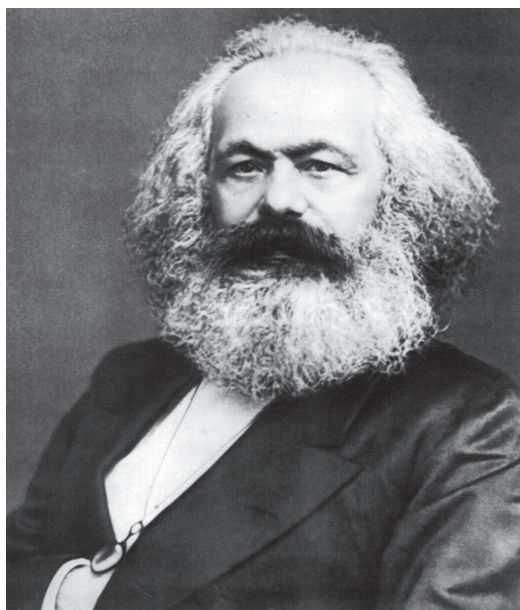
- 42 richest persons owned the same wealth as that owned by the poorest 3.7 billion of world’s population in 2017. In 2016, the figure was 61.
- 82% of the global wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%
- The 3 richest persons in the USA own the same wealth as the bottom 16 million people in that country Ironically the super rich have amassed such wealth in the aftermath of the global crisis, a period in which the working and living conditions of most of the workers across the world have worsened.

- At the height of the 2008 crisis, the top 1% owned 42.5% of total global wealth
- In 2017, within a decade of the onset of the crisis, their share in global wealth increased to 50.1%
- On the other hand, 70% of the world’s working age population own just 2.7% of the global wealth.

## **How is this super wealth built up? inheritance, monopoly, crony connections, tax evasion**

We are supposed to believe that they have earned this wealth through their hard work, unmatched talents and creative abilities alone. But, there is growing evidence to show that this is not so. It is estimated that two thirds of billionaire wealth is the product of inheritance, monopoly and cronyism.

- **Inheritance:** It is estimated that over the next 20 years, 500 of the world’s richest people will pass on over \$2.4 lakh crores – more than the GDP of India with its 130 crore population, to their heirs.
- **Cronyism:** Big corporates and monopolies utilise their closeness to those in power to manipulate government policies in their favour and get further strengthened. They enrich themselves at the expense of the people and the exchequer mainly through privatisation deals, by snatching away public properties at dirt cheap prices, grabbing natural resources displacing common people, peasants and adivasis, getting tax exemptions in the name of incentives and using loopholes in laws etc.
- **Evasion of taxes:** Another means often adopted by the super rich and big corporations to boost their wealth is by evasion of taxes. The Panama and Paradise Papers revealed that the world’s super rich are hiding at least \$7.6 lakh crore from the tax authorities utilising the global network of tax havens. It is estimated that the world’s



top 1% is evading an estimated \$200 billion in tax.

It is obvious that ordinary people cannot increase their money in this manner despite being equally or even more talented, innovative and hardworking.

### **And, of course, increased exploitation of workers**

The conditions of vast majority of workers continue to be far from decent. The employment situation across the world continues to be a source of worry despite slight improvement. Young people are less likely to be employed than adults with the global youth unemployment rate standing at 13% or three times the adult rate of 4.3%. Around 43% of the global youth labour force is either unemployed or working but living in poverty. Over 50 crore young people survive on less than \$2 a day. Despite working, often for long hours and under harsh conditions, workers continue to be poor. Recent estimates by the ILO show that almost one in three workers in emerging and developing countries live in poverty. The number of workers under precarious working conditions – the contract, casual, temporary, part time, fixed time, home based workers etc – is increasing all over the world. In 2017, around 42% of

workers across the world were in vulnerable forms of employment, according to the ILO. In emerging countries like India, their proportion is estimated to be 46%. The number of workers in vulnerable employment in the world is projected to increase further, by 17 million every year in 2018 and 2019.

The Global Wage Report of the ILO shows that the highest paid top 10% people receive almost 43% of total wages paid to all employees whereas the lowest paid bottom 50% receive only 17%. While the wages and working conditions of workers are under attack, the returns for senior executives have highly escalated. For example, a CEO in the USA earns, by working for a little more than one day, what an ordinary worker earns by working the whole year. A CEO from the top five garment companies in the world earns in four days what an ordinary Bangladeshi woman garment worker earns in her whole life time.

Another ILO report - the World Social Protection Report 2017 – 19 says that only 45% of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit. 55% people, i.e. around 400 crores do not have any social security. Under pressure from international finance to reduce fiscal deficit, most of the governments are today adopting the so called fiscal consolidation policies cutting down expenditure on social protection including for children.

Women's unpaid labour continues to be a major support to the economy worldwide. The World Economic Forums' Global Gender Gap Index 2017 reports that the gender gap has widened for the first time after 2006, the worst being the gender divide at the work place. The report estimates that at the present rate it would take 217 years to close the gender gap. According to the World Economic and Social Outlook Trends 2018 of the ILO, on average women are less likely to participate in the labour market with a global gender gap of over 26% points; they are less likely to find a job when they do participate.

## **Class oriented trade unions under attack**

Workers produce wealth but remain poor because the major source of accumulation of wealth is the increased exploitation of the workers and other sections of toiling people - pushing down wages and working conditions of the workers, evading labour laws and forcing the governments to amend labour laws. In most of the capitalist countries labour laws are being amended to deprive the workers of their hard won rights, including the basic rights to organise and collective bargaining and their rights to social security.

Such unacceptable levels of inequality can be brought down only by improving the income of the workers and taking measures for the redistribution of wealth. But most of the governments implementing the international finance dictated neoliberal policies are not willing to do so. Inequalities cannot be brought down without improving employment situation and ensuring decent work to all workers. By fighting for the improvement in the conditions of the workers, trade unions, particularly class oriented trade unions, have been acting as a counterbalance to the power of wealth. That is the reason neoliberalism attacks trade unions and the trade union rights of the workers including the right to organise and collective bargaining.

More importantly, neoliberalism has been mounting serious attack on organised working class and on working class ideology. As a result of all this, in many countries the membership and strength of trade unions have come down. This is accompanied by a rise in precarious employment, short term contracts, outsourcing, temporary, part time work etc, further exploitation of workers and further rise in inequalities. Attacks on trade unions are meant to increase the appropriation of wealth produced by the workers.

### **New technology: who benefits?**

With the huge technological advances, particularly Artificial Intelligence and

Robotics, there is serious concern about lakhs of jobs. A study by McKinsey Global Institute estimates that a little less than 50% of all work activities globally have the potential to be automated. A big debate is going on in the world about the jobs that will be lost and the scope of new job creation due to the new technology.

New technologies can be used to benefit the workers by reducing their working hours, making work easy for them and providing them more leisure. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has demanded reduction in the working week to 35 hours. But who reaps the benefits of technology and to what extent depends on who owns the technology and for whose benefit it is used. In the present capitalist society technology owned by a few rich countries and a few big corporates is used to increase their profits; not for the benefit of the workers or the common people.



## Capitalism cannot be humane

Today the world has enough resources, scientific knowledge and technology to ensure education to all, health to all, food for all, and housing for all; to ensure decent living conditions to all. These science, technology, knowledge could not have been and have not been developed by a few, in isolation. Common people, workers, peasants and other sections of people have all contributed and continue to contribute in their development. Yet, in the capitalist system, the fruits of scientific, technological development are owned by a few who corner the wealth generated by the toil of the working people. They are used to serve their interests and the interests of the rich, instead of for the benefit of all people. It is an irony that in the midst of unprecedented development of science and technology, unprecedented wealth, the vast majority of people are deprived of even the basic necessities of life.

In a world where 3 D printing of human organs is already being practiced and research is progressing on increasing the speed up the process of developing human organs for transplantation:

- 361000 children under 5 years of age die every year due to diarrhoea which can be easily prevented by providing safe drinking water and sanitation services and cured with simple medicines.
- 4.50 billion, across the world, do not have safely managed sanitation. Out of them, 2.3 billion do not have basic sanitation services.
- 155 million children under 5 years of age globally were stunted in 2016 because of malnutrition while every year 1.3 billion tonnes of food gets lost or is wasted across the globe, enough to feed 870 million people. The super rich are dreaming of space tourism, of staying in space stations and watching the Earth from that vantage point.



- But 100 crore people in low income countries do not have access to all weather roads
- 16% of world's population or over 1.2 billion people globally have little or no access to electricity.
- It is estimated that 160 crore people globally lack adequate housing and 15 crore people are homeless across the world.

This is the cruelty of the capitalist system which is driven by the greed for profit not the well being of people. It is inherently crisis ridden. It seeks to come out of each crisis by further increasing the exploitation of the toiling people for profit maximisation, further increasing inequalities.

### Growing disenchantment

Such growing inequalities and attacks on the rights of worker have resulted in the growing resentment against neoliberalism, more pronounced among the youth who are among the most adversely impacted by these policies. This is reflected in the huge struggles of workers that are taking place across the world.

Workers and other sections of toiling people across the world are today searching for alternatives that can provide answers for





a better life. This search is leading them to read *Capital* written more than 150 years back by Karl Marx who was born 200 years ago. In a survey conducted in Hampshire in memorial of the first publication of *Capital* in 1867, more than two thirds of people opined that *Capital* is ‘more up to date than ever before’.

The famous words of Karl Marx- “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it”- written in ‘*The Communist Manifesto*’ published 170 years back, act as a guide for the working class and people, even today. In the bicentenary year of Marx’s birth, we have to take his teachings to wider sections of the working class and create awareness about their role in changing this exploitative society.

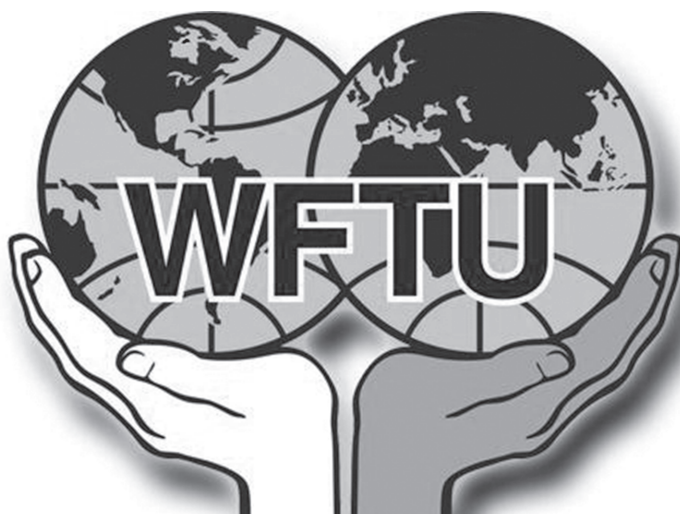
The anger amongst the people against the impact of neoliberalism is sought to be exploited by the right wing forces who seek to divert it into divisive channels by creating animosities between people on the basis of race, religion, caste, region etc. Thus they seek to disrupt the unity of the toiling people and weaken the struggle against the neoliberal policies. They are able to do this wherever the left forces are weak or fail to lead the struggles against the neoliberal policies. International finance has been

promoting such right wing forces across the world to see that the left forces which consistently oppose neoliberalism do not become stronger and emerge as an alternative political force. The right wing forces wherever they have come to power utilising discontent against the neoliberal policies have been implementing the same neoliberal policies while in power and once they regain power.

One of the major reasons for the rise of the rightwing forces, as in several countries in Europe, is the betrayal of the social democratic and left parties which have embraced neoliberalism while in power. At the same time where the left forces have been in the forefront in opposing and leading the struggles against the neoliberal policies, they have registered gains.

### **Worldwide resistance to neoliberalism, strengthening wftu need of the hour**

In view of the increasing attacks on the working class across the world it is necessary to develop strong worldwide resistance to these attacks and ensure that international unity and solidarity of the working class are strengthened. That is the only way to defeat neoliberalism and ultimately end capitalist exploitation. A globally strong WFTU is necessary to achieve this.□



## **Strengthen struggles for workers' emancipation and the abolition of the capitalist exploitation**

**George Mavrikose**

General Secretary WFTU

**D**ear colleagues, brothers and sisters, I salute the 3rd Congress of the workers of Energy, Chemicals, Coal, Rubber, Pharmaceutical products and allied industries, taking place in Trivandrum of India, and I wish the best of success to its works.

I express my warm thanks to the host Organization in India CITU, to the President K. Hemalata, to the General Secretary Tapan Sen, to Swadesh Dev Roye, National Secretary and Head of the International Relationships of CITU and members of the WFTU Secretariat, to the Chairman and General Convener of the Congress Organizing Committee of CITU, to AITUC and all other WFTU affiliates in India also all of our leaders and cadres from India for their co-operations in the hosting of this important Congress and



for all their efforts so that we can have a successful event. Moreover I specially greet the Comrades of Kerala for the courage and conviction demonstrated by them in holding this Congress confronting the devastation of unprecedented flood fury and untold sufferings of the people of the state in terms of loss of lives and destruction of properties.

We express our solidarity and our support with the workers and the people of Kerala who have been seriously affected by the disastrous floods of the last months, which have left few hundred of people dead, damages and hundreds of thousands of homeless workers. The workers and the poor people are those who always pay with their lives and those who see their heard earned very meager belongings and the existing infrastructures getting lost by natural disasters and by accidents.

In the 21st century, with the immense progress of technology and science, the absence of the appropriate protection, particularly for toiling people, against these disasters is shocking, whereas all over the world the necessary infrastructures and the respective manpower are being systematically undervalued. This happens because they

prioritize giving the funds for investments that will increase the profits of the businessmen and of the monopoly groups. The disasters is a long-standing demand of the world class-oriented trade union movement and WFTU. Our demand is modern scientific technological measurers to forewarn and protect people from natural disasters like earthquake, flood etc., providing high quality housing, immediate measures for the rescue and effective people oriented handling of the natural calamities. As workers, we have to point out these issues, to claim our rights and to organize in practice our militant solidarity to the victims of the disasters.

I have been told by the WFTU cadres in India that the Left Front Government at Kerala and specially the people of the state in general have performed in an exemplary manner in rescuing the people trapped by flood water and effectively running the thousands of make shift relief camps for hundreds of thousands of people. From this platform of our TUI Congress we greet the Left Front Government and the people of Kerala.

The 3rd Congress of TUI Energy, with the participation of more than 100 international delegates from 40 countries from all over the





world, is of great value and importance, as it brings together pioneer trade unionists who work at the sector that literally makes the Earth go round, giving fuel for the movement of all the productive activities of the planet, for the transportations and for the covering of the basic needs of the people for water supply, heating and electricity. Also, the petrochemical products, the rubber, the plastics and the medicines are principal goods for the covering of the daily needs, necessary for ensuring workers' health and prosperity.

However, today, instead of providing all these goods mentioned above for the covering of the people's needs, these goods have been converted to one of the biggest sources of profitability for the monopolies. Giant companies, such as Exxon Mobil, TOTAL, BP, ENI, PETROBRAS, BAYER, TATA Petrodyne or UPL here in India, exploit the wealth-producing resources of the countries in order to make huge profits, while the workers of these companies suffer from the immense exploitation and while the peoples generally live in energy poverty.

Even worse, we observe that the imperialist rivalries and the wars take place exactly for the control of the wealth-producing resources of various countries and of the routes of their transfer, for the oil, for the gas, for the anagement of water resources with typical examples the wars in Syria, in Libya, in Iraq, the economical blockade of USA against Iran, Qatar, the alliances that are formed with the state of Saudi Arabia which has been massacring the people of Yemen for three years. We notice the huge ecological disaster,

like the one at the bay of Mexico and we realize that the sector of energy is ravaged by the activity of the monopoly groups which is everything but friendly towards its own workers and towards the peoples.

Dear friends,

The role of the Sectoral Organizations of WFTU is very important. We want the Sectoral Organizations to be at the forefront, to be the positive protagonists inside the ranks of WFTU. Through the TUIs, we come directly in contact with the basis, with the workers at the workplaces. Though the TUIs we can instill the class-oriented, the militant line in the consciences of the factory and industrial proletariat. Our aim is the TUIs to be the heart of WFTU. It needs effort in order to achieve it.

So that the WFTU TUIs be democratic, open and modern bee-hives that neither will be inactive nor neutral in the face of the developments. TUIs that will unite all workers irrespective of religion, color, race and political beliefs. They will unite everybody on the basis of our class-oriented interests. They will have belief in the role and the strategic goal of the working class, they will act upon developments, they will be schools for the workers and they will teach them that the life proceeds only through the struggles. Only through the struggles we will reach the workers' emancipation and the abolition of the capitalist exploitation.

Colleagues,

I am optimistic for the new course that starts from this Congress for the TUI which covers the sectors of oil, chemicals, water, rubber, pharmaceutical products which are of strategic importance. The new Head-office of the TUI, its renewed leadership and the contemporary, militant documents that you have in your hands will give new dynamics and will open new ways. Along this new course, the leadership of WFTU will be at your side.□

*(Speech in the International Congress, Trade Unions International (Energy & Petrochemicals) Held at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India on 11th & 12th September 2018)*





# EMERGENCY 2.0

Jayati Ghosh

For many Indians, the period of the Emergency in the mid 1970s represents the blackest period for Indian democracy since Independence. As a student at University during that time, seeing the repression and fear all around and knowing some of the people who were imprisoned or otherwise persecuted for their views, I too shared that view – until very recently.

Because what is happening now in India is in many ways is just as bad, and in some respects significantly worse. Just as during the Emergency, we have the arms of the state and its security powers used to intimidate and harass many innocent people whose only crime is using completely lawful means of dissent and fighting for the human rights of the dispossessed, marginalised and down-trodden, typically using ludicrous and trumped-up charges. But unlike during the Emergency – and much worse – we have now also have impunity for and even encouragement of violence and blatant attacks by those who profess ideologies similar to (or more extreme than) that of the ruling party, using an aggressive and exclusionary form of Hindutva to threaten, victimise, lynch and murder. Not only are such culprits rarely

brought to book, but some are celebrated by Central Ministers while the Prime Minister maintains a studied silence or speaks in generalities, thereby allowing free rein to these frenzied forces.

Gags on the media today also bring back memories of those Emergency times. But the nature of these has changed so much that it almost makes one nostalgic for that unhappy period when censorship was open and therefore somehow more apparent and so easier to confront. Now there is an implicit censorship as well as control by the Prime Minister's Office, in addition to excessive self-censorship by corporate-controlled media houses. Media persons fear losing their jobs, know that there are some politicians and business houses that cannot be named (other than in laudatory terms) or confronted, and tend to alter their coverage and their interpretations accordingly. A few braver ones are made public lessons of, so as to intimidate the others into compliance, while the media guard dogs of the ruling establishment are rewarded financially and in other ways.

But the most chilling indication of the current dark times came on Tuesday 28 August, when scholars, lawyers and human rights activists across the country were arrested

or raided by teams from the Pune police, ostensibly on grounds of instigating riots in Bhima Koregaon on 31 December last year. The charges are numerous, serious and even terrifying: engaging and terrorist acts; supporting, funding and recruiting for terrorist organisations; unlawful activities; criminal conspiracy; public mischief; and much else. The fact that none of them were present at that occasion, and were not even mentioned in the original FIR on the case, while those exposed as engaging in violence in the videos of the incident have not been followed up at all, tells its own story. So does the fact that in the past three months the Pune police have not even been able to file charge sheets against five people who were picked up in May on similar charges, who have been languishing in jail ever since.

Indeed, the frivolity of the accusations would be laughable if it did not have such dire implications. When the Magistrate in a Haryana court asked the team of eight people from Pune police who had swooped down to arrest Sudha Bharadwaj, what exactly was her crime, none of them could respond! Instead they kept pointing to a document in Marathi that they had brought along, which was a general statement of all the possible activities under the various criminal codes listed. All they could repeat is that these offenses are non-bailable, but they could not provide a single detail of any one offense supposedly committed by the person they were accusing!

Who are these people whom the state describes as so dangerous? Sudha Bharadwaj is an eminent and highly respected lawyer, who for two decades has been fighting cases on behalf of workers, landless and displaced people – an IIT graduate who chose to work among the people, and fight for human rights, but is now Visiting Professor at the National Law University in Delhi. Varavara Rao is a famous Telugu poet and activist who has been involved in many peace initiatives in Telengana. Gautam Navlakha is a former editor with the journal Economic and Political Weekly, who has been involved in the civil

liberties movement for decades. Anand Teltumbde is a former engineer who worked in the private sector, currently professor of management in Goa, who has emerged as a leading writer on issues pertaining to Dalits and other marginalised groups. And so on.

These are people who in any other civilised society would be valued citizens, lauded for their humanitarian work. So what explains this dramatic and unjustified state aggression against them? The timing is surely significant. First, the state of Maharashtra had already arrested five activists (including lawyers, professors and human rights workers) on similar charges, and the 90 day period within which some clear charges must be filed against them is drawing to a close. It is possible – even likely – that the police have got nothing against them, and are hoping to use some fresh arrests to argue for the need for continued incarceration. Second, this drama serves to distract attention from the real culprits at the Bhima Koregaon incident, as well as from the Hindu outfits (like the Sanathan) that are suspected to have been engaged in truly criminal violent activity.

Third, and most important of all, as the country draws closer to general elections, it becomes more important than ever for the ruling party to prevent an opposition from forming and attracting people, and that means stifling, suppressing and diverting all voices of criticism, opposition and dissent. Clearly, the present ruling party is nervous, and realises that its inability to keep any of important electoral promises, its botching up at different levels (such as demonetisation and poorly implemented GST) and its effective support of divisive and hate-filled societal interventions, are no longer going down so well with people. As these failures become more evident, the need to retain power at all costs becomes even more intense.

These are desperate times that have called for desperate measures. Whether they will be successful in damaging Indian democracy even more than has been done already, or will go the way of the first Emergency, remains to be seen. □



# Say No to Simultaneous Elections; Strengthen Democratic Polity

**Dr. A. Suhruthkumar**

**T**he so called simultaneous election continued till 1967, during a period of a single party dominance in the history of the nation. But by the 1990s, the clear and neat majority system of single party dominance was dismantled and coalition stability brought in to the system; through power sharing among different parties. After 1990, not only in state provinces, at the Centre also, coalition fronts were emerged and determined the governance of the nation. The mechanism of simultaneous election has not been reintroduced due to a number of reasons, mainly, due to the premature course of elections either to the Lok Sabha or to the state legislatures. Almost all the national and regional parties and their respective coalitions were the beneficiaries of that staggered election system. At present, once again such an idea of simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures have been mooted by the present ruling front NDA and its stage managers. The idea of simultaneous election was floated long back by former deputy prime minister L K Advani. During the last Budget

Session of the Parliament, former president of India Dr. Pranab Kumar Mukherjee brought up this idea for a debate. Several agencies like the Election Commission of India, the National Law Commission, Parliament Standing Committee etc., reiterated the idea as part of collusion. Public and private consultations were conducted by some of such official and non official agencies. Recently, the same idea has been put forwarded by the political outfits of Sangh Parivar at a crucial juncture before the assembly elections in nine major states in the country. Then it becomes a real question, rather than a mere academic subject – what is essential at present, a simultaneous election or strengthening of our democracy?

## **Constitutional Mandate**

There is no fixity of tenure is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, either for the Lok Sabha or the state legislatures. Article 83 (2) and Article 172 (1) of the Constitution specify that the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures shall be for five years unless sooner dissolved. Whereas the Constitution specifies that no

longer than five years after the first meeting of the House from its appointment, and the expiration of its dissolution the House shall operate. That is also provided in the Constitution that the operation can be prolonged by a law for a period not exceeding one year during emergency not beyond a period of six months after the proclamation ceased. This makes it clear that the Constitution does not guarantee fixed terms for to the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures. Simultaneous election is not possible without fixed tenure for Parliament and state legislatures. Hence the proposed reform is primarily against the existing constitutional mandate.

### **Arguments in favour of simultaneous election process**

Cost and expenditure incurred by the Election Commissions and political parties in respect of separate and repeating election process, resource crunch in the Treasury; Deployment of large number of government employees, public servants, public buildings and other allied para formations for electioneering and hence, diversion from their primary responsibilities; Enforcement of model code of conduct introduced by the Election Commission during election season causes obstacle to public policy making and government service delivery mechanism; Opportunity for political parties to concede to popular demands or to lure of voters without consideration of public interests, only because of their political conveniences.

National perspective, over the regional compulsions, unity of the country rather than local pressures, strengthening of national parties than predominance of divisive parties and higher stability of governments etc., are the main arguments in favour of simultaneous election.

Another merit pointed out is that the curbing of corruption in governance and policy making in relation to the election process. Recently yet another argument raised is that 'One Nation, One Market, One Tax' system. This has been introduced in India by

the Goods and Services Tax Act and its implementation. Hence much of the powers of the state governments are gone and their relevance much reduced in comparison with the Union Government. By that the advocates of simultaneous election negate the federal status and strength of provincial governments in the concern and predominantly argues for presidential form of administration in the provincial states also.

### **Arguments against the reformist proposal**

In partial assessment, by simultaneous election, the expenditure incurred by Election Commissions can be reduced, but there is no guarantee for reduction of expenditure by political parties. Rather, political parties may spend their entire funds at once than in phases as in separate elections and double their expenses at once; The Constitution ensures equality for Union and State sovereign within their jurisdiction, whereas simultaneous election will reduce the importance and mandate of states, and hence basically it is against federalism; There will not be any opportunity to dissolve Lok Sabha or state legislature, and there is an absolute negation of the present constitutional principles; hence is *ultravires*; It would be mandatory to constructive vote 'No confidence Motion' hence the opposition parties would be able to form a new government or a stable government, the proposed reform has been an instrument to effectively take away no confidence motion without any alternative possibility; The tool of effective legislative control over the executive through no confidence motion has been curtailed by the proposed reform; it will curtail the people's right to express their confidence or displeasure on the government; The states would be penalised if the legislature is unable to produce a majority government. The president will take over the power and carry out governance for a reasonable period, and it will polarise the democratic governance system; Repeated election would keep the legislators on their



toes and increases accountability and ultimately increase on decreased term, there will not be any consensus among the political parties; Simultaneous election will relegate local issues, state issues etc., to the background of national issues, hence it will ignore the diversity of the country and it will result in increased burden over the election mechanism to hold free and fair election.

Thus the advocates of simultaneous elections are bound to prove that what is the benefit from simultaneous election, what are serious drawbacks of staggered elections, and advantages of simultaneous election, what is the desirability and feasibility of simultaneous election, what is the possibility of increased accountability in simultaneous election, and ultimately how much consensus there in the matter of simultaneous election among the local, regional and national parties in the country?

#### **Inferences and Comments:**

From the facts and grounds given above, the following inferences can be derived in the subject matter:

- ⊙ simultaneous election reforms negates the principle of federalism which is the founding factor of the Indian Constitution;
- ⊙ the given proposal is absolutely anti democratic and it strikes at the root of parliamentary democracy system as ordained in the Constitution;
- ⊙ any such attempt to extend or reduce the period of Parliament or Legislature beyond and above the constitutional prescription is absolutely ultravires and unconstitutional;
- ⊙ this outrageous proposal would make the president of India a totalitarian executive head of the state and it is bringing the executive presidency through the backdoor;
- ⊙ proposals to hold fresh elections, if the period of time is longer after the dissolution of the House or recognition



of the no confidence motion, and the tenure of the newly elected government would only be the remaining period of the concerned tenure, this will be impractical and destabilising the federal state governance with respect to the frequent dissolution of Lok Sabha at the Centre;

- ⊙ reduction or extension of Lok Sabha or state Legislature period would be an assault on the rights of the states and circumscribe the rights of the citizen to elect their legislators in a time bound manner;
- ⊙ any artificial attempt to bring about simultaneous election only can be done by trampling upon exiting constitutional scheme of parliamentary democracy;
- ⊙ review and reform in provisions of the no confidence motion and alternative government to prevent pre mature dissolution of Lok Sabha or state legislature on account of mechanical, artificial and legal stability of government or political instability will take away people's right to elect or dismiss a government under democracy.

Several ifs and buts are there before the idea of simultaneous election and utmost care shall be there on up keep of federalism and diversity of the country before its consideration. □



## Employees March to Vidhan Sabha, Haryana

**Sabitha Malik**

**S**arva Karmachari Sangh, Haryana decided to march to Vidhan Sabha on second day of the Assembly session against the implementation of privatisation policies more aggressively in public service departments for the profit of the Corporates, not implementing the promises of election manifesto regarding employees, indifferent attitude of government towards demands pending since long, imposing ESMA on strikes of Roadways and health employees. According to the decision taken by SKS it marched to Vidhan Sabha on 10th September 2018. Nearly 40,000 employees took part in this march. Hailing from different government departments, employees started gathering, from early morning, at Sector 5 Yavnika Park at Panchkula. The employees marched from Yavnika Park to Housing Board crossing, where the Chandigarh Police had put the barricades.

Employees staged Dharna at the Housing Board Chowk and shouted slogans against

the Haryana government. From 2 to 5 pm the employees kept sitting at the barricades. Leaders of different unions addressed the dharna. SKS President, Dharambir Phogat asked the government to come forward for negotiation on and resolve the issues. But the government did not take any notice and ignored the issues and emotions of lakhs of employees. After long patience of employees, SKS decided to march towards the Vidhan Sabha and tried to cross the barricades.

When SKS decided to march towards the Vidhan Sabha, the government instead of calling the leaders for negotiations ordered the police to take all measures to disperse the employees gathered there. The police, without giving any warning, resorted to use of water cannons, tear gas shelling and lathicharge.

26 shells of tear gas were fired. Many employees were injured. Some of them got fracture injuries. State General Secretary of Haryana Vidhyalaya Adhyapak Sangh, Mr. Jagroshan, was beaten brutally. Cases has



been registered against five leaders including president and General Secretary of SKS Haryana.

On the one hand Punjab and Haryana High Court in a decision has quashed the regularization policies which affects over one lakh of non regular employees serving in various departments. This High Court decision directly affects 4654 employees who had been regularised under these policies. After strong protests CM agreed to bring an act protecting the services of affected employees. Ultimately Government framed the draft of act and sent to SKS. SKS Haryana gave many suggestions for amendments. Instead of passing the bill in Vidhan Sabha session Haryana Govt. ditched the employees and went for SLP just two days before the session.

Nagar Palika employees went on indefinite strike in month of May. Most of their demand have been conceded by the Govt. But now the Govt. is denying its promises and not implementing the decision.

On the other hand anti employees policies of Govt. are affecting the employees adversely. Numbers of different types of non regular employees are increasing day by day. They are very low paid and have no social security. They are agitating continuously. But Govt. is not listening to them. This type of attitude increased the anger of employees. All

the employees felt cheated. Unions are agitating and new associations are coming for affiliation and posing trust in SKS. Very strong movement is building against Haryana Govt. How can it be digested? So to prevent building of the strong movement, on indication of Govt. Chandigarh police registered cases against five leaders Mr. Subhash Lamba General Secretary, Mr. Dharambir Phogat President, Mr. Naresh Shastri Senior Vice President, Mr. Satish Sethi Auditor of SKS Haryana and Mr. Saravan Jangra District Secretary of Panchkula. Vehicle used for stage hosting was broken by police and generator has been taken under police custody.

### **Vidhan Sabha March was unprecedented and historical.**

On 29th of April, 2018, SKS organised state level rally at Jind. SKS decided that if the Govt. does not concede their demands Vidhan Sabha March will be organised on 2nd day of session. From very first day block, District and State level meetings were organised.

Departmental unions took the agenda in meetings and decided to take part in the March. SKS took decision to organise non regular employees. Many non regular employees' associations came in contact of SKS and got affiliated. Handbills and posters were printed and distributed. Press conferences were organised in most of the districts which built the environment among the employees. That is why near about 40,000 thousand employees participated in the March. The scorching heat could not affect the enthusiasm of employees. They covered 5 km length distance in 1 hour. When the procession was passing in front of Directorate offices, the employees of Directorate welcomed and participated in it. Thousands of play cards of different slogans were used in the March. Patkas and caps of different colours were worn by employees. This showed their courage of participation in the March. SKS decided to build more aggressive and strong movement against the undemocratic and exploitative conduct of the BJP Government in Haryana. □



# State Level Womens Convention

## West Bengal

**Sutapa Hazra**

State Co-ordination Committee of West Bengal, an affiliate of the All India State Government Employees Federation, organised its first State level Convention of Women Employees on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2018. To pay tribute to its departed woman leader Com. Manika Pal, who was former vice President of the State Co-ordination Committee, the stage (Mancha) of the Convention was dedicated to the fond memory of her and was named as “Manika Raj Mancha.”

On 8<sup>th</sup> September morning, a huge rally of attending delegates, raising relentless slogans containing the demands of women employees as well as of toiling masses of our country, marched through the central Kolkata. The Convention was inaugurated by Com. Kaininika Ghosh, who is the State Secretary of the All India Democratic Women’s Association, West Bengal State Committee. Com. Ghosh in her inaugural speech explained the relevant examples, the necessity of organising working women both in the organised and the unorganised sectors.

The draft Report for discussion was moved by Com. Sutapa Hazra, Convenor, Central Women Sub Committee. In this draft Report, besides explaining the present situation in our country, the history of women emancipation in Bengal and the roles played by eminent figures like Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Begum Rokea were depicted. Forty two delegates from 19 District Committees and around 30 affiliated organisations / organisations took part in the two day long discussion on the draft Report. All the speakers, besides critically and self critically

examining both success and lacunae on the part of the organisation in organising women employees, vowed to build up stronger movement in future.

On the second day of the Convention, the General Secretary, State Co-ordination Committee, Com. Bijoy Sankar Sinha, made a conclusive speech encompassing the



questions raised by the delegates during the discussions. He also emphasised on the point that women emancipation in the true sense is achieved only in a society free from class exploitation. The Joint Secretary of State Co-ordination Committee moved a special Resolution registering strong protest against the authoritarian and un democratic moves unleashed by the BJP Governments at the Centre and in different States against human rights activists and left intellectuals. Both the draft Report and the special Resolution was unanimously adopted. A Presidium consisting of Gita Dey, Debala Mukherjee, Pausali Sarkar and Mina Roy conducted the proceedings. Around 200 delegates from different parts of the State attended the Convention. The Convention was concluded with much fan fare.□