



CONSTRUCTION WORKERS FEDERATION OF INDIA

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UITBB's 13th Asia-Pacific Meeting Challenges for trade Unions under the Pandemic-Anti-labour laws

Dear Comrades,

Covid-19 ,the pandemic has really deteriorated the lives and livelihoods of common people all over the world. The scientists were able to develop vaccines for preventing the seriousness of Covid-19 effects. But before that lot of people died due to covid-19 including the workers and their family members. The people of United States of America , Brazil and India are the worst affected.

In India, complete lockdown was proclaimed on 26th March,2020 to prevent the spread of Corona virus. Due to the sudden nature of the lockdown announcement, people , including the working class and their families were put to lot of difficulties. All types of transport road, rail and air were completely stopped. The migrant labourers working in other states lost their jobs. They could not pay the rents for their residences. They wanted to return to their home states but they could not find any transportation. Therefore thousands of migrant workers with their families and their small belongings decided to walk back to their original states. More than 400 migrant workers died en route.

The Supreme Court of India suo moto took up the case of pathetic migrant workers and asked the Government of India the details of these migrant workers. Government did not have any data base regarding the migrant



workers. The Supreme Court directed the government to register all the migrant and informal workers, about 380 millions. Now the government has launched a new E-Shram Portal to register all the migrant as well as the unorganized informal workers. However, the government tries to force its own contributory social security schemes including for Pension.

Due to the sudden lockdown , almost all the factories came to standstill. Millions of workers lost their jobs. The Managements were reluctant to give any relief during the pandemic period. The contract and other temporary precarious workers had to depend on state governments for food and other relief requirements.

The workers of small, micro and medium industries also lost their jobs and income. The trade union offices could not be opened due to lockdown conditions. However trade union leaders conducted online meetings . They prepared some volunteers for supply of food and other essentials to the stranded migrant and other workers. The trade unions and the general democratic movement has put up the demands for Rs.7500 direct cash transfer per month to all the non-income tax paying families and supply of 10 kg rice or wheat per person per month. Only some states like Kerala, Tamilnadu, etc extended some relief to the affected families.

All educational institutions remain closed during the pandemic. Only recently with lot of hesitations and precautions schools and colleges started reopening. Educational Institutions could provide only online classes during the lockdown periods. Children of informal and migrant workers did not have the necessary infrastructure , like smart phone and internet connectivity. Therefore their education got completely spoiled. The prevalence of Child Labour, Child marriage got increased.

Government of India in the name of ease of doing business, provided lot of concessions and favoritism to Corporates and Multi-national corporations. On the one hand millions of workers lost their livelihood. On the other hand, they had to suffer due to the rise in prices of essential commodities like petrol, diesel, cooking gas,etc.,

Workers in thousands and their family members died due to covid-19. They could not get the proper relief amounts from the government and the managements.

Government of India in order to corporatise the agriculture, promulgated 3 farm ordinances in June,2020. The ordinances became laws in September,2020 . The entire opposition walked out in the Parliament . The government using its brutal majority passed these laws. This has infuriated the peasantry. If these laws are implemented, the peasants will lose remunerative prices for their produce, the common people will lose their food security and the Nation will lose food sovereignty. More than 500 peasant organizations have formed SKM- Samyukta Kisan Manthch, united front of the peasantry. They have conducted many struggles including picketing, encirclement of the Capital, Delhi, etc. The working class and 10 Central Trade Unions including CITU and fraternal industrial federations are fully supporting the struggles of the peasantry. Solidarity financially and physically by the working class has been extended to the peasant struggles.

Even during the disastrous covid-19 pandemic, the government of India instead of extending the requisite relief and assistance, is hell bent upon converting the workers into neo-slavery by repealing 44 basic labour laws and replacing with 4 labour codes. The Industrial Relations Code, the Wages code, Social security code and Occupational Health and Safety code replace all the basic labour laws. The repealed laws include Trade Union Act,1926, All India Social Security Act for unorganised workers,2008, Construction workers act, construction workers cess act,1996, Inter- State Migrant Workmen Act,1979,etc.Government through executive orders want to replace 8 hours working day to 12 hours working day. If both the employers and the employees desire to give up Provident Fund Saving Scheme, P.F Scheme will cease to operate. The government says the workers take home pay will increase. But the reality is the workers will lose their retirement savings.

Though the Supreme Court has ordered the government to implement the schemes under Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, Construction workers act and all India unorganized workers act properly, all these acts were merged in the labour codes. The labour codes have left out many important provisions like the health and safety of construction workers,etc.

Previously, if more than 100 workers are in a factory, the management can not resort to retrenchment, lay off or closure without government's permission. Now as per the labour codes, the threshold limit has been enhanced to 300. Similarly for factories having more than 300 workers only, Standing Orders will apply. This means the managements are at full liberty to force slavery

working conditions on the workers. Previously if 20 or more workers are engaged by the contractor, he has to obtain proper licence. Now 20 is replaced by 50. This means the working conditions of the contract labourers will become worse, because the number of contractors engaging below 50 workers will increase and they need not get any license.

Due to anti-labour, anti-peasantry and anti-people measures like the farm acts and labour codes, etc there is a new phase in struggles of the basic classes. Workers and peasantry are united now. Worker-peasant unity is exhibited in all struggles. Many joint movements like All India Bandh-General Strike on Sep-27,2021 are taking place now. The 11 month old peasant struggle has created a world record. The toiling masses of India are firm in their determination to continue and intensify their struggles till victory is achieved.

With Revolutionary Greetings

V. Sasikumar

General Secretary

CWFI

