



UNION POWER

NTUI

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WORKERS CHARTER FOR THE 16th LOK SABHA ELECTION



The country goes to a general election to elect the 16th Lok Sabha at a time when it is abundantly clear that the economy is in profound crisis. It is more apparent than ever before that this crisis is neither temporary nor merely the result of deterioration in the external economic environment but endemic to the very structure of the domestic economy. The period of economic growth has collapsed into a phase of stagflation resulting in enormous misery to all working people. Despite this, there is a consensus on economic policy between the two dominant parties – the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party and almost all

regional parties irrespective of whether they are aligned with the United Progressive Alliance or the National Democratic Alliance or not.

Global Integration leading to collapse of Macro-economic strategies

Two decades and more of pursuing neo-liberal policies has failed to grow the share of manufacturing, has created an export-dependent service sector and an unsustainable agriculture. India’s integration with the global economy has further accentuated the

unsustainability of its economy External financial flows have played an important role in recent growth strategy allowing for easy liquidity and low interest rates and therefore private corporate sector driven and debt-fuelled growth and accumulation. But as structural constraints began to bite and external condition worsened, the economy went into a tail-spin. Even as the economy slowed down, the resultant widening of the current account deficit could not be financed at existing levels of external financial flows thereby putting the rupee under tremendous downward pressure. The resulting devaluation of the rupee stoked inflation which was then exacerbated by speculation in commodity markets. So even as growth slowed down markedly, both the current account deficit and inflation proved stubborn leading to a perfect storm of stagnation and inflation - stagflation. However, in last few months, the current account deficit has narrowed appreciably and that has led to a rapid appreciation in the value of the rupee. The wild fluctuations of the exchange rate as a result of an ideological obsession with letting markets determine its value has not only complicated macroeconomic management but significantly increased the risk faced by business. Whether the correction in the current account can be sustained is another matter. As discerning analysts have already noted, a part of the decline in the deficit is due to decline in capital goods imports, which in itself is a result of a decelerating economy. Given the structural nature of this relationship, capital goods imports will increase with a revival of growth. The expectation that the private sector would be able to provide adequate surpluses for the investment needs of a growing economy has simply not been achieved. As a result the growth of the private sector has come to be dependent on tuning the public sector to support private sector expansion. This has been achieved by allowing the private sector to make inroads into industries and services dominated by the public sector, including through public-private partnerships, and also to place public sector banking and financial institutions at the disposal of the private sector. As a result where the public sector is thriving, especially in manufacturing, it is in tune with the neo-liberal framework while the assets of public sector financial institutions have come to be stressed by poor private sector performance. Alongside these concessions there have been large scale concessions to capital in the form of tax reliefs, capital subsidies and the opening up of public utilities and natural monopolies to the private sector, and the transfer of vast tracts of land for the exploitation of natural resources The rising fiscal deficit has been portrayed as a symptom of the government's populist profligacy. But the fiscal deficit hides the collapse of private corporate savings and the insistence on continuing to subsidise capital (through taxes foregone) even as revenues have collapsed. The same government then hypocritically uses the decline in

revenues to cut back government expenditure that benefits working people and the poor. This fiscal deficit also hides the profitability and efficiency of public sector enterprises particularly in manufacturing. A profitability that the government has milked to help contain the fiscal deficit. The nature of capital-state relationship is such that this incentive has become more a permanent concession to capital. The growing complicit state-capital relationship has increased corruption that has come to be rooted at an unprecedented scale in every aspect of economic life.

In the absence of sustained expansion of the urban economy and inadequate support for autonomous development of the rural economy, the agrarian crisis has severely threatened the livelihoods of small and landless peasants. The government has entered into WTO and bi-lateral Free Trade Agreements with the objective of attracting foreign investment. These FTAs have not led to any marked increase in inward investment, but has led to an increased dependence on imports in the manufacturing sector of the economy, and increased vulnerability in some primary sectors. The WTO regime and the FTAs have severely undermined the existence of small and medium enterprises that remain an important source of employment and an important site for building competitiveness. Exploitation of natural resources and building of infrastructure have become the two principal areas for capital accumulation. As both these economic activities are land intensive, this land grab has come to define the most significant form of attack on rural livelihoods.

Agrarian Crisis: Migration, Feminisation and Low Wage Spiral: Widening Inequality

The agrarian crisis has been exacerbated by low and non-remunerative prices for agricultural produce, causing immiserisation among small and medium peasants. This has resulted in a situation where there is insufficient employment for workers in rural areas to ensure a dignified existence pushing worker's in rural areas to migrate. This large scale distress driven migration is continually pushing wages down by creating not just wage competition amongst workers but in fact creating a situation where the achievable bargained wage is only equal to the statutory minimum wage. This has inordinately benefited employers especially in new areas of investment and growth. In the formal sector, a large section of the workers receive wages that are a small fraction of the bargained wages of permanent workers whilst, in the majority of cases, perform tasks that are more arduous and less safe. In the informal sector, most workers today are struggling for recognition as 'workers'. The largest number of new jobs created in the last five years is that of development workers on honorariums or as part-timers and are entirely denied employment rights. Women have been

forced into insecure and unsafe jobs at lower wages than their male counterparts in order to make two ends meet. The triad of the agrarian crisis, the failure to create regular jobs in the urban sector and uncontrolled inflation have significantly eroded real wages and incomes. This sustained attack on wages and incomes has resulted in lowering rates of growth of domestic demand and the rate of savings which in turn have contributed to the further dependence on foreign investment and foreign flows.

Economic development remains the political rhetoric within the mainstream. Yet, over the last two decades, government supported and subsidised private sector expansion has resulted in a sharp widening of income inequality. In these 20 years, not just has income inequality worsened, it has come along with a culture of public display of consumption by a small minority while the misery and deprivation of the vast majority of working people has intensified. The profits of the present model of economic growth have been appropriated by capital while the costs have been borne by the working class. While direct taxes, such as taxes on companies, have remained unchanged and the income tax on the richest has been lowered year-on-year, subsidies meant to protect the working poor from the ravages of the market forces, are being cut drastically at each budget in the name of fiscal prudence with simultaneous increase in indirect taxes on all commodities that hit the working poor disproportionately. Government is additionally making every effort to substitute the existing subsidies with targeted cash transfers. While there is no doubt that markets contribute to inequality, government policy is meant to correct that through taxes and provision of social security and social protection. Government's inability to move policy effectively on these counts has itself become a source of income and asset inequality.

Economic Crisis aggravating Social Inequity

Low wages, the lack of employment opportunities and increasing income inequality have contributed to rising social marginalisation, of course of women, as also of dalits, adivasis, other oppressed castes and religious minorities, in particular muslims. As they have come to be pushed to the margins of the labour market, if not out of it, they are not just losing opportunities of employment but also the opportunity of social mobility from one generation to the next. Low incomes and irregular jobs have affected access to adequate healthcare and a quality education, both of which constitute the key recognised necessities for intergenerational social mobility. The lack of opportunity is leading not just to further marginalisation but also to rising discrimination. Social inequality is increasingly contributing to discrimination, differentiation, prejudice, violence and hate crimes in

society on grounds of gender, caste, religion, race, region and language. The parliamentary political parties, with no exception, have actively employed the constitutional provisions for positive discrimination for advancing sectional interests to garner votes without really addressing the elemental objective of social justice embodied in the principle of positive discrimination leaving open a space for a politics of majoritarianism and regionalism. The persistence of majoritarian and regional sentiments has also curtailed the country's capacity to advance a progressive foreign policy especially within the sub-continent. This has in turn undermined the capacity of the country to engage from a position of equality with imperialist and hegemonic forces.

Concerted attack on the Right to Democratic Dissent

The inability to grow the home market has resulted in the failure to create jobs while destroying the livelihoods of those dependent on land. The inequality in growth outcomes which exacerbates inequalities in asset ownership, distorts the growth of the home market as well. India's home market is today driven by elite consumption which not only has failed to create jobs for the vast majority but also destroyed the livelihoods of those dependent on land. This has caused the spread of movements against land acquisition in rural areas especially amongst small and marginal peasants. Correspondingly in urban and new industrial enclaves the increasing employment of contract and other forms of irregular labour has contributed to united trade unions of both regular and contract workers. Increasingly all efforts at collective action and the exercise of right to freedom of association, even in the private sector, are being seen as acts of violence and criminalisation against the state and have been met with the force of the police. Democratic dissent and the assertion by peoples of their fundamental rights, including the freedom of speech, have come to be seen as anti-state and anti-development and are being violently put down. This constitutes a serious attack on fundamental political rights of citizenship.

Election without Ideology

At the general election in 2009, the Indian National Congress (INC) won an unusually large mandate, more than that won by any single party in over a decade-and-a-half. And yet, its United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government failed to deliver the mandate of the people as it sought to reconcile meeting the basic needs of both urban and rural working people with the objectives of neo-liberal economics. As the path of economic growth faltered the UPA government refused to recognise the structural limitations of the economy and take corrective measures and has come to be mired in charges of corruption and cronyism. While indeed these charges

are not restricted to the UPA or the INC, the fact remains that they have been in government for a decade and must bear the responsibility for the state we are in.

The parliamentary left parties too have faced an erosion of their strength but more than that have lost credibility because of the inconsistencies of their policies when in government and their increasing electoral opportunism to retain their parliamentary strength and thereby failing to build a united front of progressive forces to defend and advance the challenges for building a society based on principles of equality and justice. The inability of centrist and left parties to reorient the economy and address social divisions has led to a crisis of the parliamentary system and a loss of credibility of the political class while opening the way for right wing offensive rooted in Hindu majoritarian politics.

In this environment the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been able to build considerable momentum against the UPA and the INC by building a case of corruption and economic mis-management while not just supporting the same neoliberal pro-imperialist policies but in fact seeking to shift the economy further to the right through wider opportunities for private sector expansion and fiscal tightening by reducing the funds for social security and social protection. The BJP promises “Minimum Government” that will “empower the weakest and the most neglected sections of Indian society, without any biases for caste, creed or religion”. In making this promise the BJP simultaneously does two things: first, it reaffirms its faith in the private sector; and second, it negates the social roots of inequality. It proposes, as an alternative, an undemocratic market-based meritocracy which in reality feeds on asset and income inequality and exacerbates social discrimination. Emboldened by the enormous and vocal support that the BJP have received from private capital, it now seeks to achieve a mandate for itself through an appeal to its core belief in Hindu majoritarianism.

Regional parties, many of which emerged in response to the aspirations of oppressed castes and deprived groups and communities and enjoy the support of working people in the state and regions, have failed to take their mandates forward and have come to be bogged down by neo-liberal policies and competitive regionalism. In the efforts to obtain or retain electoral office the regional parties, again without exception, have been opportunist in their engagement with the UPA or the NDA, at one time or another.

With parliamentary politics in crisis the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged through a campaign against the broken political system dominated by avaricious politicians and bureaucracy complicit with big business. This has in some measure and in some parts of the

country captured the imagination of the middle class and a section of the working class. While it has also been able to win over sections of the social and peoples’ movements, it has consciously remained ideologically non-committal. By refusing to align with various electoral and non-electoral progressive forces, the AAP has allowed itself the freedom to steer clear of ideological clarity. This is no different from the opportunism resorted to by regional parties who are less than transparent about the possibilities of their post-election alliances and reflects the lack of accountability of the parliamentary system to the electorate.

NTUI’s Call

The NTUI has always recognised the primacy of defending democracy and advancing democratic rights for protecting the objectives of a just and egalitarian society and advancing the rights of the working class. And yet the NTUI also recognises that none of the dominant political parties are reflective of the economic, social and political crisis and the necessity for advancing national development rooted in self-reliance and sustainability that can meet needs of the working class. Hence, the choices before the electorate are limited. With democracy as its core principle, the NTUI will strive to ensure that secular and democratic forces, reflective of the plurality within the country, come to government in this election.

At the same time the NTUI also recognises that neither can it influence this outcome on its own nor can it be achieved by merely all progressive trade unions coming together. The task of building a struggle for a just economy, an egalitarian society and a democratic polity that must go on beyond the general election calls for the widest possible united front of all progressive forces. The NTUI commits itself to this.

Defeat Communal and Right Wing Forces

Defend Democracy

Resist Imperialist Globalisation

Build a United Struggle for A Just Economy, an Egalitarian Society and a Democratic Polity

1. Protection of Basic Labour Rights

- i. Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining
 - Ratification of ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 and

Convention 98 on Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949.

- Repeal of all legislation like ESMA that violates the Right to strike
- Automatic Registration of Trade Unions to be completed within the timetable laid out under the Trade Unions Act 1926 and rules thereof with written reasons to be provided for refusal of granting registration
- Compulsory recognition of trade unions by employers and automatic reference to secret ballot where there is more than one trade union

ii. Forced Labour

- 8 hour workday for all
- No forced overtime work
- Non-payment of minimum wages to be made a cognisable offence in consonance with the Reptakos Bret case in which the Supreme Court ruled that non-payment of minimum wage amounts to a condition of forced labour.

iii. Equal Remuneration

- Equal pay for equal work for women workers, wherein the minimum wage, in any establishment is accepted as, at least, the lowest wage to a regular worker.

iv. Discrimination

- Equal benefits to contract workers comparable to those paid to regular workers and cannot in any case be lower than statutory levels of payment of PF, ESI and Gratuity.
- PF, ESI and Gratuity contribution for Piece rated workers not to be lower than that for the minimum wage.
- Equal conditions to contract workers in terms of access to canteens, uniforms, company transport, childcare and crèche facilities, etc

2. Amendment to Labour Laws

- i. Remove all ceiling under the Payment of Bonus Act
- ii. Amend the Industrial Disputes Act to ensure that complaints under sections 25 T and 25 U of the act can be raised directly in the Industrial Tribunal and do not have to go through conciliation proceedings before the Labour Commissioner.
- iii. Amend the Shops and Establishment Act to ensure that protection in consonance with chapter VB of the Industrial Disputes Act is extended.
- iv. Recognition of sales promotion workers as 'workmen' under the Industrial Disputes Act,

1947 in keeping with the Industrial Disputes (West Bengal Amendment) Act, 1981

- v. Amend Section 48 of the Factories Act, 1948 and Section 12 of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 for provision of crèche facility for workers so as to ensure that it is gender neutral. Provide crèche facility with adequate space and care providers in every workplace that employs more than 10 workers, regular or contract, men or women, with children less than 6 years of age.

3. Minimum Wage

- i. A national level floor minimum wage (NFLMW) determined on the basis of the 15th ILC norms for setting the minimum wage along with subsequent Supreme Court orders for all employments below which no minimum wage can fall in any state or employment. The national floor level minimum wage will apply to all employments that are not notified in any employment or state. In any case, no Minimum Wage should be less than that paid presently under the 6th Pay Commission and by its successor commissions.
- ii. The NFLMW to be recommended by a **Wage Commission** constituted by legislation which ensures a wage parity ratio not exceeding 1:24 in urban areas.
- iii. Link minimum wages to Dearness Allowance with 100% neutralisation; Half yearly revision of minimum wages keeping in accordance to the revision of Dearness Allowance.
- iv. 5 yearly revisions of the minimum wages by the Advisory Board should be made mandatory. In case the Board fails to revise, then the VDA of 5 years should be merged with the Basic along with a flat 16% increment (3% annual increment).
- v. Government to promote industry level wage agreement with lowest level of the industry wage being higher than the base level of the regional minimum wage to incorporate the productivity gains of the industry.
- vi. Payment of minimum wages to be made through cheques for all workers.
- vii. The right to inspect and prosecute cases of minimum wage violation should be extended to registered trade unions
- viii. Constitute Minimum Wage Boards on the pattern of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka for tea workers in Assam and West Bengal

4. Social Security

- i. **National Minimum Social Security Benefit to include:**

- **Health Care**– Mandatory lifelong comprehensive health care that includes coverage for hospitalisation, accidents, diseases caused by occupational health hazards, maternity benefit and non domiciliary treatment.
- **Old age Pension** – Pension computed on a uniform principle that applies to government employees. The pension must be linked to the statutory minimum monthly wage or the last drawn monthly wage whichever is higher and calculated as 50% of it.
- Regulation of social security through tripartite Welfare Boards that includes the representation of trade unions.
- Creation of National Social Security Fund through contributions from employers and through a national social security contribution to be made by all income tax payees.

ii. Provident Fund

- All workers who are not covered by any PF scheme must be directly covered by the EPFO with no lower limit of number of employees.
- No exemption to PF should be granted to any class of employers including cooperatives.
- In all cases of contract employment continuing for a year or more, the principal employer should be mandated to maintain a sub account for Provident Fund of contract workers.
- PF contributions should not be invested in shares.

iii. ESI

- Extend ESI facilities to all workers, including rural workers
- Allow self-registration of workers where employer-employee relationship cannot be established with the employers contribution paid by the state government
- All doctors and hospitals to provide medical help to ESI covered workers
- Incremental integration of the ESI system with the Public health system

5. Contract Work

- i. After completion of 240 days of continuous or aggregate employment contract workers in perennial employment be made tenured workers.
- ii. The system of automatic licensing of contractors should be immediately stopped. Issuance of contracts should be based on information of market exigency, seasonality, technology etc. Clear guidelines should be specified for qualification of contractors. Contractors

convicted for basic labour law violations, including non-payment of minimum wages, should be debarred from registration under the Act.

- iii. Payment of all contract workers employed in any establishment be through bank transfer.
- iv. Implement the 1983 Award of the Cement Wage Board that bars employment of contract workers in the cement industry except in loading and unloading.

6. Employment

i. Rural

- Immediately legislate an enactment to regulate working conditions of agricultural workers in consonance with the Kerala Agriculture Workers Act 1974.
- Increase the limit of NREGA to 150 days for every individual above the age of 18 in rural areas and to 200 days for SCs and STs.
- NREGA wage with 100% CPI neutralisation to be revised six monthly

ii. Urban

- Confirm all contract workers with more than 240 days of employment under a single principal employer by 1 June 2015.
- Legislation of National Urban Employment Guarantee Act which includes provision of a wage subsidy to enterprises registered under the S&E Act and the Factories Act that fall into the category of micro and small enterprises.
- Ensure access to housing, education and social security for workers including migrant workers.

iii. Government

- Confirm all contract workers with more than 240 days of employment under a single principal employer by 1 June 2015.
- Regularise all 'honorarium workers' like Anganwadi employed bodies by central, state and local government immediately
- Fix a wage cap of 1:12 on salary differential between the lowest paid and highest paid government employee.

7. Right to Food

- i. National Food Security Act to be universal
- ii. No dilution of Supreme Court Orders on Right to Food
- iii. No to Genetically Modified crops and seeds, in the absence of adequate testing, and liberal patent regimes, especially in the case of

pharmaceuticals, are detrimental to food and health security

iv. Public Distribution System

- Ensure universal access to PDS in both rural and urban areas with expansion of the distribution network, increases in quantities supplied in consonance with consumption needs and at prices in line with minimum wages.
- Expansion of PDS to include all essential commodities. Food grains should include millets, pulses, oil over and above basic cereals. Recent research also suggests that the size of individual PDS shops may be a constraint in delivering the NFSA. It therefore may be necessary to expand the PDS
- PDS to be linked to control of prices of cereals and other essential commodities.
- Portable Smart Cards for PDS to ensure access for migrant workers. Smart cards to take nuclear families as the unit for Household. A household may have a single member.
- Transparent, participatory, effective, efficient and justiciable delivery system.
- Minimum Support Price for food grain production to be so fixed such that it provides an incentive for food production.
- No cash transfers for provisions under NFSA and PDS

v. ICDS, MDM

- Universalise ICDS for all children under 6 years and MDM in schools for children upto Std X for 12 months of the year.
- Provide pregnant and lactating women daily financial support equivalent to the daily minimum wage for a period of six months (three months before and after child birth);
- Anganwadi centres to be upgraded to crèches
- Identification and treatment for acute malnutrition to be included in ICDS
- Anganwadi workers and helpers, MDM workers to be regularised as government employees in respective departments in order to ensure their services in delivery of these government programmes.

vi. Special provision to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, destitute, etc.

vii. Special provision for natural and human-made disasters.

8. Right to Health

i. All workers to be brought under ILO Convention 155 on Occupational Safety and Health

ii. Right to Healthcare Act

- Legislate a Right to Healthcare Act that lay down the framework for provision of quality and free health care through the public healthcare system and regulation of the private sector. Providing entitlements must be accompanied by a clear framework for accountability and grievance redressal.
- Expand the public health care system, including comprehensive integration of the three levels of the public health systems, as well as the ESI and centres specialising in OHS, including creating of rural infrastructure (PHCs and sub-health centres).
- Define a clear, transparent and time-bound road map for strengthening and expanding the public health system while improving its functioning and accountability. This must include allocation of adequate, increased budgets.
- Raise budget allocation for health to 10 percent of GDP by 2015.
- Ensure all components of health systems are involved in an integrated response to the specific health needs of working populations.
- Regularise ASHAs, ANMs and all other contract health workers and increase the number of health workers per 10,000 population from 19 to 23 (WHO norm)
- Compulsory rural tenure for all doctors at every stage of their career to be linked to career progression.

iii. Rational Drug Policy and IPR

- Enact a National Rational Drug Policy that promotes generics and limits patents
- Strengthen the Indian Patent Act, 1970 and use the powers available under Section 100 of the Patent Act, to issue notifications calling for application by generic drug manufacturers for the grant of compulsory licenses by the Patent Controller on specific drugs and uphold the substance and rational of the clause 3 (d) of the Patents Act 1970 as a safeguard against evergreening, i.e. the extension of patent monopolies of known drugs and the consequent delay in the availability of affordable generic versions.
- Rejuvenate and strengthen the public sector in the pharmaceutical industry for large scale production of affordable generic medicines
- All essential drugs including its combinations and all dosage forms to be included under Drug Price Control Order (DPCO).

- Ensure strict vigilance and stringent measures against manufacture of spurious Drugs.
- Establish a national Ethical Monitoring Cell for monitoring clinical trials under the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR). Strict monitoring of Contract Research Organisations (CROs) to prevent illegal clinical trials.

iv. Occupational Health and Safety

- Put in place a single law on occupational safety, health and industrial and workplace hazards that covers all work and workers.
- The workplace should also serve as a setting for delivery of other essential public-health interventions, and for health promotion.
- ESI hospitals and clinics specialising in OHS should be set up in areas identified as hosting large numbers of vulnerable workers/industries.
- Add all occupational diseases, injuries and health hazards to Workmen's Compensation Act if it is not listed in schedule 3.
- Higher compensation for death or permanent disability due to occupational health hazard. Special assistance to all those suffering from occupational diseases in service and post retirement.
- Appoint Commission to assess and award full compensation to affected people, decide penalty for the environment damage and cancellation of the licenses of all industries causing pollution.

9. Right to Education

- i. Improve educational outcomes along with enrolment by ensuring education in mother tongue in primary schools
- ii. Raise budget allocation for education to 10 per cent of GDP by 2019 to actualise the provisions under the Right to Education Act, 2009.
- iii. Ensure enrolment of children of migrant workers in schools at the point of destination to ensure continuity of schooling
- iv. Regularise all para-teachers under the SSA in the pay and grade as regular teachers based on their experience and qualification.
- v. Improvement and access to Technical Training, especially for women, dalits, adivasis, religious minorities and other socially backward communities for skill development
- vi. Implement recommendation of the Knowledge

Commission for expansion of Public libraries across the country

10. Right over Natural Resources

- i. Balanced land allocation policy to ensure sufficient land and water are dedicated to ensure sufficiency in food production.
- ii. Appoint a National Commission on Land Acquisition to ensure livelihood security of the potentially displaced and a moratorium on land acquisition until livelihood security is addressed.
- iii. Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013
 - Ensure livelihood security and rehabilitation and fair compensation to landless dependents on land already acquired
 - Ensure women's right over community land and other natural resources
 - Ensure protection of urban poor
- iv. Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006
 - Community governance over natural resources- Establish a democratic structure, with active participation of forest working people, in forest governance focussing on protection of livelihood and resources.
 - Minor Forest Produce/ Non-timber Forest Produce (MFP/NTFP) – Amend co-operative laws to enable forest dwelling people to gather/collect, sell such products for enhancing their livelihood.
 - Expedite implementation of Community Forest Rights
 - Withdrawal of all cases on minor offences on all forest dwelling people
 - Initiate social security schemes and set up schools, hospitals and roads
 - Encourage traditional forestry as against commercial forestry.
- v. Fisher people
 - Independent central ministry for fisheries
 - Enact a legislation on protection and regulation of fishworkers
 - Monetary compensation for death while fishing during rough seas
 - Recognition of community rights of traditional fishing communities
 - Recognition, regulation and protection of fish vendors, mostly women
 - Regulation of trawlers and corporate fishing entities

- Strict implementation of the ban on coastal sand mining as ordered by the National Green Tribunal.
 - Revive the CRZ notification 1991 in spirit and principle. Strengthen the authorities for monitoring and taking action against the violations
 - Stop coastal (Sea) reclamation
- vi. Repeal the SEZ Act, 2005 and the proposal for setting up NMIZs
- vii. Coastal Area Regulation
- viii. Extend the PESA Act, 1996 to all scheduled areas.
- ix. Climate Justice
- Ensure urgent cut in emissions by elites thus enforcing equality and equity in resource-sharing. Develop an effective framework that promotes the use of public transport alongside binding restrictions on the use of vehicles for private purposes, and one that prevents displacement of the poor in towns and cities.
 - Redraw the energy strategy to move towards a more sustainable, equitable, employment and livelihood-generating renewable and bio-energy sources and strategies, in a time-bound manner.
 - A strict principle of “polluter pays” should be implemented for costing and comparing various energy options. The government must cease to be party to any market-based solutions like carbon trading.
 - Repeal the Electricity Act, 2003 and all its ramifications and replace it with legislation that ensures electricity for all and meets the needs of the economy.
 - Nuclear energy, bio-fuels as energy solutions to be reviewed in a transparent and democratic manner.
 - Support the payment for ecological debt for historical emissions and current adaptation and respect, protect and promote the sovereignty and rights of nations and people, with national boundaries and globally.
 - The costs of mitigation and restructuring are paid for through direct investment by the government defined by the paramount principle of the public good.
 - India should take the lead in building a consensus among developing economies to commit to mitigation targets, which should be binding through national legislation.

11. Right to Affordable Housing and Transport

i. Housing

- Ensure redevelopment of slums with basic amenities and decent housing, with security of tenure for all urban slum dwellers and ensure that all evictions, in both urban and rural areas, are justiciable.
- Regulation of private rent providers
- Allocate a fixed percentage of the budget to public / low cost housing in order to meet the severe housing deficit, especially in large cities. This should be mandated in all city and village development plans, and should include reservation of land and earmarked funds for housing for all low-income groups.
- Ensure provision and monitoring equal access to basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity.
- Ensure people’s participation in the development of all city, town and village plans, including housing /settlement plans, as well as national housing policies and policies related to basic services such as water and sanitation.
- Ensure Regulation of Real Estate Sector
- Special schemes should be implemented that prioritise reallocation of surplus, land to landless dalits and adivasis. Urgent measures to be taken to prevent atrocities and violence against dalits and adivasis, including women, in their struggle to gain equal access to land, housing and basic services. These acts of violence against Dalits due to land disputes are punished under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989).
- Introduce a higher rate of property tax @ 50% higher than the circle rate for all properties valued at above Rs 1 crore.

ii. Public Transport

- Ensure safe, secure, reliable, balanced, diverse and sustainable integrated transport system to provide better access and mobility.
- Ensure that public owned urban transport facilities are introduced in all towns with a population of over 2,50,000;
- Dedicated bus lanes are in place in all cities with population above 1 million;
- Public owned bus services reach every village and are frequent;
- Build the necessary infrastructure and

- facilities to extend the coverage of the transport system in the city
- Daily bus pass on both public and private bus services are affordable and are therefore maintained at not more than 10% of the lowest state minimum wage per day of a working person.
- No to contractualisation of work in public transport; Regularisation of all workers in public transport to ensure safety and security of passengers.
- Introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in urban centres to reduce construction time, travel time, and cost of travel.
- Integrate multiple modes of urban public transport with common tickets and passes.
- Strict regulation of private transport to include fares, safety and quality of service.
- Public participation in planning of transport system
- Railways
 - Extension and improvement in frequency of railway connections to ensure better access
 - Provision of hourly train service between metro cities and towns within 500 Kms.
 - Provision of clean toilets and drinking water at bus stations and railway platforms
 - The subsidy on railway fares up to the sleeper class to be offset by the fares of higher classes.
 - Shift road freight to rail freight through an appropriate mechanism of incentives.
- Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana
 - Extend the scheme to all pregnant women
 - The cash transfer should be for 6 months of maternity leave and at the rate of the National floor level monthly minimum wage.
 - Anganwadi on demand
 - Remove restriction of the two-child norm or of the age of mother
 - Remove restriction on non-institutional deliveries
- iii. Immediate enactment of a national domestic workers legislation to ensure
 - Fixation of minimum wages and working hours, including day of weekly rest and paid leave, maternity leave
 - Compulsory registration of domestic workers with a Domestic Workers Welfare Board
 - Regulation of private employment agencies by the tripartite Welfare Board
 - Right to association and collective bargaining
 - Protection against workplace harassment, including sexual harassment
- iv. Immediate ratification of ILO convention 189 on Domestic Workers.
- v. Protection of women from Sexual crimes
 - Violence at Home and Public Spaces
 - ❖ Stringent implementation of
 - The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 to prevent female foeticide
 - The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
 - The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
 - ❖ Amend the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 to include the Justice Verma Committee Recommendations on marital rape, AFSPA, as well as in the definition of rape or sexual assault as not being gender neutral by recognising that the perpetrators of sexual violence are male, while the victims could be gender plural.
 - ❖ Amendment of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
 - Decriminalise adult consensual sex work
 - Repeal Section 8 of the ITPA, 1956 to ensure protection of sex workers under law
 - Violence at Work

12. Gender

- i. Recognition of women’s work
 - Regularise all honorarium workers in government employments in recognition of their work.
 - Decriminalise sex work and recognition and legal protection of their right to work
- ii. Maternity benefits
 - Extend provisions under the Maternity Benefit Act to all women workers employed in establishments falling under the Factories Act and the Shop and Establishment Act and honorary workers employed in the delivery of government programmes.
 - National Maternity Benefit Scheme/ Indira

- Implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
 - Include Domestic workers and home-based workers in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
 - Sexual Harassment Committee at all workplaces with more than 10 workers
- vi. Decriminalise consensual sexual relations between persons of same sex through the repeal of Section 377 of the IPC

13. Affirmative Action and Protection of Religious Minorities

- i. Mandatory affirmative action in private sector employment
- ii. Immediately clear all backlogs in recruitment in the reserved category in all employments.
- iii. Implement the recommendations of the Ranganath Mishra Report to include Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Caste origin for constitutional guarantees. The eligibility for membership of the Scheduled Castes should not be linked to religious status.
- iv. Implement the recommendations of the Sachar Committee report to improve access to education, to increase employment share and participation in public bodies of Muslims.
- v. Immediately legislate the Women's Reservation Bill
- vi. Expansion of employment opportunities for women, dalits and adivasis in regular government employment.
- vii. Repeal Freedom of Religion Act in the states where it exists that restricts freedom to choose religion.
- viii. Legislate a Targeted Violence [Prevention, Control and Reparations] Bill immediately

14. Right to Justice

- i. Reform of the criminal and civil justice system to ensure time bound completion of cases, accountability and transparency.
- ii. Abolish Death Penalty
- iii. Legislate a national law along the line of the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, 2013

15. Protection of Democratic Rights and Right to Democratic Dissent

- i. Repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958

- ii. Repeal all sedition laws including Section 124(A) of the IPC, 1860
- iii. Repeal the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2008
- iv. Resolve all existing false cases within 90 days of formation of government

16. Regeneration of Public Sector

- i. No disinvestment of the public sector
- ii. Reinvest in the Public Sector to reform and regenerate it so as to direct private investment in order to ensure economic equalities, social justice and environmental sustainability is maintained.

17. Cooperatives and Retail

- i. Ensure legislatively to provide for funds both from the exchequer and from public sector banks and insurance companies for the cooperative sector.
- ii. Introduce a national policy for the development of integrated credit and consumer cooperatives.
- iii. Restrict all multi-brand retail to cooperative ownership

18. Private Sector

- i. Compulsory audit by the CAG in all PPPs
- ii. To prevent evergreening of loans, introduce compulsory independent audit from an RBI appointed panel of auditors of companies under the Corporate Debt Restructuring scheme.
- iii. Make mandatory for Companies to disclose separately the (i) the distribution of their employee costs between workers and non-workers and (ii) payment to contractors engaged under the provisions of the Contract Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act.
- iv. Create a public fund for distribution of the 2% Corporate Social Responsibility expenditure under the Companies Act 2013
- v. Takeover of abandoned and closed Tea Plantations by the Tea Board as per the Tea Act and payment of all dues to workers by the Tea Board in all cases of abandonment by the owner. Subsequent handing over of the plantation to workers' cooperatives, if there are any.
- vi. Expansion of the coverage of the RTI Act to be extended to include all companies registered under the Companies Act that (i) are in default of a loan from a public sector bank or (ii) contributes more than 1% of its annual sales in the form of royalty or any other transfer to a

parent or holding company registered in India or abroad or (iii) is a concessionaire or a recipient of a concession under law or (iv) is a public utility, or (v) is covered under the provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, or (vi) has a Gross Capital Employed of over Rs. 100 crores or a annual sale of Rs. 3000 crores, or having more than 10% of capital employed contributed public sector undertakings (vii) is a banking company (vii) is in the business of running a hospital, diagnostic centre, undertaking clinical trials or providing any other medical facility.

- vii. Expansion and mandatory implementation of The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 in all states.

19. Macroeconomic Reform

i. Industrial Policy:

To put in place an industrial policy that fosters expansion of the manufacturing industry that satisfies three important goals:

- To ensure the expansion of autonomous technological development, where we have developed technology at global standards, in order to scale up the benefits, ensure technological absorption, make this technology available to public sector enterprises.
- To that industrial exports can meet the country's import costs.
- To ensure that the central public sector enterprises together with state government owned public enterprises provide the instruments to ensure that effective industrial policy is an important element of an equitable and just growth strategy and for this purpose legislatively provide for funds both from the exchequer and from public sector banks and insurance companies in order to insulate and shelter indigenous industrial development from the vagaries of the market.

ii. Monetary Policy

- Reject the recommendations of the Urjit Patel Committee on interest rate policy to be set by inflation targeting and CPI indexation.
- Tighten money and capital market regulation
- Regulate the insurance providing for costless withdrawal of small investors.

- Protection of small savings – place floor of Rs. 50,000 on investment in mutual funds and abolish the Rajiv Gandhi Share Investment Scheme.
- Incentivise protected small savings through PFI instruments.
- RBI's mandate must include both growth and inflation control.

iii. Fiscal Policy

- Fiscal Devolution
- Progressive taxation – freeze the current floor of payment of Income tax, introduce a tax rate on incomes of above Rs. 10 lakhs to 40% and above Rs. 20 lakhs to 50%.
- Introduce income tax on agricultural incomes based on a 5 year average income span.
- Introduce progressive taxation on luxury consumption.
- Introduce an inheritance tax for all inheritance above Rs. 1 crore.
- Removal of taxes (including octroi) on non-processed food and sales taxes on essential commodities and generic medicines.
- Include repeated royalty payments – paid to a holding or related party - beyond 5 years as a component of profit.
- Bring down the ratio of direct to indirect taxes to 1:1 by 2019.

20. Trade Policy

- i. An activist trade policy that is integrated with industrial policy and protects food security
- ii. Parliamentary accountability of trade negotiations and consultation with state governments.
- iii. Stop TRIPS plus provisions in bilateral FTAs

21. Foreign Policy

- i. Secure Global peace by
 - Building on equality of nations and respect for human dignity within countries that eliminates all forms of racism, xenophobia, religious and social prejudices and demonisation of Muslims and other peoples
 - Global disarmament and denuclearisation

- Securing and sustaining independence, sovereignty and right of development of nations
 - Demilitarisation of the society by abrogating all laws that enables military to intervene in domestic social and political conflict
 - All states signing and ratifying the Rome Treaty of the International Criminal Court.
 - Supporting liberation movements and struggles of nations against aggression by the US and its allies and by other expansionist powers.
 - Working for a genuine and just settlement of the Palestinian peoples' right to self determination and securing the early, complete and permanent withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and Afghanistan and withdraw the sanctions against Iran.
 - Initiating diplomatic and economic sanctions against military regimes
 - Abrogating of Indo-US nuclear treaty
 - Democratise the UN system.
- ii. Build a South Asia on the basis of:
- Democracy, Secularism and Social equality by eliminating all forms of discrimination
 - Peaceful political settlement of aspirations of peoples' for right to self determination
 - Regional framework for peaceful and equitable development of peoples and nations of this region with resolution of bilateral issues, including border disputes and where needed renegotiation of bilateral treaties, on the basis of equality and mutual interest
 - Reduce and channelise defence spending for social development and demilitarise the region including nuclear disarmament.
 - Scrap all strategic military agreements with US and Israel towards eliminating US hegemony
- iii. Ensure Rights of Migrant Workers: Ensure people have the right to work anywhere in the country without obstruction. Assure migrant workers the security of movement and right to livelihood, facilitate easy visa and naturalisation and penalise human trafficking. In particular, provide mechanism for work permits for South Asian countries and protect fishing rights of the fisher communities in South Asia in the territorial waters of the South Asian region.
- iv. Issuance of short stay tourist visa on arrival to all citizens of member SAARC countries without any restrictions and police reporting.
- 22. Democracy**
- i. Government**
- Bring all public servants, elected representatives, office holders having constitutional cover as well as members of the judiciary under the ambit of anti-corruption legislation which includes punitive measures.
 - Right to public services and public provisions that is time bound and justiciable
- ii. Political Parties**
- Bring political parties registered under the Representation of the People Act under RTI.
- iii. Media**
- Strengthen public broadcasting by ensuring 100% fiscal support for All India Radio and Doordarshan.
 - Empower the Press Complaints Commission with statutory powers including for punitive action

SPECIAL REPORT

International Women's Day Celebrated

On 8 March 1857, over a hundred and fifty years ago, women working in clothing and textile factories in New York City staged a protest against inhumane working conditions, a 10 hour workday, low wages and equal rights for women. They were brutally attacked by the police who openly fired at the protestors and dispersed them. Two years later, in March 1859, the first labour union of women garment workers was formed.

Hundred and fifty years later, the story of women workers in the countries of the global south, especially in South Asia, is not much different. Hundreds of workers, mostly women, have died in garment factory fires in Bangladesh. The largest employment generated in the last decade in India to meet the millennium development goals is that of honorarium workers, an overwhelming majority being women, paid poverty wages far below the minimum wage. With the rise in inequality, and the income growth of a certain section of the urban population, there has been a substantial rise in

the demand for domestic workers. But no regulation governs this large number of workers in urban centres. Acute distress has pushed women into hazardous and precarious employments as well as to self-employment. Indiscriminate land grabbing for industrialization, mining and urbanization, threatens the livelihood of traditional communities disproportionately affecting women and children. The neo-liberalisation project has accentuated the double burden on women.

Breaking through the existing low wage-low skill trap is a challenge not limited to women workers but to the entire working class as this acts as a drag down on wages and conditions of work for the entire working class. In a speech in 1896, fourteen years before she proposed the celebration of 8 March as the International Women's Day, Clara Zetkin said, "*...The proletariat will be able to attain its liberation only if it fights together without the difference of nationality and profession. In the same way, it can attain its liberation only if it stands together without the distinction of sex. The incorporation of the great masses of proletarian women in the liberation struggle of the proletariat is one of the prerequisites for the victory of the socialist idea and for the construction of a socialist society.*"

Protest actions by different key NTUI affiliates unionising women workers from different sectors across the country marked International Women's Day celebrations. In **Mumbai**, the Maharashtra Rajya Anganwadi Karmachari Sangh held a huge public meeting at the Azad Maidan to celebrate their monthlong strike that won them retirement benefits and an increase in their honorarium. They also resolved to fight against the social evils of dowry, female infanticide and foeticide. Rich tribute was paid to Savitribai Phule on her death anniversary (10 March) and her struggle for right to education of dalit women. Comrades M.A. Patil, Milind Ranade and Maya Parmeshwar joined the celebrations and resolved to take the struggle forward for equal wages for equal work, to unionise ASHA workers, domestic workers and other informal women workers in large numbers to strengthen the struggle.

In **Mysore**, the Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) along with the Garments Mahila Karmikara Munnade organised a 'Women in Black' protest against all forms of violence on women workers. This was followed by a huge rally and a public meeting attended by GATWU members from Mysore and Maddur.

Over a hundred members of the Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam (PTS) and the Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU) held a meeting at the Union office, in **Chennai** to both celebrate the recent notification of minimum wages for garment workers and resolved to build a sustained struggle for minimum wages for

domestic workers. With campaign for the forthcoming general elections in full swing, the union activists resolved to use the election as a bargaining juncture with the political parties. Speaking on the occasion, Com. R Sumathi, General Secretary, PTS stressed on the need for strengthening the branch units to resist evictions and building a united struggle for housing rights. Com. N Santhanamari, the Treasurer, PTS spoke on the need to curb alcoholism and violence within the family and the need for safety and security in public spaces. Young daughters of union members performed a play titled - "My mother's day out at work" - showing the long hours of work and their everyday struggle. The play ended with, things will change with our mother's joining the union and upholding their rights!

Protesting against the continuing apathy of the state government, Mid day Meal Workers Union, held a demonstration in **Khadur Sahib in Tarn Taran district in Punjab** and burnt an effigy of the Chief Minister. The union is demanding a minimum wage of Rs. 7028 as against the current paltry monthly honorarium of Rs. 1200, for only 10 months of the year. Speaking at the demonstration, Comrades Mamta Sharma, General Secretary and Manjeet Kaur demanded an end to discrimination in wages and benefits between men and women workers in government employment. The women workers were also discriminated on the basis of their caste, pointed out Com. Germanjit Singh.

The All India Union Of Forest Working People (AIUFWP) organised the second Com. Bharati Roy Chowdhury Memorial lecture on 9 March in **Delhi** in remembrance of her tireless struggles against violence against women, patriarchy and for the development of women leadership in communities, both urban and in forest areas. Speaking on the theme: Women Resisting Violence – Assertions, Struggles and Solidarity, both Comrades Sukalo Gond, senior AIUFWP adivasi woman leader from Sonbhadra and Seema Murmu from Dumka, Jharkhand, narrated their continuing struggle against the forces of feudalism, patriarchy and capitalism on one hand, and their victories in winning thousands of hectares of forest land under the FRA, and their efforts at collectivisation as against individual ownership of natural resources.

AFFILIATE NEWS

GATWU wins historic increase in minimum wages for garment workers in Bangalore: *Bangalore, 6 March 2014:* After a prolonged struggle and campaign by the Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU) for a new minimum wage, after a year since the High Court order directing the government to "pass appropriate orders as expeditiously as possible, and in any event not later than three months from the date of

receipt of copy of this order”, and several rounds of tripartite negotiations, the Karnataka government finally notified a new minimum wage for garment workers in the state.

As per the new notification dated 28 February 2013, the daily minimum wage for garment workers is as below:

Zone	Category	Basic	DA	Total
I	Unskilled	220	32.53	252.53
	Semi-skilled	229	32.53	261.53
	Skilled	232	32.53	264.53
	Highly-skilled	240	32.53	272.53
II	Unskilled	215	32.53	247.53
	Semi-skilled	224	32.53	256.53
	Skilled	227	32.53	259.53
	Highly-skilled	235	32.53	267.53
III	Unskilled	210	32.53	242.53
	Semi-skilled	219	32.53	251.53
	Skilled	222	32.53	254.53
	Highly-skilled	230	32.53	262.53

In 2009, the government in a draft notification set a minimum wage of a basic pay of Rs. 96.20, which was, in a fresh notification in 2010, revised to Rs. 114.10 (including Dearness Allowance). The notification was never implemented, barring in a few large-sized export-oriented companies.

AIUFWP celebrates Shaheed Diwas in Delhi: 24 March 2014: About 3000 women and men from the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh representing different social movements along with the All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP) gathered at Shaheed Park, Feroze Shah Kotla ground, New Delhi on 23 March to commemorate Shaheed Diwas – the day of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev.

Speaking at the meeting, Comrade T Peter of the National Fishworkers Forum noted the significance of the coming together of organisations of forest working people, the fishworkers, the agricultural workers, into a new and concrete alliance on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections. Comrades Ashok Choudhary, General Secretary, AIUFWP and D Thankappan also spoke on the relevance of militant struggles to take forward a collective revolutionary vision.

This meeting was followed by a rally to Jantar Mantar, where community leaders from different regions asserted the importance of alliance building and broader unity to strengthen the roots of new people-centric political formations.

On 24 March, about 200 community leaders held a strategy meeting to discuss, debate and draw up a Peoples’ Demand Charter.



GEFONT successfully holds 6th National Congress: Kathmandu, 31 March 2014: GEFONT held its Sixth National Congress on the theme **Transformation: By Building Workers' Power** between 28 to 31 March 2014. Attended by 605 delegates from all sectors, with a third of women, the congress focussed on the role and importance of workers in transformation of state, society and economy. Over 40 international delegates also attended the congress. The NTUI President, Com. N Vasudevan extended solidarity to all members of GEFONT and discussed areas of future collaboration.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

Fifth National Convention of the Right to Food Campaign in Sanand: 4 March 2014: The 5th National Convention of the Right to Food and Work Campaign was held in Sanand, Gujarat on 1 - 3 March. Over 2000 delegates from 17 states and an South Asian delegation from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal attended the Convention.

The Convention this year was on the theme: National Food Security Act (NFSA) and Beyond: Right to Food, Democracy and Social Justice. Delegates at the convention discussed and debated beyond the Food Security Act which was passed the last year. There were efforts to look into the issues of food sovereignty and a sustainable basis for food security beyond the existing distribution mechanism. It dealt with approaches in eliminating hunger and inequalities and about building alliances to strengthen democracy.

A special plenary on ‘Insaaf ke Dagar Par’ was organised on the first day. Several victims of communal violence from the 2001 Gujarat Genocide, Muzzafarnagar and Assam shared stories of fear, courage and communal harmony.

Apart from the plenaries, a number of parallel workshops were organized that discussed key issues of food security and sovereignty.

The conference ended enthusiastically with a public meeting on 'Gujarat's Development – Claims and Reality' in Ahmedabad to arrive at the 'Ahmedabad Declaration on the Right to Food, Democracy and Social Justice'.

NEWS UPDATE

Spate of Lockouts in Bangalore at Financial year-end: 27 March 2014: Toyota Kirloskar Motors Pvt Ltd (TKM) – a subsidiary of of Toyota Motor Corporation – producing 6 models including Innova, Fortuner, Corolla, Camry and Etios at the Bidadi plant - declared a lock-out on 16 March, Sunday, demanding a Good Conduct Undertaking from over 4000 workers employed at the twin plants and suspended 17 key activists of the union, including union office bearers.

The management has dragged negotiations over the charter of demands from April 2013 with the TKM Employees' Union (TKMEU). No settlement has been reached even after 7 tripartite meetings. Reduction of work load, wage revision, holidays and housing are a few of the demands in the charter placed by the Union.

The management has offered a Rs 3050 wage hike as against the demand for Rs 4000 by the union. The Toyota Kirloskar Vice Chairman, Shekar Viswanathan, in a media interview said *"If we increase the salary too much, then it will affect the rest of our ecosystem of suppliers and in the end, we may have to pay more for our parts, which will increase our costs, making Toyota less competitive."*

The differential in wage for 4200 workers in a month that is the cause of this dispute is less than Rs 40 lakh which is the cost of less than 3 Innovas!

The twin plants produce about 700 vehicles a day!

The management lifted the 8- day lock out on 25 March and started production with non-union members - contract workers and engineers – as the Union continues to refuse to sign the good conduct undertaking.

The struggle at Toyota continues as 2 other plants in and around Bangalore, declared lockouts. Bombay Rayon Fashions Ltd (BRFL), a garment manufacturing unit at Doddaballapur, declared a lock out simultaneously with Toyota. The union at the BRFL plant is demanding a wage increase. Stumpp Schuele and Somappa plant on Hosur Road, Koramangala

producing springs, declared a lockout on 6 March over a dispute over the transfer of a contract worker to another unit on 1 March. The contract workers protested against this arbitrary transfer in order to victimise and went on a strike. They were joined by the permanent workers on 6 March. The management retaliated by declaring a lockout.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Bangladesh: Bangladesh Accord announces first round of factory inspection reports: 11 March 2014: Nearly a year after the Rana Plaza collapse, killing more than 1,100 workers, the Bangladesh Accord Foundation, will inspect 1,500 Bangladesh garment factories by early September. The Accord is a legally binding agreement between international trade unions IndustriALL and UNI Global, Bangladesh trade unions, and international brands and retailers. The Clean Clothes Campaign and the Workers' Rights Consortium, International Labour Rights Forum and Maquila Solidarity Network are witnesses to the agreement with the ILO as the independent chair. Inspection reports on the first 10 factories were released on 11 March and found that some lacked adequate fire escapes, did not have required sprinkler systems and had dangerously high weight loads on several floors. The Accord's first set of inspections focused on buildings with at least five floors that have multiple factories.

Cambodia: Garment workers march to Freedom Park demanding minimum wages on International Women's Day: Phnom Penh, 8 March 2014: Cambodian government refused to provide permission to the trade unions to hold a public forum at the capital's Freedom Park on 8 March. The Collective Union of Movement of Workers, however decided to go ahead with the forum demanding a minimum wage of U.S. \$ 160 for garment workers and a call for the release of the 21 protesters who were imprisoned following the violent suppression of garment worker demonstrations in January, the prosecution of military police who shot dead five garment workers and injured at least 40 more and an end to legal intimidation of union leaders. Hundreds of union activists, mostly women, marched to Freedom Park and held the meeting despite heavy armed police presence.

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