

TAMIL NADU

'Concerted fight of workers across sectors needed now'

**STAFF REPORTER**

MADURAI, NOVEMBER 20, 2017 00:00 IST

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 20, 2017 04:23 IST

Centre favours corporates under the pretext of 'ease of doing business': CITU

Alleging that rights of workers have come under severe attack after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government came to power at the Centre in 2014, A.K. Padmanabhan, vice-president, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), said that greater unity and a concerted fight of workers across sectors were required to counter this attack.

Delivering the inaugural address at the 13th triennial conference of All India Regional Rural Bank Employees' Association here on Sunday, Mr. Padmanabhan said, "While many decades-old demands remain unfulfilled, even rights hard-won through continuous struggles since pre-Independence era are being taken away now."

Pointing out that the peasantry in the country had begun to organise themselves in many regions against anti-farmer policies of the government, Mr. Padmanabhan said trade unions in the country, with experience in organising struggles, must initiate steps to help farmers in putting up a united fight.

“Employees of Regional Rural Banks (RRB) can take the lead in this,” he said.

Pradip Biswas, general secretary, Banking Employees Federation of India, blamed the Centre of dismantling institutions such as the Planning Commission. Highlighting that the employees of RRBs and other public-sector banks were united in their struggle, he said trade unions would not let the Union government’s agenda of gradually privatising all banks.

R. Vijaya Sankar, Editor, Frontline magazine, said trade unions must be aware of the inefficient role played by the media, which he blamed for failing to represent rural India and the real economic and social issues.

Pointing out that increasing commercialisation, business reasons, coercion by government and many other factors were affecting the functioning of media, he appealed to the members of trade unions in banking and other sectors to effectively use social media to bring out their issues.

Noted economist Venkatesh B. Athreya highlighted the rural and agrarian crisis facing the country and stressed the need for banking sector employees, particularly those in RRBs, to play a leading role in mobilising rural population to fight against the anti-poor policies of the government.

N. Ravichandran, Chairman, Pandyan Grama Bank, and Manoranjan Sahu, Chairman, Pudukkottai Bharathiar Grama Bank, were also among those who spoke.

The key demands to be discussed on the three-day conference include pension parity for the staff of RRBs, opposition to privatisation of RRBs, granting autonomy to RRBs by de-linking them from their sponsor banks and forming a National Rural Bank of India, and regularisation of casual and daily wage workers in RRBs.

