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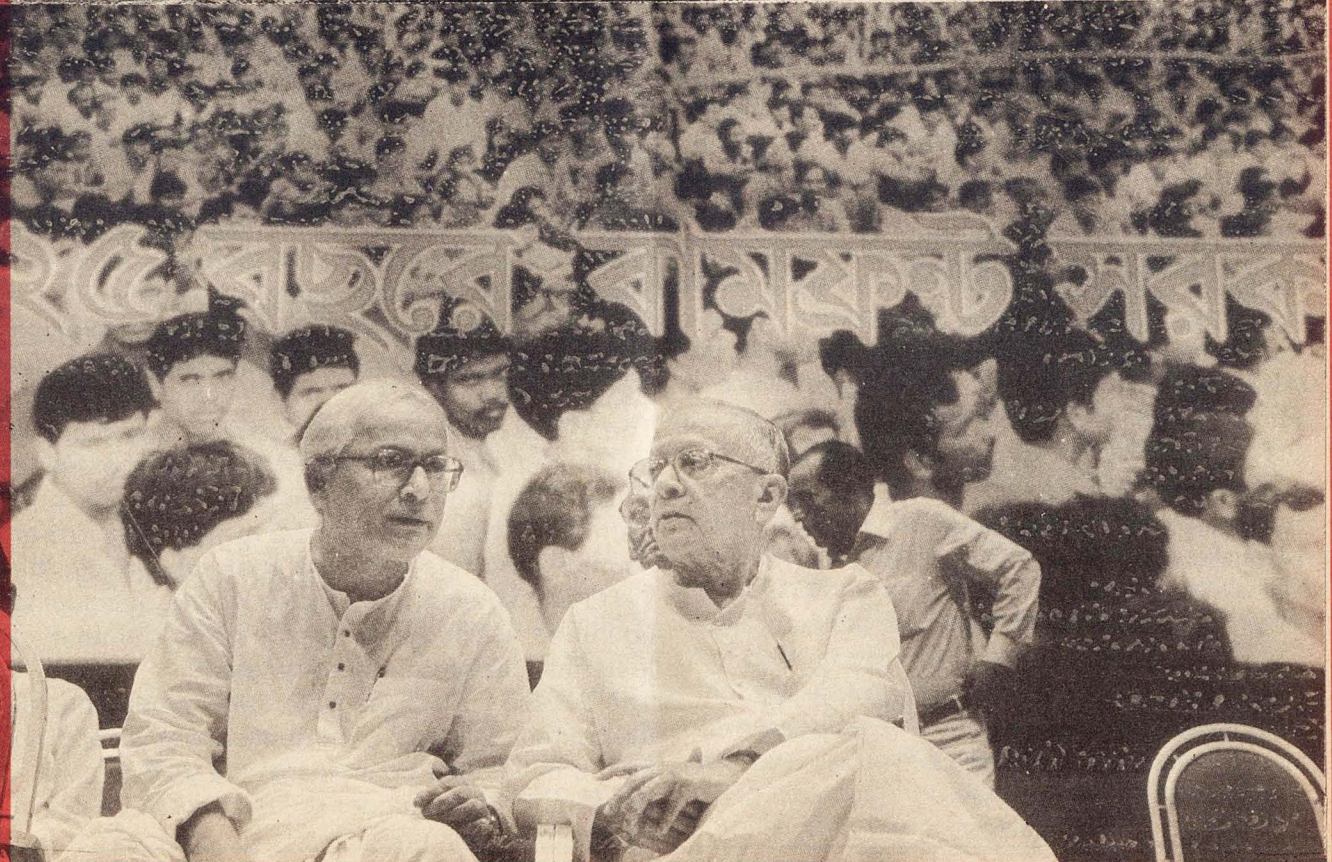
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THE WORKING CLASS

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Glorious Twenty Five Years of Left Front Government

WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW: PRESSURES ON INDIA

In 1989, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) had instituted the Trade Policy Review (TPR) Mechanism. The review entails conducting an examination of the trade policies and practices of each WTO member country at regular intervals to detect significant trends and developments. It is based on two reports - one prepared by the WTO secretariat and the other by the Government of the country concerned. Under this TPR, the WTO review of India's policies have been held in 1993, 1998 and the latest on 19-21 June, 2002, now.

There were reports that the United States of America and the European Union would take up the issue of high incidence of anti-dumping duties in India at the trade policy review.

WTO members were also reported to be planning to tighten the noose around India, seeking an explanation for the tardy growth in the country's imports despite the removal of quantitative restrictions from April, 2001.

According to *Business Standard* (18 June), Commerce Department officials told that the issue had been raised by a number of members,

including the US, Canada and Japan, as well as Brazil, Bangladesh and China. Despite the removal of quantitative restrictions, there has been no surge of imports into India. Countries have questioned whether this is attributable to imposition of non-tariff barriers.

Why this ringing of alarm bells?

India had announced removal of quantitative restrictions on 714 items in 1999-2000. During that year imports rose by 17.2 per cent. Again during 2000-01, QRs were removed on 894 items, with imports that year posting a 1.7 per cent growth. But with the further removal of QRs on 715 items from 1-4-2001, India's imports declined by 0.08 per cent during 2001-02. So, questions have been raised on the sharp hike in the number of anti dumping duties imposed by India.

At the end of the review, the WTO, on 21st June, 2002, is reported to have congratulated India for its reforms process (!) but "expressed concern over high tariffs and increased use of anti-dumping measures by New Delhi".

Indian delegation led by the Commerce Secretary, Dipak Chatterjee pointed out that the actual trade affected by these measures was not significant. In all, the 39 measures against the US and the EU, for instance, accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of all of India's imports.

New Delhi also said the slower phasing out of the quota restrictions, tariff peaks for quota items and repeated trade defence action were coming in the way of increased market access for developing countries like India for the moment (*The Hindu*, 22 June, 02).

The WTO review will not, result in any punitive action. But, this exercise will be the basis of future trade negotiations at the WTO, where stiff demands are likely to be placed by other countries. As has been the past experience, the WTO will subject the policies of the developing countries like India to rigorous and demanding tests and prescribe onerous tasks.

The question is: will the NDA Government muster the courage to face the immense pressure applied by the developed countries at the WTO or will it once again buckle under pressure as in the Doha Ministerial meeting?

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JULY 2002

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



Dr Kalam is facing that side. This gentleman is talking to him thinking he is facing this side!

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

SAFFRON LEOPARD AND ITS SPOTS

Conscious of the immense damage inflicted on the unity and integration of the country by the fascistic offensives indulged in by the saffron brigade in Gujarat with the active involvement of the Narendra Modi Government there, the National Platform of Mass Organisation had embarked on a nation wide campaign from 19th June to 4th July. The relevance of such a campaign and sustaining it further ahead needs no reiteration.

But, from the saffron camp, ominous signals are out again. In Gujarat, the Modi regime has sought to close down the relief camps, just to buttress its untenable claim that normalcy has been restored in the State. It is widely admitted that conditions are nowhere near normalcy and the victims of the ethnic cleansing resorted to by the RSS and its *parivar* are in a state of trauma, dreading to go back to their place of original inhabitation. Victims, who had lost lakhs of rupees worth of properties, had been given such paltry sums ranging from Rs. 250 to Rs.5000 as compensation! Even the Governor of the State had to come out openly that it was inopportune time to close down the relief camps.

Now, Modi, borrowing a page from his mentor, Advani, is planning to take out a *rath yatra* across the communal carnage ravaged State. The very name given to the yatra - the Gujarat *Gaurav Yatra* - reveals the perverse mindset of the RSS-BJP-Bajrang Dal-VHP brigade. They want to parade their 'pride' (*Gaurav*) and glory over the rioting they resorted to. Modi's *rath yatra* is intended to mobilise the majority Hindu vote for the State Assembly elections, which are due. It will spell a doom for the minorities, who are insecure and vulnerable under the Mody regime. It will surely spark off yet another fierce round of rioting.

In Ayodhya, the VHP is back to its old rhetoric. Ashok Singhal has spat venom against the minority community, charging the Muslims as working for yet another partition. He had held out an open threat that Gujarat would be repeated throughout the country, by warning the Muslim minorities that they would have to live perpetually in relief camps, throughout the country, as in Gujarat. This is a clear signal that the Saffron camp is falling back on its Hindu vote bank. Much was touted as the success of the Kanchi Seer's mission on the Ram Mandir issue and the *shila daan* that was ultimately performed. Now, the VHP has reneged on their commitment to abide by the Court verdict. Not merely that, they had openly challenged the judicial order itself, declaring that they would not abide by any court verdict, if it went against dharmashastras.

All these establish that the saffron leopard cannot be expected to change its spots. Eternal vigilance and massive resistance to the game plan of the sangh parivar is the bounden duty cast upon the shoulders of the working class and the democratic secular masses of the country. Let us rise up to the occasion.

THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST

KR Narayanan, who presided over the destiny of our country as the Constitutional head of India, will demit office on 24th July, 2002, on completion of his term of office. Cutting across party affiliations, the leadership of a substantial segment of political hues earnestly desired that in the critical phase, which the country is passing through at the present juncture, the incumbent President could be continued in office for another term. But, the parties in the National Democratic Alliance and those supporting it from outside were dead set against giving a second term to K.R.Narayanan. The RSS that is calling the shots from behind the BJP led Government at the Centre had openly accused K.R.Narayanan of 'proximity to left parties and ideological mooring in the Congress'. The RSS mouthpiece described Narayanan's tenure in Rashtrapati Bhawan as 'years of constitutional disaster'. They perceived Narayanan as one who tried to destabilise the NDA Government, which is a totally baseless charge. So, it was no surprise that the Prime Minister, Vajpayee hurried down to Rashtrapati Bhawan to convey to him in the unkindest manner that the ruling dispensation was firmly opposed to his candidature. The dignified statesman that he is, K.R.Narayanan, quietly opted out, declining to seek a second term.

But, the BJP and its cohorts, who swore by the past convention of not giving a second term to the incumbent President, for no reason other than to cast away K.R.Narayanan, chose to ignore the other convention of elevating the Vice President as President. Krishna Kant, whose name was conveyed by the Prime Minister Vajpayee to the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, was also unceremoniously abandoned.

Not to speak of efforts by the ruling party to seek and evolve a consensus among all political parties, a consensus eluded the NDA and its allies themselves. So, they toyed with the name of the Maharashtra Governor P.C.Alexander, a name propped up by the Shiv Sena. Finally, the name of A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, the man stated to be the brain behind the nuclear weaponisation programme, launched by the BJP Government with the Pokhran blasts, was announced as a candidate of the NDA for the Presidential poll.

The outbursts of the Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and his son - the Union Minister of State - Omar Abdullah, squarely accused the BJP leadership of playing foul with the National Conference leadership and reneging on the promise of making Farooq Abdullah the next Vice President. This itself shows that Kalam was a candidate not of choice but of default. The point is simple - the RSS and BJP

wanted a trusted person of their own to occupy the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Unfortunately, the Congress party caved in. It abandoned the search for a consensus candidate and unashamedly endorsed the chosen candidate of the BJP. Certain other parties, which swore by their commitment to fight the communal BJP, orchestrated support to the candidature of Kalam.

Kalam was chosen by the RSS - BJP because he was the most prominent face behind Pokhran-II. He was perceived to be in tune with the 'sangh parivar' jingoism "to teach Pakistan a lesson". By proposing a person of the minority community, the BJP seeks to whitewash the State-sponsored carnage in Gujarat. At the same time, it also seeks to advance its concept of militant nationalism (read fascistic jingoism) by elevating the author of India's missile programme as the supreme commander of the armed forces. Kalam also fits in with the Hindutva doctrine of 'cultural nationalism'.

For these very reasons, the Left parties rightly decided to carry the political fight against the communal and anti people NDA regime in the ensuing Presidential election as well. The candidate of the Left - Capt. Lakshmi Sahgal - combines in herself the glorious traditions of the Indian freedom movement as well as the democratic secular values that need to be

cherished. It is a fact that given the arithmetic of the electoral college, the outcome of the fight is well known. Yet, the fight symbolises the comprehensive and uncompromising struggle against the whole gamut of

policies pursued by the BJP-led NDA Government, carried on by the Left forces and all the mass organisations. The CITU recalls with pride Lakshmi Seghal's long association with the CITU and the trade union movement and

struggles. Irrespective of its outcome, the political fight spearheaded by Lakshmi Sahgal, is bound to inspire the working class and other masses in their future struggles.

WHAT LAKSHMI SAHGAL STANDS FOR?

"I firmly believe that our freedom struggle became a mighty peoples' movement because it was able to unite people with diverse religious, linguistic, caste backgrounds. My personal experience with the INA under the slogan "Unity, Faith and Sacrifice" confirms this. Unfortunately, such unity today appears more fragile. Our dreams of the freedom struggle remain unfulfilled in many aspects as a result.

"For many of us in my generation, which fought for the country's freedom and independence, the Indian Constitution reflects the encapsulated vision of a secular democratic republic. Today, all the four foundational pillars of our Constitution, viz., secular democracy, economic self-reliance, federalism and social justice — are severely stressed. All patriots are called upon to meet these challenges.

The recent happenings in Gujarat have numbed the nation.

"Secularism for us in India is no western concept borrowed in modern times. Way back in the 3rd century B.C, Emperor Asoka commanded in his edicts, "Whosoever honours one's own sect and condemns other sects, out of devotion to one's own sect, intending to glorify it, in acting thus injures his own sect the more."

"Federalism is the key feature of our Constitution, designed to strengthen the unity and integrity of India. In the past, there had been several complaints about the erosion of this federal spirit and essence of our Constitution, concretely, the misuse of Article 356.

"Our people's victory against colonial rule and consequent independence raised high hopes and expectations. During the course of half a century of freedom, we as a country, have made many advances and achieved many successes. But the pace and depth of these have been halting and at time inadequate to meet the needs of our billion-strong population. The fruits of development and of scientific and technological advances have benefited few and deprived many. Serious problems such as poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to potable drinking water continue to plague us. Some of us, even after attaining freedom continued the struggle for achieving our economic self-reliance, which is endangered by recent policies.

"Likewise, the goal of social justice, despite many advances, still eludes us. The obnoxious practice of caste oppression continues in many parts. The battles against social oppression needs to be strengthened. As well as the struggle against gender oppression and for the empowerment of women.

"A grave situation has arisen in the country on all fronts. Like we fought for India's freedom, a different but equally important effort is required, synergising our pluralistic society of rich diversity to rise in unison to meet the challenges and to safeguard and strengthen what we, the people of India, have built and achieved since independence. "

(Extracts from the statement issued on 17th June, 2002)

Dr. (Captain) LAKSHMI SAHGAL

A Revolutionary Life of Struggle & Sacrifice

Lakshmi Sahgal was born on 24.10.1914 in Madras. Her father was S. Swaminadhan, a brilliant and leading lawyer - practising criminal law at the Madras High Court. Her mother was A.V. Ammukutty, a social worker, freedom fighter and tireless campaigner for women's rights, who successfully contested elections to the Madras Municipal Corporation, the Constituent Assembly, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. She also served as National President of the All India Women's Conference.

As a young girl, Lakshmi participated enthusiastically in nationalist programmes of burning of foreign goods, including her own clothes and toys and picketing of liquor-vends. She decided to study medicine not from the point of view of embarking upon a successful career but because she wanted to be of service to the poor, especially to poor women. As a result, she received the MBBS degree from Madras Medical College in 1938. A year later, she received her diploma in gynaecology and obstetrics.

In 1940, Lakshmi left Madras for Singapore. Here she quickly established a clinic where the poorest of the poor, especially migrant Indian labour, could receive medical treatment. Not only did she establish herself as a successful, compassionate and extremely competent doctor, but she played an active role in

the India Independence League which contributed greatly to the freedom movement in India.

In 1942 came the historic surrender of Singapore by the British colonial power to the Japanese. Lakshmi was kept extremely busy tending to the many casualties and injuries that resulted from skirmishes. She also came in contact with many of the India POWs who were deliberating over the Japanese proposal to form an Indian army of liberation. She was extremely enthusiastic about this possibility and argued strongly in its favour. As a result, she was very much part of the deliberations that finally resulted in the formation of the INA under Gen. Mohan Singh.

Events moved very fast with the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore on 2nd July, 1943. In the next few days, at all his public meetings, Netaji, as he was popularly known as, spoke of his determination to raise a women's regiment, the Rani of Jhansi regiment, which would also fight for Indian independence and make it complete. On the 5th of July he spoke to Yellappa, and enquired whether there was any Indian woman in Singapore who would be suitable for the task of leading such a regiment. Shri Menon immediately suggested Lakshmi's name. Netaji insisted on meeting her immediately and she was brought to meet him quite late the same night. As soon as he put his proposal to

her, she accepted it without a moment's hesitation and, the very next day, she closed her clinic and began preparations for the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the INA.

These preparations were underway very soon and, in a short time, a well-trained fighting force of women recruits took shape. On 21st October, 1943, when the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was announced, Lakshmi was the sole woman member of its Cabinet.

The Rani of Jhansi Regiment saw active duty on the front. Lakshmi, who was given the rank of Colonel (although in the popular imagination she remained Captain Lakshmi) was active both militarily and on the medical front. She played a heroic role not only in the fighting but also during the terrible days that INA personnel were hunted by the victorious British troops and saved many lives because of her courage and devotion. She was finally captured and brought to India on 4th March, 1946 when she received a heroine's welcome. The British authorities realised that keeping her a prisoner would be counter-productive and she was released.

After her release, Capt. Lakshmi campaigned tirelessly for the release and rehabilitation of imprisoned and de-mobbed INA personnel and for the freedom of India. She travelled the length and breadth of the country and

was able to collect huge funds for the INA soldiers and also mobilise people against the colonial power.

After the release of the prisoners, including Col. Prem Kumar Sahgal, from the Red Fort, the campaign for freedom continued. In March 1947, Col. Sahgal and Capt. Lakshmi were married in Lahore (Col. Sahgal was the son of Justice Achhru Ram Sahgal, a member of the Punjab High Court Bench who was one of the judges in the Gandhi Murder Case).

After their marriage, they settled down in Kanpur. In Kanpur, Lakshmi plunged into her medical work almost immediately because the influx of refugees started even before August, 1947 when it became a flood. She worked tirelessly among them for several years. Later on she established a small maternity home in a hired premise where it continues till today. Her compassion and service to the poor have become legendary in the city.

In 1971, when huge numbers of refugees came from what was East Pakistan into West Bengal, Lakshmi worked at a camp in

Bongaon for several months.

After this, Lakshmi became very active in left politics and in, first, the trade union. She was the President of the All India Jute Workers' Federation. She is even now the Vice-President of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. She had been a member of the CITU General



Council for quite a length of time. She was also taking keen interest in the coordination committee of working women. She has led many struggles of the working class, particularly in

the city of Kanpur and U.P.

Later Lakshmi involved herself actively in the women's movement although she never neglected her medical work. When the All India Democratic Women's Association was formed in 1981, she became Vice-President of the largest women's organisation in the country and has been actively

involved in its activities, campaigns and struggles ever since.

In October, 1984, when anti-Sikh riots broke out in the city in the wake of Smt. Indira Gandhi's assassination, she came out on the streets in defence of Sikh families and shops near her clinic and did not allow any of them to be harmed.

In 1998, she was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by the President of India. Today, at 87, she still leaves for her maternity home at 9.00 every morning, seven days a week and works till late in the afternoon. Adulation and awards mean very little to her. Her

unassuming manners and modesty are a source of amazement and inspiration. Her untiring and undying commitment to humanity and its service are truly exceptional.

25 YEARS OF LEFT FRONT RULE AND THE WORKING CLASS

M K PANDHE

The completion of twenty-five years of the Left Front Government in West Bengal is a matter of rejoice for the working class all over India. No other Government in the country since independence showed such a sound stability, despite severe adverse conditions. All efforts of the reactionary opposition parties to use anti-incumbency factor against this Government did not work, which underlined the massive support which the Government enjoyed from the working class and the toiling masses in the State.

The Left Front Government had to face the discriminatory treatment meted out by the Congress and the NDA Governments at the centre. The Left Front Government faced innumerable difficulties, since it had to work within the framework of a capitalist system. It imposed several limitations for extending relief to the people of the state. People of West Bengal have shown great understanding of this limitation, which reflected in the electoral support from time to time. There is no precedent in the whole world where a Government led by the Communist Party in a part of the country could sustain its support for such a long time.

Existence of such a Government was an eyesore to the U.S. imperialism, which conspired time and again to topple the Government. The CIA was very much active in West Bengal, which with the moral and material help to opposition elements engineered several fictitious agitations against the popular left front Government. All these attempts miserably failed due to the vigilance shown by the Left Front and the people.

FOR ALTERNATIVE POLICIES

One of the most important achievements of the Left Front Government in West Bengal was the alternate policies proposed by it on several policy matters facing the country. On the question of centre state relations, on taxation policies, on repressive legislations like TADA, POTA, which curb the democratic rights of the people, on progressive labour policy, on agrarian reforms, on the question of regional autonomy, on policies towards sick industries, on trade union rights to

policemen, on decentralisation of planning and its implementation, on educational and health policy etc., the West Bengal Government placed before the country policies which were in direct contrast to those pursued by the central Government at the centre. On the question of globalisation, liberalisation and structural adjustment programme the left front Government, while opposing the policies pursued by Central Government, placed alternate pro-working class and the pro-people policies. These alternative policies pursued by the Left Front Government in West Bengal became a weapon in the hands of CITU and other trade unions to fight for similar policies to be adopted by the other State Governments.

Implementation of genuine land reforms has been the unique achievement of the West Bengal Government, applauded even by the Planning Commission. The Panchayat Raj system, with the State Government conferring adequate financial and administrative powers and the decentralised plan implementation had added a glorious dimension to local self-governance. The Left Front Governments in Kerala and Tripura have also taken similar measures in their States. The agricultural workers movement in India has been considerably helped by these measures to fight for implementation of genuine land reforms in the country.

CONSISTENTLY PRO-LABOUR

The left front Government in West Bengal categorically refused to implement the draconian laws like TADA during workers struggles as was done by several Governments in other states.

The pioneering attempt by the left front Government to legislate on trade union recognition through secret ballot was acclaimed by the united movement of the working class. The Central Government dithered on granting the Presidential approval thereto but had ultimately to relent.

The efforts of the West Bengal Government to settle the industrial dispute through negotiations has yielded good results. Throughout the period of 25 years, the CITU in West Bengal had been

at the forefront of all struggles by the workers. The industrial relation machinery in West Bengal was prompt in intervening in such struggles. The Minister of Labour in West Bengal himself mediated in a large number of disputes and arrived at mutually acceptable settlements.

The Left Front Government had to meet politically motivated Bandh calls by Trinamool, Congress, besides some extremist elements on unreal and frivolous issues. Such attempts to destabilise the left front Government in the state could be foiled by the relentless campaign by the left parties with the support of the workers and the people.

Left Front Government in West Bengal was also the pioneer in introducing unemployment insurance scheme for the workers, who lost their jobs due to closure of industrial units - though the relief is for a limited period. No other State Government in India has introduced such scheme as yet.

There was a big campaign going on in West Bengal and elsewhere that due to militant trade union movement and the policies of the left front Government the industrial units were being shifted to other states and sickness in West Bengal is increasing. The recent reports, however, belie this misinformed criticism. According to latest available data, the largest number of sick and closed industrial units is in Maharashtra followed by Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamilnadu are mentioned. West Bengal ranks after them only. The Government of West Bengal has made serious efforts to improve the performance of the sick industrial units in the State sector and some of the units have been made viable and are earning profits. West Bengal Government has not accepted the philosophy of the NDA Government that every sick industry should be killed. Jyoti Basu and Buddhadev Bhattacharya, as Chief Ministers, had in their communications to the central Government urged measures for revival of sick industrial units in West Bengal. But, there was no response. Regarding IISCO and ECL the Left Front Government and the trade unions have been making consistent efforts to talk to Government of India so as to revive them and not to be closed down since the economy of West Bengal depends to a great extent on the revival of these two major public sector undertakings.

The Left Front Government has introduced a Provident Fund Scheme exclusively for the unorganised workers, which is the first of its kind in India. The State Government has been periodically revising the minimum wages but the employers go to the court and get stay order, which creates difficulties in implementation.

The left front Government has openly come out against the pro employer amendments sought to be introduced by the NDA Government at the Centre in the labour legislations. It is a well known fact that all programmes of direct action by the National Campaign Committee, Sponsoring Committee, Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions as well as National Platform of Mass Organisations have received full support from the left front Government in West Bengal.

B.T. Ranadive in his Address to the CITU 5th Conference at Kanpur said: "Certain trade unions and leaders excel in slandering the left front governments of West Bengal and Tripura - the advanced outposts of democracy. This has to be countered. These Governments constitute the achievements of the working class and democratic movement, support to them and the left forces has to be developed by the CITU among other sections of the workers. Without this, struggle for democracy cannot be carried on"

Throughout the period of 25 years, in West Bengal preserved communal harmony and the entire State was free from communal tension. The credit goes to the policy of secularism followed by the Left Front Government and the CITU in West Bengal. Any one, who cherishes the objective of national unity and social progress, cannot ignore this singular achievement.

THE NEW SITUATION

In a period of globalisation, when the whole capitalist world is engulfed in deep economic crisis, the left front Government, after completion of 25 years is faced with many challenges. While the Government opposes the NDA Government's anti-national policies, it has to take measures to develop the economy in West Bengal, without which generation of more jobs is not possible.

The objective of economic growth with social justice has to be followed meticulously in West Bengal to overcome the sickness of industry and

(Cont. on page 11)

The VSNL Scandal: PLUNDER OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

Swadesh Dev Roye

The very concept of disinvestment/privatisation of public sector units - and more so the blue chip cash rich ones - is in itself a bankrupt corrupt policy perception, treachery with the nation and fraud on the people of the country. It is bound to be scam tainted. The whole privatisation process has become an instrument of transferring public property to private hands for a song, much to the detriment of the national interests and the industrial economy of the country in particular. Thus, corruption is woven intrinsically in each and every case of privatisation of PSUs. Right from the on set of the Fund-Bank dictated 'new economic' regime, all the disinvestments operations were full of corruption. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had to make stringent observations that the loss to the Government exchequer from the sale of PSU shares in 1992 alone was to the tune of Rs.3,441.7 crore. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry estimated a loss of Rs.10,000 crore to the national exchequer in the disinvestments of PSU shares carried on till 1994-95.

THE VSNL SCANDAL

The Tata Teleservices Limited (TTSL) acquired 25 per cent stake of Videsh Sanchar Nigam

BSNL EMPLOYEES UNION PROTESTS

The BSNL Employees Union has strongly protested against the diversion of Rs. 1200 crore from the VSNL to Tata Teleservice. This action of the Tatas, to whom the control of the VSNL was handed over with just 25 % stake, is improper, unjust and highhanded. It is strange the Tatas did not even consider it necessary to consult the Central Govt. which holds 26 % stake in the VSNL. Such diversion of money will affect the development and future of the VSNL. The Union has demanded remedial action by the Govt. for reversing the decision.

(Report from V.A.N. Namboodri)

Limited (VSNL) from the Government at a price of Rs.1,439 crore. The Company further acquired another 20 per cent stake of VSNL through open offer at a cost of Rs.1,151 crore. Now with 45 per cent stake the total management control of the VSNL has been handed over to the TTSL.

Now in the process of the corrupt game of privatisation of the cash-rich, profit-making, public sector Telecommunication Company, the VSNL is victim of pre and post privatisation asset stripping. Immediately prior to privatisation, the Government compelled the VSNL to pay an abnormal 500 per cent dividend and mopped up Rs.741 crore against its 52 per cent equity holding. The amount of dividend for the remaining equity of 48 per cent worked out to Rs. 684 crore. Further, the PSU had to declare a special dividend of 750 per cent and pay to the Government an amount of Rs.1,111 crore. Here again the amount of dividend for the remaining part of equity worked out to Rs.1,025 crore. Thus, pre-privatisation stripping game took away an amount of Rs.3,561.5 crores from the reserve of the VSNL.

The post privatisation asset stripping has already been started by the TATAs with the decision to take away Rs.1,200 crores from the reserve of VSNL. Such stripping step is only the beginning is apparent from reports in the Press that, "VSNL is proving goldmine for the TATAs." In the controversial May 28 meeting, the VSNL Board has approved the proposal to the sale of part of the equity holding of VSNL with Intelsat and Immarsat, which is expected to generate an amount of Rs.1,000 crore for the company.

Now, the free flow of liquid cash from the reserve of VSNL to the TATAs confirms two things: (1) the TATAs got in gratis "45 per cent controlling stake in a telecommunication major like VSNL" (2) free money for private capital accumulation. Economists have compared such phenomenon with "the process of primitive accumulation of capital".

The VSNL scandal has, once again, brought to

light how the Government and the foreign and Indian private big business houses are looting the public sector companies, both overtly and covertly. Inferring from the TATA-VSNL episode, it has been observed that in the coming days, "we will see all other divested PSUs being stripped off their assets in the shortest possible time. They may end up in being dumped as sick companies".

CASH-RICH PSUs TARGETED

The privatisation cases of the recent past - and the ones lined up for the forthcoming period - are all cash-rich companies and corruption is rather deepening with every subsequent case of privatisation. Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL) has been handed over to the Reliance Industries Ltd., (RIL) owned by the Ambanies. While the RIL has acquired the controlling share of IPCL at a price of Rs.1,491 crore, the IPCL had an amount of Rs.2,946.13 crore as reserve and surplus at the time of privatisation. The Sterlite Group has acquired the equity and management control of Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) at a price of Rs.445 crore and the PSU has a reserve fund of Rs.737 crore and estimated asset base of around Rs.10,000 crore. The two cash rich profit making oil sector PSUs, which are in the advanced stage of privatisation, are Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL). Again, these two companies, even after paying abnormal amount of huge dividend to the Government, have a reserve fund of Rs.9,927 crore as on 31.3.2001.

DISTRESS SALE AND CORRUPTION

The "Manual on Privatisation", brought out by the Union Ministry of Disinvestment is a source of deep corruption in the process of valuation of the PSUs. While dealing at length with various methods of valuation of the PSUs under sale, the manual recommends a particular method - 'the discounted cash flow method' (DCF), which ensures price-fixing for the PSUs under sale at a low level, without any consideration of its huge asset base and replacement cost, solely to the advantage of the prospective customers.

The Asset valuation method could capture the real value of the huge national assets created by the public sector industries over a long period. But, the said Manual, published by the Disinvestments Ministry, has unceremoniously discarded this.

While recommending the Discounted Cash Flow method (DCF), the Manual went a step ahead. It advises that the prospective cash flow to the company under sale must also capture for discount the future (after sale) presumable cost for modernisation, capital-replacement, market etc., that may be incurred by the new owner. This would lead to assessment of the 'cash flow' at a lower level and facilitate low pricing to favour the prospective customer. Thus, the unholy nexus between the private buyers and the sellers in the Government can no more be camouflaged, courtesy Ministry of Disinvestments.

Given the extreme heightening of the attack on the PSUs, we have to go for a big leap forward in the battle to defeat the onslaught of private capital within and outside the country to grab our national assets built over the years. By now it has become crystal clear that privatisation of the PSUs has become the source of rampant corruption. Therefore, the fight against privatisation and the fight against corruption have become synonymous. The working class movement of the country must take the initiative to mobilise the democratic and patriotic people to launch a decisive battle to reverse the corrupt, anti-people policies of the BJP-led NDA Government.

(WEST BENGAL: Cont. page from 9)

tackle the problem of unemployment. Under these circumstances it is very necessary to evolve common understanding by the State Government, captains of industry and the trade union movement through proper dialogue to meet the new challenging situation. The strengthening of the tripartite consultative mechanism acquires great importance in the forthcoming period.

The working class of West Bengal has to play a leading role if these challenges are to be met effectively. While fighting for legitimate demands of the workers the T.U. movement must prepare plans of over coming the sickness of industry and take responsibility in making them viable.

The CITU in West Bengal has to play an important role in this situation. The completion of 25 years of the left front Government is an occasion to evolve our approach to the new developments.

THE FIRE IN AGRA SHOE FACTORY

K HEMALATA

Agra is one of the biggest footwear producing centres in the country, where around 2 lakh people work. The cottage, small scale and medium scale footwear units in Agra manufacture over 1.5 lakh pairs of shoes per day. Nearly 65% of total domestic requirement of shoes in India is supplied from Agra. There are also around 200 large-scale export oriented units.

On 24th May 2002, a major fire broke out in Shree Jee International, a footwear company in Agra, where 42 people have been killed. It was the most devastating fire in Uttar Pradesh in the last three decades. A fact-finding team visited Agra on 29-30 May 2002 to inquire into the circumstances leading to and causes of the accident, and the lapses on the part of the authorities etc. It comprised representatives of AITUC, CITU and HMS together, besides those of the Centre for Education and Communication, National Campaign for Labour Rights and the Labour File. OP Sharma represented CITU in the team and was accompanied by Daulat Ram, General Secretary, Uttar Pradesh State Committee of CITU, and Naval Singh, President of its Agra unit.

The team talked to several workers of the factory, including those who were injured in the accident and undergoing treatment in hospitals, their families, a cross section of people in the near by area, the concerned labour,

administrative and police authorities. After such an elaborate exercise, the team has come out with its report.

The fact-finding team severely indicted the owner of the factory, Sunil Goyal, for flouting and violating the provisions of various labour laws including the Factories Act. It came down heavily on the district administration of Agra, including the labour department and the Factories Directorate, for their serious lapses in failing to inspect the concerned factory since 1997. It was found that these departments had shirked their responsibility of inspecting the factories, after the Uttar Pradesh Government prohibited inspection of factories without prior permission from the District Magistrate.

The team pointed out that the virtual moratorium on inspection of factories, in the name of ending 'inspector raj', is 'a part of the agenda of globalisation and liberalisation, flexibility of labour market and changes in labour laws'. It has also pointed out that even reputed companies - both Indian and foreign - indulge in bad corporate practices. Shree Jee International was producing solely for the European market and foreign buyers used to visit the factory along with the Mumbai based exporters. The conditions in the factory indicate that the consumer campaigns in Europe, which aim to pressurise the corporates to ensure that fair labour practices are adopted

in the supplier units, do not have much impact. The debate on labour standards was just talk. In practice they colluded with the traders and manufacturers in denying the basic rights to the workers.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The owner: The report held the owner of the factory, Sunil Goyal, as primarily responsible. He had violated each and every provision in law. He registered his factory with 45 workers and a floor space with a capacity of 130. But over the years, he employed not less than 300 workers. He never maintained the muster roll of the workers. Most of the processes within the factory premises were sub contracted out to 67 contractors. The factory was registered to produce shoe uppers only, but it was a complete manufacturing unit intended for export. Job card of the workers, kept in the owner's custody showed the name of the company as 'Shree Ji International', escaping at one stroke the accountability over the workers. Workers had to work for 11-12 hours. Piece rate wages were below the minimum prescribed. No social security benefits were provided. No safety measures were in place. All the windows were secured with wire mesh, leaving only one door open for entry and exit. Children and adolescents were engaged and made to work for 10-11 hours a day. The workers had no organisation or any recourse to collective

bargaining.

The Administration: The report pointed out several lapses on the part of the administration. The employer observed none of the provisions of Section A of the Factories Act, dealing with health, safety and welfare of the workers. But the Factories Directorate allowed the owner to get it registered and he has never been prosecuted in the last seven years after its establishment. The Deputy Director, Factories is the authority to issue licenses to factories using hazardous and inflammable chemicals. But in the case of Shree Jee International, the Assistant Director, Factories, issued the license. The number of employees was not verified during the two inspections conducted in 1996 and 1997. After 1997, no inspection was made, as no inspection could be made without the prior permission of the District Magistrate (as per the decision of the State Government). The administration knew that several hundred shoe factories were unregistered, but did not think of ordering periodic inspection of the units.

Globalisation as the culprit: In the context of the demands of employers for flexibility and changes in labour laws, the real

objective of the U.P. Government order, prescribing prior permission of the District Magistrate for inspection of factories, becomes quite clear. In the last decade of liberalisation and globalisation, the Government has been undermining the labour department in its enforcement of labour laws, surveillance and monitoring of the observance of health and safety norms for the workers etc, at the behest of the employers. The Agra factory functioned as a scarecrow of the liberalisation era, using flexible labour under contract with no labour rights and on subsistence wages. The company operated as an export-oriented unit. Export orientation has been the thrust of globalisation, providing large number of benefits to the employers, including tax benefits and relaxations in implementation of labour laws. Corporate Accountability: The exporters, who were getting the products from Shree Jee International, cannot be unaware of the conditions in which the factory was running, about the lack of safety measures, child labour, and non-implementation of minimum wages and social security measures. Their representatives visited the

factory frequently and in fact one of them was in the factory when the fire broke out. But they were driven only by their profit motive. The same is the case with the foreign buyers. The report held the exporters and the foreign buyers to be equally responsible for the death of the 42 workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report has made several recommendations, including for payment of compensation and giving jobs to the family members of the dead, social security fund for footwear workers, awareness creation on labour rights and provisions in the Factories Act, etc.

It urged the State Government to immediately withdraw the controversial circular and make the labour department more responsible and accountable. The District Magistrate should ensure periodic inspection of the factories and the administration should publish a list of registered footwear units in Agra and what steps have been taken to punish the unregistered units. The report also demanded that the Mumbai based exporters and the International buyers should be considered as principal employers and their accountability and liability should be established.

CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS OPPOSE CLOSURE OF ANY UNIT OF IISCO

The Central Trade Unions viz. AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS INTUC are opposed to Govt.'s proposal of closing down Kulti Works and privatisation of Iron Ore mines as a part of revival scheme of IISCO.

The Central Trade Unions have urged upon the Govt. to reconsider its decision about closing down of Kulti Works and selling off the mines. they have also requested the BIFR to give a hearing to the unions before finalizing any proposal to be submitted by the Central Govt.

OBNOXIOUS MOVE FOR FAST TRACK LIQUIDATION

W R VARDA RAJAN

The Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, also known as Task Force, comprising corporate bigwigs viz. Ratan Tata, Nusli Wadia, P.K. Mittal and Kumar Mangalam Birla (Convenor), had recommended creation of a separate tribunal called the Commercial Insolvency Tribunal to take up the cases relating to winding up of company and also deal with revival of sick. Companies. Such a Tribunal was to combine the powers of a High Court, as also of the BIFR, with a mandate to give its judgment within a period not exceeding one year and the decision of the tribunal should be appealable only to the Supreme Court and that too, on a question of law or for certain errors apparent on the face of the record.

ERADI COMMITTEE

In line with the same thinking, the Government constituted a Committee with Justice Balakrishna Eradi as Chairman. The Eradi Committee recommended amending the Companies Act to include the provisions for setting up of a National Tribunal which will have a) the jurisdiction and power presently exercised by Company Law Board under the Companies Act, 1956; b) the power to consider rehabilitation and revival of companies - a mandate presently entrusted to BIFR/AAIFR under SICA and c) the jurisdiction and power relating to winding up of companies presently vested in the High Courts. The Committee had also concluded that SICA should be repealed and the BIFR and AAIFR abolished.

Based on the recommendations of the Eradi Committee, the Government of India introduced the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2001 in the Lok Sabha on 30th August, 2001. Simultaneously, another Bill for the repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act (SICA) was also introduced.

UNANIMOUS STAND OF ILC

The Indian Labour Conference (ILC), the apex tripartite forum in the country, had discussed the issue of industrial sickness during in 1999 and 2000. The unanimous recommendation of the ILC was that SICA should not be repealed unless and until a better alternative mechanism is evolved.

Rather, the ILC preferred that SICA should be strengthened to deal with the problem of sick companies more effectively and expeditiously.

The CITU and other Central Trade Union Organisations have opposed the repeal of SICA, while at the same placing a number of suggestions for amending SICA and ensuring proper functioning of the BIFR and AAIFR.

But, it is unfortunate that the lone member representing trade union on the Eradi Committee, A.V.Sambasiva Rao - an all India Vice President of the BMS - had been a willing party to the recommendation to repeal SICA.

The present economic situation in the country is, to say the least, most inappropriate for doing away with the legislation like SICA. It is admitted in all quarters that the economy is reeling under a severe demand recession. Hardly 30 per cent of the installed capacity in indigenous industry is being utilised. Removal of Quantitative Restrictions on imports, slashing down of peak rates of custom duty, hiking of excise duty on local manufactures, have all led to a chronic proliferation of industrial sickness. This situation warrants immediate ameliorative measures for revival/rehabilitation of sick industries. In this context, the enactment of the Companies (Amendment) Bill, with its main thrust on fast track liquidation and drastically diluted provisions towards revival, will immensely harm the country's economy. Huge industrial manufacturing capacity, installed over several decades, will face instant liquidation.

CONSTRAINTS OF SICA

The present move on the part of the Government of India to repeal SICA has not taken into account the factors that impeded the functioning of SICA, the BIFR and the AAIFR. Though the SICA contained provision for the BIFR to function with one Chairman and 14 members, the Board had never even once during the last 15 years of its existence had a full compliment of 14 members. For several years, the BIFR functioned with just a Single Bench only. The BIFR had no infrastructure worth the name to carry out its onerous functions. It was not provided with an appropriate fund for

revival/rehabilitation at its disposal. Though the BIFR was a quasi-judicial body; it had to go by the consensus process in drawing up sanction of revival packages. It had no powers to compel the creditors, or the Financial Institutions or the Government to undergo any sacrifices for revival of the sick company. In fact, in several cases of Central Public Sector Undertakings, the approved rehabilitation packages could not be put into implementation for want of financial approval from the Government of India. In most cases, the promoters of sick industrial companies had gone to the BIFR only when they were chased by the creditors. Their aim essentially was to avail the protection under Section 22 of the Act. It benefited them to prolong the proceedings before the BIFR. With the Banking Sector reforms set in motion, as part of the economic reforms measures, the Banks are mostly keen on getting away from the sick company under some One Time Settlement (OTS) formula, rather than committing funds for revival. A holistic view of all these aspects need to be taken and the BIFR cannot be held exclusively responsible for all that ails the functioning of SICA.

The Bill requires the Board of Directors of a sick industrial company to prepare and submit a scheme of its revival and rehabilitation to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) at the time of making a reference itself. It enjoins upon the Tribunal to conclude its enquiry, within sixty days from commencement of the enquiry while section 424 A(6) requires the Special Director/s, who may be appointed by the Tribunal, also to submit a report within sixty days from the commencement of the enquiry. Indecent hurry cannot be an answer to protracted delays. Thus, the telescoping of the provisions of SICA into the Companies Act, as attempted by the present Bill, is only a feeble attempt to showcase that revival measures are still provided for but in effect, the drive is towards fast track liquidation.

A MONOLITHIC TRIBUNAL?

The Indian Companies Act is itself a voluminous and complex legislation. Inasmuch as the delay involved in the BIFR proceedings is worrisome, the delay involved in matters dealt with by the Company Law Board and the Company Courts under various High Courts are matters of serious

concern. The Company Law Board essentially deals with administrative functions and matters related to compliance of legislative provisions by companies. The High Courts deal with legal matters. The BIFR under SICA deals with financial, economic and even technical feasibility related matters. To combine all these functions in one monolithic Tribunal is certainly not a correct move. Moreover, the NCLT is vested with the power of contempt of court, which is not a desirable move. With the NCLT and the Appellate Tribunal to be constituted, anyone aggrieved is left with recourse of appeal to Supreme Court only. Such a short-circuiting of judicial remedy route cannot ensure fair play.

The administrative/regulatory functions that the Company Law Board is expected to carry out has grown in enormous proportions. Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, had gone on record that out of 5.72 lakh companies, more than half the number, nearly three lakh companies failed to file their returns. He also cited harsh ground realities such as increased corporate frauds, siphoning of money, lock-up of deposits, non-payment of dividend after declaration and other malpractices. (*The Hindu* 22 May, 2001).

Between 1992 and 1996 the country witnessed the Primary Market fraud popularly known as Vanishing Companies fraud. Fly by night operators floated as many as 4069 public issues and collected over Rs 45000 crore from the public on fictitious grounds. After raising the money these operators vanished. In such a scenario the responsibilities of the Company Law Board and SEBI are expected to grow manifold.

Under these circumstances, it is not prudent to pool all these administrative/regulatory functions, judicial and financial responsibilities et al to be entrusted to an omnibus Tribunal.

The SICA Repeal Bill provides that once the Bill is enacted, all the references and appeals before the BIFR and the AAIFR shall stand abated. This will mean that over 1300 sick industrial companies involved in various stages of BIFR/AAIFR proceedings will face the threat of instant liquidation, affecting over 15 lakh workers and their families. It is, therefore, necessary that the entire trade union movement should unitedly oppose these Bills.

WATER TRANSPORT WORKERS TO FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATISATION

M.K. Pandhe

The Sixth Conference of the Water Transport Workers Federation of India (WTWFI) held at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) Complex from 2nd to 4th June 2002 decided to launch a countrywide campaign to oppose the policy to privatise the ports in India. 160 delegates and observers who attended the conference, by a resolution, expressed their firm determination to launch a countrywide united movement of the Port and Dock workers to defeat the policy of privatisation.

Nhava Sheva Bandar Kamgar Union, a recognised union of JNPT, made all the arrangements to hold the conference. The JNPT Board meeting on 7th June proposed to take decision to hand over the administration of this profit-making port to P & O, an Australian monopoly house, at throwaway prices. However, the trade unions in JNPT decided to go in for indefinite strike if the decision to privatise the port is taken in the meeting. Due to the firm determination of the workers, the JNPT management was forced to defer the decision till March 2003.

The venue of the conference was named after late Com. K.P.S. Menon, Working President of the WTWFI. K.L. Bajaj, Vice Chairman of the Reception Committee, while welcoming the delegates, highlighted the heroic struggles launched by the workers in the region. Bhushan Patil, Secretary of the Reception Committee pointed out how P & O Company engaged contract workers on low rates of payments and exploited the workers to make higher profits. He further noted that the JNPT union is run by the workers themselves. It has got first position in secret ballot and is enjoying full confidence of all workers.

GROWING UNITY

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU, inaugurated the conference. He explained the worldwide struggle emerging against globalisation and machination of World Bank, IMF and WTO.

Welcoming the growing unity in the trade union movement, Pandhe called upon the working class to organise bigger struggles to defeat the policies of the NDA government.

Pandhe welcomed the participation of Port and Dock workers in the 16th April nationwide strike against privatisation and called upon for indefinite strike if the Bill to privatise the port is brought in Parliament.

S. R. Kulkarni, General Secretary, All India Port and Dock Workers Federation, addressing the Conference criticised the policies of the NDA government towards the Port and Dock industry and characterised the policies as anti-national. He supported the call given by the five Port and Dock Federations to go in for indefinite strike if the NDA government goes ahead with the policies of privatisation. He appealed to the Central trade unions to prepare for a long drawn struggle to change the policies of the government of India. M. Shete, Secretary, All India Port and Dock Workers Federation (Workers) noted the danger of MNCs controlling our ports and threatening the defence of the country itself. He stressed the need for strengthening the present unity of the port and dock workers, so that massive united actions can be planned to oppose the policies of privatisation in all major ports.

NDA POLICIES CRITICISED

M.M. Lawrence in his Presidential Address reviewed the policies of the NDA government and observed how they immensely harmed the interest of the nation as well as working class and people of India. He welcomed the growing struggles of the port and dock workers whose problems remain unsettled for several years.

The President of WTWFI criticised the Prime Minister for not implementing the promises given to the leaders of five federations of Port and Dock workers and called upon the delegates to campaign all over the country against the policies of the government, so that powerful struggles can be launched in all ports.

He warned against the communal danger in the wake of Gujarat carnage and appealed for communal harmony and preservation of secular tradition of the country.

Subhash Chakraborty, General Secretary of WTWFI, presented a report on the activities of the federation since the last conference held in 1995. He explained how the WTWFI had to expressed its descent in the ten year bipartite settlement since amount offered for five year settlement was marginally increased. He also noted how WTWFI could not agree to some of the pre-conditions imposed by the port managements for granting additional concessions.

While appreciating growing unity of the waterfront workers, he pointed out the vacillations expressed by some unions during struggles which affected the impact of these struggles.

Narrating several unsettled issues of the port and dock workers, Chakraborty called for countrywide joint movement to get these issues settled without any further delay.

NATIONWIDE STRUGGLES INTENSIFIED

The General Secretary's Report reviewed the activities of different ports and pointed out WTWFI had been making sustained efforts to get the grievances of the workers settled.

He reviewed the seamen's movement and noted how the forward seamen's union participated in several movement which resulted in increased membership of the union to 18000. He criticised the discriminatory treatment given to FSUI by the shipping corporation management.

Chakraborty noted weaknesses of the WTWFI and stressed the need to overcome the weaknesses to strengthen the movement of the waterfront workers.

Shib Shankar Ghoshal, Treasurer, submitted the statement of accounts for the last six years.

39 speakers who participated during the discussion of the report narrated their local experiences in conducting united movement of the port and dock workers. They emphasised the need for better coordination among different units and the federation HQ.

The speakers further pointed out the need for independent activity of the WTWFI, so that

workers can understand its role properly.

The downsizing man power in all the ports inspite of increasing traffic was raised by several speakers. They also pointed out the growing trend among the port authorities to take unilateral decisions without consulting the trade unions. Some speakers even pointed out non-implementation of some of the clauses of the last ten year settlement. The question of pensioners in port and dock industry was also raised by some of the speakers.

After clarifications given by the General Secretary, the report was adopted unanimously by the conference. Similarly, the statement of accounts was also accepted by the conference.

RESISTANCE TO PRIVATISATION

The conference adopted several resolutions including on privatisation of Ports by NDA government, on communal carnage in Gujarat and demanding resignation of Narendra Modi government, on solidarity with the struggle of the DNPT workers against privatisation, and on privatisation and leasing of Rajiv Gandhi Container Terminal at Cochin with Vakrapadon Project.

Shyamal Chakraborty, Secretary of CITU, in his speech emphasised the need to make an intensive campaign among the workers on various aspects of globalisation so that workers are ideologically prepared for a bigger struggle. He also noted the achievements of Left Front government during the last 25 years.

The Convenor of Enron Virodhi Samiti, Joshi, while supporting the struggle of the port and dock workers against privatisation pointed out how it would add to the cost of production in all the ports. On 3rd evening, a cultural programme was organised by the workers artists in the township which depicted several cultural forms prevailing in the region. M.K. Pandhe while speaking during the cultural programme assured JNPT workers the solidarity of all port workers in India in the struggle against privatisation.

The conference elected 79 members working committee and 19 office bearers including M.M. Lawrence as President and Subhash Chakraborty as the General Secretary.

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KERALA: CITU WINS REFERENDUM IN KSRTC

Kerala State Road Transport Employees Association - CITU (KS RTEA), the biggest trade union in Kerala, won a creditable victory in the referendum held on 23rd May, 2002 and secured recognition, under the Congress led U.D.F. Government there. While the KS RTEA (CITU) fought the referendum independently, two other formations also contested. They were: 1) The Transport Democratic Front (TDF) comprising ITNUC and five other constituent unions of UDF and 2) Transport Workers Co-ordination council (TWCC) comprising AITUC, BMS and six other unions. 94.62% of workers participated in the secret ballot conducted in 89 centres throughout Kerala. The KS RTEA (CITU) secured 54 per cent of the total votes polled, while INTUC led TDF got 29.19% and AITUC led TWCC got 16.72% votes. The campaign in connection with the referendum resembled that of election to Assembly. Political

parties print and electronic media gave great importance and wide coverage to this referendum. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee President and leaders of the constituent parties of the UDF campaigned for INTUC led TDF.

In Kerala the LDF commands a strength of 43 to 46% of the electorate. But, the KS RTEA (CITU), contesting independently in the referendum, could get 54% votes. The KS RTEA (CITU) could improve its position from 29.24% in the first referendum held in 1986 to 43.66% in 1991, 49.27% in 1997 and 51% in 2002, out of the total number of workers as per the guideline. Only, a union having more than 20% votes gets recognition.

The democratic mode of functioning of union and the sustained struggles led by the CITU union in defence of the nationalised transport industry and the interests of the workers earned the appreciation of the workers. This is the root cause of this improvement and victory achieved.

The Congress led UDF Government made all attempts to privatise the KSRTC by hiring private buses, freezing fresh appointments, denying promotions to workers and made all attempts to down size the KSRTC. The CITU union launched independent as well as united struggles against the anti-labour policies of the UDF Government. An overwhelming majority of workers considered the KS RTEA (CITU) as their leader. Through our efforts during the campaign, we could succeed in weaning away at least one of the constituents of the UDF, viz, the Kerala Congress (B), which raised its opposition to privatisation. A Soundararajan, Secretary, AIRTWF and the leader of Tamil Nadu State Transport workers also participated in the campaign and attended meetings during the referendum. The victory of KS RTEA (CITU) is a moral boost to the CITU movement throughout Kerala.

(Report from K.K. Divakaran)

ASSAM: CITU STATE COUNCIL MEETING

The Assam State General Council meeting of CITU was held at Jorhat on June 15 and 16. The council meeting was held at the Bisturam Barooah Hall, Jorhat and altogether 80 General Council Members attended. From

the CITU Centre, M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, Jibon Roy and S. Dev Roye, Secretaries attended the meeting.

M.K. Pandhe addressed the meeting and said that the economic policy of BJP-led Central

Government is pushing the country backward, creating immense problems to the people and working class in particular. It is the duty of working class to build up unity among the people to fight back the ruinous Fund-Bank

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dictated economic policies and to combat communal force, disrupting the unity of the nation. The major decisions taken in the meeting include a month long massive campaign amongst the tea plantation workers of the State based on the urgent demands of the workers to culminate in a one day **TOKEN STRIKE** in the tea gardens in the last week of August, 2002. A state level **WORKING WOMEN CONVENTION** will be organized sometime in the month of October, 2002. Programmes have also been drawn to conduct the campaign '**AGAINST FASCISTIC COMMUNAL OFFENSIVES**'. While inaugurating the council meeting, S. Dev Roye said that success of April 16 strike in PSUs has opened a new vista in the trade union movement of India. Failure of imperialist globalisation has manifested in the militant action programme of the working class in the capitalist world including USA, UK, Italy, Germany, France and Japan. The demonstrations

from Seattle to Genoa against IMF/WB/WTO policies have amply vindicated the mood of the working class to fight back the anti-people and anti-working class policies undertaken at the behest of the imperialists. Within the country, the communal forces have raised their ugly heads and it is the duty of the working class to fight for the preservation of secular fabric of the country.

Jibon Roy addressed the general council meeting and called for gearing up the organisation to enable CITU to undertake unleashing of series of struggles ahead against the policies of Central Government. He also emphasised ideological education of the working class and strengthening democratic functioning.

Deben Bhattacharyya, General Secretary, Assam State Committee, CITU, placed the report, which inter alia discussed the organisational achievements and weaknesses in the State and put forward immediate task for

strengthening and expanding the base of CITU in different industries and particularly in the tea gardens in the state employing around 8 lakhs workers both permanent and temporary. Samir Das, Treasurer placed the statement of accounts.

Altogether 33 members took part in the discussion. The General Secretary replied to the discussion and the report along with the statement of accounts was adopted unanimously. A souvenir was released by M.K. Pandhe. S Dev Roye in his concluding speech put emphasis on the need for independent activities of the CITU, to take forward the united struggles in the State. A largely attended mass rally was presided over by Amal Ghose Dastidar, President, Assam state Committee, CITU and was addressed among others by M.K. Pandhe, Jibon Roy, MP, S. Dev Roye and Deben Bhattacharya.

(Report from Samir Das)

CAMPAIGNS IN TAMILNADU

The decision of the CITU General Council for a national campaign and observance of a national protest day was carried out by the district committees in Tamilnadu.

CITU State Committee had met and planned for the campaign. Preparatory meetings were held in all districts. Material for a handbill

was prepared by the centre and sent to all districts.

Majority of the districts conducted the campaign from 30th May and the protest day was observed on 6th June. In some districts, due to various reasons like by-elections and other unavoidable reasons, the campaign was conducted in June. Van jathas, touching almost all

parts of the districts were conducted. In Thirunelveli district for example, 6 Van Jathas covered the rural areas and Auto Ricksha campaign groups covered urban areas. 15,000 handbills and 70 posters were published.

Coimbatore (West) district conducted the campaign for 4 days holding meetings in 150 centres

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Rural centres were mainly covered. 25,000 handbills and 700 posters were published. In Coimbatore (East) 20,000 handbills and 300 posters were published. The campaign was conducted for four days.

In Pudukottai, the campaign was conducted for 5 days. In Chengalput and Thiruvellore districts, 50,000 handbills were distributed and meetings were held in 109 centres.

In North Chennai, the campaign was for 5 days. A van jatha was

organised. One-lakh handbills were distributed. (Details of campaigns from other districts are awaited)

Along with this campaign on the national demands, T.N. committee has added the ESMA enacted by State Govt. and malfunctioning of the Welfare Boards for unorganised workers.

Massive court arrest programme is being planned for 23rd July.

NPMO Campaign

Representatives of constituents of NPMO met at Chennai on 15th

June. CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, UTUC (LS), Kisan, Agricultural labour, Student, Youth and Women organisations and various middle-class organisations were represented.

The meeting decided to have extensive campaigns all over the State from 27th June to 4th July. Mass demonstrations will be organised in 100 centres all over the State on 4th July, condemning the State sponsored communal carnage in Gujarat.

(Report from A. K. Padmanabhan)

CITU CAMPAIGN IN KARNATAKA

Immediately after the Siliguri General Council meeting, the CITU Karnataka State Committee met at Hassan on 6 - 7 May and discussed ways and means of implementing Siliguri decisions. Reporting of Siliguri decisions was in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttarakannada, Kolar and Tumkur.

There was lot of enthusiasm generated.

The NPMO call for observance of campaign fortnight against fascist communalism was discussed at a meeting of leaders of mass organisations held on 5th June. In the meeting at State level participated by the CITU,

AITUC, HMS, UTUC (LS), AIIEA & AIBEA, it was decided to organise taluk level and district level NPMO conventions against FASCISTIC COMMUNALISM from June 19th to July 3rd and to have demonstrations on July 4th.

(Report from V.J.K.Nair)

ALL INDIA PROTEST DAY OBSERVED

Andaman & Nicobar State Committee of CITU organised a dharna at Municipal Park, Aberdeen on 6.6.2002 from morning till evening and ended with a public meeting. B. Chandrachoodan, Working resident, A. Rajan, Secretary, CITU and H.N. Parial, Secretary, PI (M) State Committee spoke on the occasion. The speakers

criticised the Central Govt on its policies on privatisation of profit making and viable public sector undertakings, proposed change in labour laws including Industrial Disputes and Contract Labour Act removal of quantitative restriction on imports against national interest, for immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers, joblessness

and unemployment etc. Dharna and public meeting was also held at Diglipur on 6.6.2002.

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COCO COLA WORKERS SIGN AGREEMENT

220 workers are employed in the Coca-Cola Company in Hyderabad. Though Coca-Cola is a big multinational company, it pays very low wages to its workers on the pretext of incurring losses. The wage agreement between the workers and the management expired in December 2001. The workers have submitted the charter of demands but had agreed to the request of the management to hold talks in order and to come to an agreement in February 2002. But as the management did not keep its word, they had to resort to agitation. Starting with gate meetings and demonstrations

during the lunch hour the workers intensified the agitation. Every day processions were conducted from the main gate to the depot. Protest badges were worn on the uniform inspite of the management's threats that they were not allowed to wear badges on uniforms.

All the workers irrespective of union affiliations joined the struggle. The workers of HCL, ECIL, BEL, HAL, Shaw Wallace, Nava Bharat and the Road Transport Workers visited the camp of the Coca-Cola workers daily and extended their solidarity. The management was forced to invite the workers for negotiations

but put forward the condition that the agreement should be for a period of 5 years instead of the earlier 3 years. The workers refused the condition and further intensified their agitation. Torch light processions and shirtless processions were held.

The management resorted to several tactics to intimidate the workers. It obtained a court order prohibiting any sort of agitations in front of the factory. But the workers remained firm and ultimately the management had to come to the negotiating table. The workers were able to sign a better agreement.

A P: COOPERATIVE SECTOR CONVENTION

Thousands of employees of the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies and Cooperative Central Banks held a massive rally at the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram in Hyderabad on 24th May. Earlier they marched in a procession from Indira Park to the Vignana Kendram in scorching sun. They were protesting the Andhra Pradesh State Government's decision to close down 1300 Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies and 200 branches of District Cooperative Central Banks.

Addressing the rally the General Secretary of AP State Committee of CITU, S Veeraiah criticised the Government for demolishing the cooperative sector and told that

besides the employees losing their jobs this would also impact the peasantry. He appealed to the employees to intensify united struggles. He also appealed to other trade unions to come forward for united struggles.

On The 25th May, the State Committees of CITU, Kisan Sabha and the Artisans' Coordination Committee held a joint convention to 'Save the Cooperative Sector'. Ajaya Kumar from CITU presided over the convention; MA Gaffoor, president, AP Committee of CITU inaugurated. He noted the role played by the cooperative sector in the development of agriculture and dairy sector in the State and criticised the Chandrababu Naidu Government for the present state

of affairs. He called upon the employees and the peasants and artisans to join in united struggle to protect the cooperative sector. The General Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Rytu Sangham, Sarampalli Malla Reddy, Convenor of the State Artisans' Coordination Committee, Gattu Ramachandra Rao and other leaders also spoke.

The Convention unanimously adopted a resolution placed by State Secretary of CITU, Y Siddhaiah and decided to hold dharnas in front of the DCC Banks on 30th May. It was also decided to focus the issue by insisting that resolutions to be passed in the Janmabhoon programme scheduled on 1-10 June 2002.

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TEXTILES: ALL INDIA CONVENTION IN JULY

The meeting of JAC, Textile was held on 12th June at the AITUC office. Haribhau Naik, S.S. Yadav (both INTUC); D.L. Sachdev, Sohanlal Shinde (both AITUC); P.K. Ganguly, Kailash Limbodia, Md. Washi (all CITU) attended. Haribhau Naik presided. The meeting expressed serious concern that even without any consultation or information to the Central Trade Unions, the Govt. had decided to close down 66 NTC mills in the country, while according to the Govt.'s status

paper itself, 76 mills could be revived. (25 fully working mills and 51 partially working mills). Despite repeated assurance, the Textile Minister did not convene any official meeting with the trade unions. He even refused to meet the joint delegation of the JAC despite repeated efforts.

In the above background, the meeting reiterated its decision to carry forward the struggle demanding revival of 76 mills and to continue the mass signature campaign in pursuance of the

demand. The All India Convention of NTC and BIC workers will be held at Delhi on 16th July. The Convention will be held at Rajendra Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhaya Marg, Near ITO, Delhi. After the All India Convention, State level joint Conventions will be held at important NTC centres like Kanpur, Indore, Kolkata, Tamilnadu, Nagpur and other places. The JAC will also print a joint appeal to MPs requesting them to press for a special discussion on NTC in Parliament.

NPCC WORKERS' UNION CONFERENCE

The 20th biennial central conference of NPCC Workers' Union of India was held at Tailpool Dam, Panchet (Jharkhand from 25th to 26th May, 2002. 63 delegates all over India attended the conference. Binoy Mukherjee Working president of the union, hoisted the CITU flag. The presidium comprised Basudeb Acharya, MP, Binoy Mukherjee, Bisheswary pawan and Md. Naim. S.B. Karmakar, leader of Construction Workers Federation of India, inaugurated the

conference. Anup Kumar Roy, General Secretary presented the report. The report reviewed the experience gained in implementing the decisions of the last conference. 20 delegates took part in the discussions. After thorough discussions the report was unanimously adopted. The accounts presented by Gurupada Das, Treasurer, was also accepted. Santosh Charkaborty of DVC Sramik Union greeted the conference. The conference elected a 27-member central

executive committee, with Basudeb Acharya as President, Binoy Mukherjee as Working President, Anup Kumar Roy as General Secretary and Gurupada Das as Treasurer.

The conference concluded with the President's address. Basudeb Acharya exhorted the delegates to unite the NPCC employees against the anti-national and anti-worker policy of Govt. of India and to lead the struggle to protect the construction industry and workers' interest.

CITU-ILO CHILD LABOUR PROJECT: NFE CENTRES

**New Chumta Tea Estate,
Darjeeling**

The Non Formal Education Centre in the Darjeeling district of West

Bengal is located in the New Chumta Tea Estate, around 10 Km from Siliguri. It has been functioning regularly since

November, 2001. K Hemalata, National Project Coordinator visited the NFEC 28th April 2002, along with Ajit Sarkar, General

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Secretary of the Darjeeling District Committee of CITU and District Plantation Workers' Union. There were around 50 children in the NFEC. when they visited the NFEC on the evening of the. They were sitting in two rows; one row consisted of smaller children, around 5-9 years and the other slightly older ones, around 10-16 years. The teacher, Kajal Chik Baraik, a young tribal girl, who herself was a student appearing for her graduation examination, told that the older children were working children, while the smaller children were the children of the plantation workers working in the New Chumta Tea Estate. The child labourers were doing several types of jobs like weeding in the plantations and other odd jobs; some were working as domestic maids in the houses of the clerks, officers etc of the plantation. The workers of the plantation were eager to educate their children and requested that their children be allowed to attend the NFEC. The CITU District Committee agreed and was bearing the additional costs like providing books, snacks etc to these children. The management of the tea estate agreed to provide transportation for the children back to their homes, after the NFEC closes at around 8 PM. Kajal is helped by her younger sister, an energetic girl also doing her BA. The teachers were happy that the children showed interest in learning. Several children displayed what they have learned

in the NFEC. Some recited poems in Bengali and sang songs in 'Sardi' - a tribal language. Kancheepuram

'The workload is like a palm fruit on the head of a sparrow; I am like an ant with a big stone on its back; I get food only once in a day; I have never been to a school; Society says 'child is like a god'; but which god is labouring like us?' This was the theme of the song by the child labourers attending the NFE Centre at Kancheepuram in Tamilnadu.

The Non Formal Education Centre in the handloom weaver dominated locality of Narayanapalayam Street in Kancheepuram town was opened in the month of January 2002. It took almost one month for the district CITU leadership and the Handloom Workers' Union to convince the parents of the child labour engaged in the handloom industry, to send their children to the NFE Centre. But, once the NFE Centre was started, the response has been very good.

31 child labourers, 15 boys and 16 girls have been enrolled in the NFE Centres. Out of these around 27-28 attend the Centre regularly. The Centre is run from 7 p.m., after the children come from their work, to 8.30 p.m. daily. Guna, the teacher in the NFEC starts the evening with a patriotic song. Then the children are taught Tamil, simple mathematics, and general knowledge. On 17th May 2002, Hemalata, National Project Coordinator, Malati Chittibabu,

State Coordinator, and the CITU district Secretary, Ravindran, visited the Centre. The children demonstrated what they have learnt in the Centre. They sang a couple of songs, including the above one on child labour.

Bir Muhammed, 11, and his sister Mahaboob bi, 12, attend the NFEC regularly. Their father died a few years back and their mother works as a domestic help in two houses. While Bir Muhammed get Rs. 250 per month, Mahaboob bi gets only Rs. 200. Their mother is paid Rs. 200 per month in each household. They have an elder brother and a sister; they too are handloom workers. Kala, 10, and her elder sister Rekha, 12, also attend the NFEC. Their parents are also handloom workers. While their elder sister also works, their younger brother is sent to school. Their parents say they cannot afford to send them to school but the brother must at least be able to read any letters they get, so he is sent to school. Both the girls get Rs. 200/- per month. In addition to the work at the shed, they have to work in the employer's house also like cleaning the vessels, washing clothes etc.

All the children work for 11 hours in a day including around 2 hours break for breakfast and lunch, when they walk down to their houses and go back to work again. They are mostly engaged in joining the Zari border to the sari, while an adult is weaving it. They are also engaged in 'butah' work on the sari, in doing the designs over

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the 'pallu' and in hand spinning etc. A few of them have joined the regular school in the first standard but dropped out of school in a year or two. They would like to go to school but their parents cannot afford.

Sundernagar

The NFEC at Sundernagar in Himachal Pradesh was located at a place called Noulakha Chowk, around 4-5 km from Sundernagar, in Mandi district. The centre is located on the side of the canal, near a brick kiln. Hemalata, National Project Coordinator visited the centre on 9th June 2002, when she was at Bilaspur to attend the anganwadi trade union class. Jagat Ram, State Project Coordinator and Prem Kumari, the teacher in the centre, accompanied her. Though it was

a Sunday, normally a holiday for the centre, all the child labourers who attend the centre, came out as soon as they saw their teacher. Some girls brought their younger siblings of 2-3 years also. Prem Kumari told that it was a regular feature, particularly with the girls, who had to look after their younger brothers or sisters, while their mothers were at work.

The children as young as 7-8 years, told that they prepare 'rotis' at home and also work in the brick kilns. They were very much interested to learn in the school. Some of them exhibited what they have learnt.

Hemalata and Jagat Ram talked to the parents of some of the child labour attending the centre. They told that, they were from Gurudaspur district in Punjab, and

would be leaving for their native place in a few days, when the rains start and they do not have work. They were being paid only Rs. 180 for preparing one thousand bricks, for which the entire family had to work from morning to evening. Much as they wanted their children to be educated, the migratory nature of their work made it difficult; besides their children had to help them both at the kilns as well as at the home. Prem Kumari and Jagat Ram told that they had talked to the SDM about the age certificates for admission to regular schools and the SDM had agreed to relax some rules in their case. They had persuaded a few parents to send their working children to regular schools, and were continuing with the efforts.

CITU TO HOST World Congress of Integrated Energy Workers

Unified international organisation of the integrated energy sector trade union movement is gaining more and more popularity amongst the workers of different segments of the energy sector in the world.

The Executive Bureau meeting of the International Energy and Mines Organisation (IEMO) held in London on 25th May, 2002 has given a call for 'unified international organisation for energy, mining and chemicals workers'. S. Dev Roye represented CITU in the meeting.

(The decision is reported hereunder.)

In this connection, it is worth noting that the World Congress of the entire Energy sector is being hosted by CITU in India in two parts. The Congress of the IEMO representing the world Electricity workers and Miners' trade unions shall be held in Cochin on 15-17 November, 2002. Again the congress of the world trade unions in Oil, gas and refinery sectors is scheduled to take place in Calcutta on 11-13 March, 2003.

The IEMO Executive Bureau

meeting in London 25 May 2002 decided to hold the IEMO Congress in Kochi in South of India on 15, 16 and 17 November 2002. In a resolution, the IEMO recorded concern at the increasing growth and influence of transnational companies (TNCs), the market economy and global capitalism. In particular at a time when every human being has a right to energy, we condemn the increasing concentration of energy into a small number of transnational energy companies - a policy that leaves the majority of

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the world's population without energy or with insufficient energy. The IEMO reaffirmed the need for an integrated energy policy and demanded the right of all workers for basic human and trade union rights. The demands included: The right to work and an end to unemployment; A right to energy for every human being on this planet; The right to decent affordable housing for all working men and women; The right to establish and maintain free and independent trade unions - free from interference by governments or TNCs with trade unions which have the unfettered right to strike in furtherance of their terms and conditions and their standard of life; An end to inequality and injustice - particularly in the under developed world and the writing off of third world debt.

We live in a world, which is continually being threatened by war. We condemn the United States of America and its NATO allies for its unlawful threats

against independent nations such as Iraq, Iran, Korea and Cuba, and call for an immediate cessation of the bombing of Iraq.

The IEMO unequivocally condemned the State of Israel for its continued unlawful fascist occupation of lands which belong to the people of Palestine and demand an immediate withdrawal in line with United Nations' Resolutions from all the territories illegally occupied by Israel since 1967.

The IEMO viewed with deep concern the deteriorating situation in the Indian sub continent and call upon all concerned to condemn acts of terrorism, at the same time call upon both India and Pakistan to negotiate a peaceful solution to the area of disagreement, particularly in the area in and around Kashmir.

The IEMO condemned the continued occupation by Turkey of the North of Cyprus and calls for an immediate withdrawal and the restoration to the people of Cyprus

of self determination.

The IEMO expressed concern at the growth of fascism and the Far Right and re-affirms its total opposition to racism and fascism in all its forms. We will do everything and anything to combat racism or fascism wherever and whenever it raises its ugly head.

The IEMO re-affirmed its commitment to assist energy, mining and chemical unions and their members involved in struggle and assure all workers that we will continue to support them in struggle anywhere in the world.

As a first step towards a unified international organisation for energy, mining and chemical workers, the meeting called all IEMO affiliated unions to attend our Congress in India on 15/16/17 November 2002. Invitation has also been extended to all other energy, mining and chemical trade unions to attend our Congress in the capacity of observers with a right to speak.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME IN LABOUR IN DEVELOPMENT

The Indira Gandhi National Open University under joint collaboration with the VV Giri National Labour Institute has launched a "Certificate Programme in Labour in Development".

The Programme will cover subjects like "Political Economy of Labour in India", "Organising the Unorganised", "Child and Bonded Labour", "Migrant and Female Workers", etc. It aims to sensitise and organize the laborers, particularly the unorganised labourers, through educating trade union functionaries, social activists and others. There is no age bar and admission is open throughout the year. Eligibility is 10+2 pass. For details contact:

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Block 5, IGNOU,
Maidan Garhi,
New Delhi - 110 068

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Mar'2002	Apr'2002				Mar'2002	Apr'2002
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	431	430	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	553	554
	2	Guntur	451	453		39	Nagpur	491	491
	3	Hyderabad	462	462		40	Nasik	511	508
	4	Visakhapatnam	460	462		41	Pune	520	521
	5	Warangal	486	487		42	Solapur	476	477
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	391	395	Orissa	43	Barbil	418	419
	7	Guwahati	469	475		44	Rourkela	406	411
	8	Labak-Silchar	369	375	Punjab	45	Amritsar	411	413
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	403	404		46	Ludhiana	421	421
	10	Rangapara	405	411	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	464	466
Bihar	11	Monghyr	425	423		48	Jaipur	436	438
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhilai	401	403	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	502	501
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	470	474		50	Coimbatore	455	465
	14	Bhavnagar	481	489		51	Coonoor	460	466
	15	Rajkot	437	442		52	Madurai	443	445
	16	Surat	476	478		53	Salem	453	453
	17	Vadodra	461	462		54	Tiruchirapalli	512	515
Haryana	18	Faridabad	468	472	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	426	429
	19	Yamunanagar	428	434		56	Ghaziabad	464	466
J & K	20	Srinagar	551	546		57	Kanpur	455	448
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	420	420		58	Saharanpur	434	434
	22	Jharia	363	367		59	Varanasi	478	474
	23	Kodarma	382	381	West Bengal	60	Asansol	449	452
	24	Noamundi	405	405		61	Darjeeling	388	387
	25	Ranchi-Hazaribagh	425	424		62	Durgapur	540	544
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	445	445		63	Haldia	579	578
	27	Belgaum	505	507		64	Howrah	535	536
	28	Hubli-Dhule	460	460		65	Jalpaiguri	410	408
	29	Mercara	453	452		66	Kolkata	522	524
Kerala	30	Alwaye	461	463		67	Raniganj	411	414
	31	Mundaka	454	454	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	505	505
	32	Quilon	466	459	Delhi	69	Delhi	537	539
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	528	532	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	494	507
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	409	410					
	35	Bhopal	503	503					
	36	Indore	482	484					
	37	Jabalpur	462	459					
ALL-INDIA								468	469

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	March 2002	April 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	458	
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	447	
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	466	
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	422	
Tripura	5 Tripura	415	
Goa	6 Goa	571	

(Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, participated in the 90th Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), held on 3-20 June 2002 at Geneva, as a member of the workers group in the Indian Delegation. Here is a report by him. - Editor)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE AT GENEVA

The 90th Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), held on 3-20 June 2002 at Geneva, brought to the fore the glaring reflection of the rising discontent against and louder disapproval of the ongoing process of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation. Not only most of the workers delegates attending the conference from both the developing and developed countries, but even the Government representatives from many of the developing countries, particularly from Asia, Africa and Latin America, made scathing observations against the neo-liberal globalisation process, imposed by the international monetary agencies at the behest of few rich nations and their multinational companies. No doubt, the increasing tempo of anti-globalisation protest-actions even in the western world from the very onset of the new millennium, against an economic order which generated filthy inequality and deeper poverty, even in the highly industrialised countries, provided the backdrop. That is why, even the Director General's speech while placing the Report before the conference could not but comment on the so called shortcomings of globalisation policies reflected in aggravation of poverty and unemployment and marginalisation of developing countries.

In his speech before the full assembly, the Director General, Juan Somavia, had to admit: "There is a lot of things said about globalisation. People are told that this is extremely good for them but when they look at their life at work, they cannot see the result. Currently more than a billion women and men are unemployed, under employed or working poor.... 120 million migrant workers and their families had to leave their home countries in the hope of finding a job somewhere else.... Today's single minded globalisation has a price for everything but it has nothing to say about basic human values." Thus the Director General could not but comment that the globalisation is facing a crisis of legitimacy.

But as usual - and may be due to systemic

compulsions - despite admitting the inefficacy of the present globalisation in providing a better humane living for all, the Director General still sought to find a solution within the frame work of free market-globalisation itself. He wanted to "get the balance right" of the globalisation and advocated "open economies" and "active market policies". He advocated: "we need to concentrate much more on local development, on local market, on local entrepreneurship, on basic networks of organisation and social protection and on local capacity to cope". But he avoided recognising the fact that the so called 'open economies' mechanism and free market policies promoted by globalisation are destroying local (national) economies, local industries, all social protection and engineered massive informalisation.

GLOBALISATION DENOUNCED

Many speakers on the DG's report were forthright in denouncing the present globalisation process as of imperialist and neo-colonial character. Mahathir Mohammad, Prime minister of Malaysia, while describing the present globalisation as of neo-colonial character, citing examples of last South Asian crisis, succinctly observed:

"International agencies, which were supposed to help merely saw an opportunity to impose their rules for opening markets, among other things, instead of bringing relief to the people. Loans were withheld in order to gain compliance. And with compliance, the whole country, and all its businesses and banks had to be sold at fire-sale prices. If the loans cannot be repaid, then the country will become debt slave indefinitely. No more independence. Everything will be decided by foreigners whose only interest is to open markets and to collect repayments on their loans. No subsidies for food or fuel for the poor people, no restriction on foreign ownership. No national agenda. And so, not only will there be poverty and unemployment, but also prolonged riots, instability and finally anarchy. But not to worry, the country is democratic, practices market

economy and accepts globalisation in toto.

"Well, after all this, should we in the developing countries be convinced that globalisation is the remedy for the social ills of the world? Frankly, I have doubts. What we are seeing is the erosion of independence of countries and their further impoverishment."

The Deputy Minister of Labour of Cuba also mentioned in his speech: "There is no mention or acknowledgement (In the DG's report) that in reality, the unfair international economic order imposed by rich countries has been the real cause of the calamities and sufferings experienced by the millions of the people throughout the world." Prime Minister of Barbados commented sharply while speaking on the Report that "the free market cannot do it all. It does not contain the sum total of human endeavour, needs and concern."

Sukomal Sen, also spoke on the DG's report on behalf of Trade Union International of Public Service Employees. While referring to the mounting onslaughts against all public services and the concerned employees through reckless privatisation and also growing resistance and strike actions all over the globe against such onslaughts, Sukomal Sen noted that neoliberal globalisation is the root of all such anti-people and anti worker machinations. He also criticised the DG's report for lacking any serious concern over such developments. He also mentioned that DG's suggestion of building consensus on globalisation is an unrealistic one and there is practically no room for such consensus anywhere as being evidenced from growing dissent and struggle against such policies everywhere in the world. Sen also urged that governing body of ILO should be made truly representative, representing all trends and opinions.

The deliberations in the ILO conference also brought to focus increasing concern among all the workers organisations about the serious situation arisen owing to Israeli aggression on Palestine and voiced strong demand for immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories. Even the Director General's Report mentioned about urgent need to establish peace in the region and withdrawal of Israeli forces. The Resolution Committee of the Conference also debated the issue. But unfortunately no resolution

on the subject could be adopted due to dilatory tactics of the Govt. and Employers' group, in connivance with some in the Workers Group.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As per usual practice, discussion was held on four different subjects in four separate tripartite committees representing Govt.s, Employers and Workers. They are-1) On application of Standards (ILO Conventions), 2) On Decent Work and Informal Economy, 3) On Promotion of Cooperatives, 3) Resolutions Committee. (Details of deliberations in the tripartite committees will be covered in the next issue)

One pernicious trend in the ILO itself came to the surface at this conference.. Although the conference reflected widespread resentment against the policies of globalisation, a move is also afoot to dechannelise such resentments to collaborative routes, that too with the perpetrator agencies of the neo-liberal globalisation. The same theory of cooperation and coordination with Brettonwood institutions both at international and country level has also been put forward in the Report of the Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body. This theory is sought to be pushed through in the conclusion of various committees. The Trade Union movement can ignore this trend only at their peril.

The workers delegation from India to ILO conference included K J Thakkar and Ravi Raman(BMS), Adwaintaya (INTUC), Tapan Sen(CITU), H Mahadevan(AITUC), Christin Natahan(HMS), Shankar Saha(UTUC-LS) and Renana Jhabwala(SEWA). Among them, Christin Nathan was the workers' spokesperson in the Committee on Informal economy, and spoke at the plenary session. Other speakers from among the workers group in the Indian delegation in the plenary session were: K.J. Thakkar (on DG's Report), Tapan Sen (on Resolution on tripartism), H Mahadevan (on Occupational Diseases and Accident) and Ravi Raman (on Cooperatives). N Adyantaya (INTUC) and I P Anand (Employers Orgn.) were elected as deputy members of the Governing body from India. Most notable is that for the first time from China, Xu Xicheng , Vice Chairman of All China Federation of Trade Unions was elected as deputy member of the Governing Body of ILO despite not being in the ICFTU panel.