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# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

***NPMO CALL AT 9th MARCH DELHI RALLY:  
ON TO COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE  
11th MAY 2000***



Against anti-people Economic Policy and communalism:

## RALLY OF SEVERAL LAKHS IN THE CAPITAL COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ON 11TH MAY

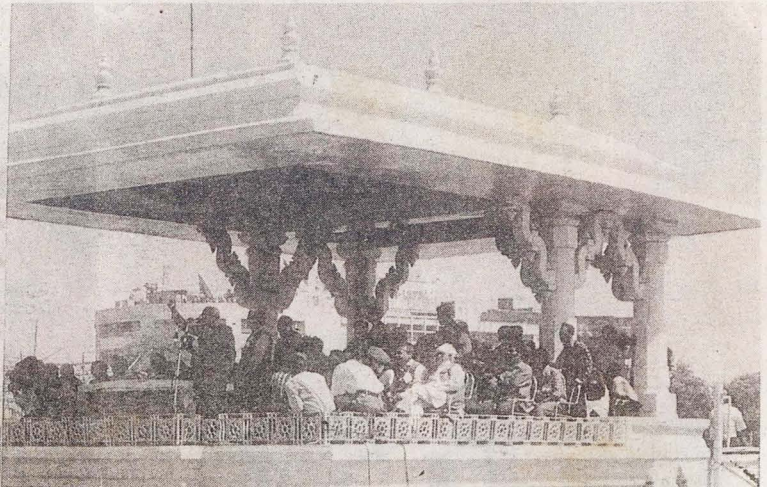
A massive rally of several lakhs workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, students, youth and women held at Ramlila Maidan at New Delhi announced countrywide General strike to be observed on 11th May 2000 against the anti-national and anti people economic policy of the Govt and its patronisation to communal forces. At the call of National Platform of Mass Organisations, the united platform of trade unions and mass organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth and women, a huge procession marched from behind the Red Fort to converge at Ramlila Maidan where the rally was held.

The rally adopted a declaration demanding reversal of the disastrous policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation and condemning the BJP Govt's attempt to communalise administration and other important social, cultural and educational institutions. (Copy enclosed)  
The rally also denounced the Govt of India's capitulation to the pressure of the imperialist powers both in economic and political fields and

passed a resolution unanimously calling upon the mass organisations to organise countrywide protest against the visit of US President Bill Clinton in India.

The rally was addressed by M K Pandhe(CITU), Harkishan Singh Surjeet(All India Kisan Sabha), K L Mahendra(AITUC), Umraomal Purohit(HMS), Ashoke Ghose(UTUC), Satyaban (UTUC-LS), D D Shastri(TUCC), Swapan Mukherjee(AICCTU), A B Bardhan(All India Electricity Employees Federation), Sukomal Sen(All India State Govt Employees Federation), S K Vyas(Confederation of Central Govt Employees), S R Saini(All India Insurance Employees Assn), Ramanand(All India Bank Employees Assn), J P Choubey(All India Railwaymen's Federation), Brinda Karat(ALL India Democratic Women's Assn), Kumudini Pati(AIPWA), Md Salim(DYFI), Bhan Singh Bhaura(AIKS) among others.

The speakers, while condemning the BJP led Govt for its anti-national policies called upon the people to start preparation in all sectors to make the call of GENERAL STRIKE on 11TH MAY a massive success all over the country.



NPMO RALLY:  
Leaders on the dias  
Photo courtesy:  
J. Ballabh

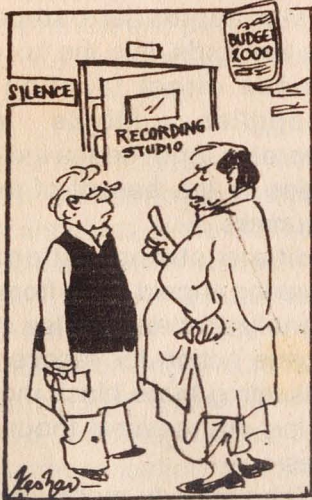


# THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

APRIL 2000

## ALL IN THE GAME



Don't say anti-corporate  
— just anti-people  
will do...

Courtesy: The Hindu

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## EDITORIAL

### MARCH ON, TO THE BATTLE AHEAD!

We are at a crucial juncture....

One after another crimes are being perpetrated by the Swadeshi brand rulers on the country's economy, on the society and ultimately on the sovereignty.

The disaster is starring at the face of the economy, despite the noise made by those in governance on its illusory recovery. It is a sad story of decline and deterioration all around so far as the common people are concerned. Now, the Govt played the worst trickery with the people through its extra-budgetary game of hefty hike in the prices of kerosene and cooking gas, imposing further burden on the common people.

The so called second generation reforms now target everything precious in this country for sale. The Govt of the day has become desperate to dismantle and demolish the economic might of the country in its entirety.

It is all raw deal for the people in the form of price-rise, poverty, unemployment, job-losses and bonanza for the Clinton-flock, the TNC empire.

At the same time the Vajpayee flock targets, as a part of its second generation reforms, the rights of the people, the democratic set-up and institutions and also the societal harmony, for attack to minimise and demolish possibility of resistance to their anti-national crimes. Hence the labour laws and trade union rights are under attack of so called rationalisation exercise, courtesy Second Labour Commission. The Indian Constitution is put under so called review to take away the essence of parliamentary democracy, courtesy the Constitution Review Panel. And there are the hoodlums of saffron brigade entrench themselves with Govt-patronage in administration, education, culture and what not and disrupt harmony in every sphere of the society.

And last but not least, Clinton, their saviour, was here to make strategic partnership with the swadeshi-brand outfit to curb terrorism(?), while heading the most heinous terrorist administration in the world. And these Indian swadeshiwallas expressed readiness to surrender to its hegemonistic design.

The people's life is at stake, country's sovereignty is at stake, the whole society is at stake.

The people will not accept the ongoing crime lying down. The waves of strikes and protests all over the country from the commencement of this new millenium testify to this.

The National Platform of Mass Organisation, in the 9th March rally has reiterated people's firm resolve to cry halt to the anti-national brigade in power.

**A great battle is ahead, march on to countrywide General Strike of May 11th. The anti-people crimes shall not pass !**

# NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATIONS

## DECLARATION OF 9TH MARCH, 2000 RALLY

The National Platform of Mass Organisations warmly congratulates the workers, peasants, agricultural workers students, youth and women who have converged today in lakhs at Delhi to join the March to Parliament to protest against the ongoing economic policies being pursued by the BJP-led Government at the behest of the Fund-Bank-WTO.

This rally condemns the Government for further carrying forward the liberalisation process, as reflected in the budget proposals for 2000-01, ignoring the growing opposition from all sections of the people. In a most anti-national manner, steps have been taken to privatise all public sector banks and highly efficient profit making PSUs, while closing down the sick units.

Against the interest of the country's economy and the domestic industries in particular, imports have been further liberalised and import duties have been drastically reduced, while increasing the excise duty burden. Subsidies on fertilisers have been curtailed and prices of rice, sugar, wheat etc supplied through public distribution system have been enhanced--- all against the interest of the common people. Huge concessions have been granted to the rich and moneyed class. While talking big about employment generation, the

budget proposals actually initiated steps to further kill the employment potential of the economy, downsize the employed workforce promoting unemployment and poverty in a big way.

Apart from the aggressive pursuit of the anti-people economic policies, the BJP led Govt at the Centre has further encouraged the communal forces to disrupt the unity and integrity of the country-- through saffronisation of Administration and all educational, social and cultural institutions, which poses a serious threat to the democratic set up as a whole.

This rally therefore calls upon all mass organisations for countrywide united mass movement on the basis of following demands:

- 1) Roll back the budget proposals and reformulate the Economic Policies to benefit the people and the country.
- 2) Halt reckless entry of Multinational Companies in Indian Economy.
- 3) Stop privatisation, disinvestment and corporatisation. Rescind the steps already taken in this direction.
- 4) Reopen closed industrial units and revive the sick ones.
- 5) Protect small scale and traditional Indian industries from the onslaught of the big business.
- 6) Check price-rise in real sense,

strengthen public distribution system, supply adequate quantity and quality of essential commodities at subsidised prices to economically weaker sections.

7) Re-introduce Essential Commodities Act and take action against hoarders and black marketeers.

8) Take appropriate steps to bring landlords, into the tax net. Increase direct taxation on monopolies, MNCs and Corporates, and reduce indirect taxation to the benefit of mass consumers.

9) Initiate strong action for recovering unpaid loans from the nationalized banks. Also take concrete action for recovering/ confiscating huge black money running into several thousand crores.

10) Take speedy measures to implement thoroughgoing land reforms, plug loopholes in land ceiling legislations, distribute ceiling-surplus and benami lands to the landless and protect the interest of the share-croppers.

11) Step up public investment for agri-infrastructure development, research and irrigation; Ensure availability of adequate credit to agriculture; write off all debts of agricultural labour and poor peasants, ensure marketing facilities, remunerative prices and comprehensive crop insurance for poor peasants, and adequate

subsidies for agrarian inputs. Curb liberal import of agricultural products and consumer items to protect the Indian agriculture and small scale industries.

12) Introduce comprehensive Central legislation for agricultural labour.

13) Introduce Right to work as a fundamental right under the Constitution. Ensure payment of unemployment allowance. Increase funds for rural development schemes, employment/guarantee schemes and food for work programme and provide for strict monitoring to ensure the benefits to reach the poor.

14) Withdraw ban on recruitment, stop downsizing Govt. staff strength and fill up all vacant posts in the Govt.deptts/ PSUs and other places.

15) Make Education a fundamental right in the Constitution and ensure free and compulsory education to all. Stop Commercialisation and Communalisation of education. Step up budgetary allocation for education to 10%. Ensure democratic rights of the academic community to elect

respective unions and to represent in the governing bodies of all educational institutions. Pass the 83rd Amendment Bill.

16) Adopt 33% Women's Reservation bill as it is, without further delay; take concrete measures to prevent atrocities against women and take stringent action against perpetrator of crimes and sexual harassment at workplaces. ensure equal property right to women and guarantee patta jointly in the name of husband and wife and ensure implementation of equal wage for women workers and also all the protective legislations.

17) Take speedy measures for abolition of child labour in all forms.

18) Guarantee the rights of dalits and tribals; take stringent action against perpetrators of atrocities against them. Fill up the backlog of SC/ST quotas in employment.

19) Modify the existing terms of reference of the Second National Commission for Labour and reconstitute the Commission in consultation with

all Central Trade Unions and organisations of peasants and agricultural labour.

20) Guarantee minimum wages above poverty line with automatic linkage to price index and regular periodical revision and progressively increase it to need based level. Suitably amend the Minimum Wages Act and place it in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution.

21) Curb all media and cultural programmes which violate secular values, dignity of women and glorify crime and violence. Prevent entry of MNCs in the media sector.

22) Halt nuclear weaponisation, stop arms race, refrain from signing CTBT and NPT.

23) Take stringent action against all involved in corruption deals, particularly those holding public office.

This rally therefore resolves to observe

### **COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ON 11TH MAY, 2000**

against the anti national policies of the Govt. and appeals to the people of India and the mass organisations to make it a massive success.

### **2.5 LAKH JUTE WORKERS ON STRIKE FROM 22ND MARCH**

2.5 lakh jute workers of 59 Jute mills in West Bengal went on indefinite strike from 22nd March on their 17 point charter of demands. All the 19 trade unions in the jute industry including those affiliated to 15 central trade unions have given the call demanding, inter alia, full implementation of the earlier industry-based agreement which was grossly violated by the jute mill owners, payment of the unpaid dues on account of PF, gratuity, and ESI by the employers, regularisation of temporary workers etc.

Reports received till going to press revealed that the strike was total and peaceful. As per latest development, the owners of 14 jute mills already evinced interest for a negotiate settlement and expressed their willingness to implement the earlier settlement and payment of statutory dues and arrears.

# FORWARD TO GENERAL STRIKE ON 11TH MAY!

M K Pandhe

The historic rally held at Ramlila Maidan on 9th March 2000 gave a clarion call to observe a countrywide General Strike on 11th May 2000 to protest against the anti-national economic policies pursued by the NDA Government leading to disaster and ruin for the entire toiling masses of India. The rally also supported the 22 point demands of all sections of the toiling masses of the country.

The Commissioner of Police, Delhi earlier gave permission to the march upto Jantar Mantar, in writing, but later on withdrew it on the plea that the place would not accommodate such a large gathering. There was a clear case of political intervention of the Ministry of Home Affairs in denying such a permission. However, the rally was among the biggest rallies held so far in Ramlila Maidan. The enthusiasm among the demonstrators reflected the new upsurge emerging among the working people all over the country. Braving difficulties of travelling, they came to Delhi from near and far. Streams of workers was flowing into Ramlila Maidan even when the rally was over.

## ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

The rally called for a countrywide intensive campaign against the economic policies of the BJP led Government and communalism so that millions of people can be mobilised in the concerted

struggle. The message of the rally was not only welcomed by the participants in the rally but received enthusiastic response in all corners of the country.

The Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers have already issued directive to all its affiliates to join the nationwide strike as decided by the NPMO. Its convention on 8th March has given a call to observe 19th April 2000 as Anti-Downsizing Policy Day. It also called on all the central government employees "to prepare the rank and file of the workers for participation in the national programmes of agitations by the entire working class." The local coordination committees of the confederation have already started preparations to join the nationwide united action.

The All India State Government Employees Federation in their national convention in the last week of December 1999 had decided to join the strike on the day the NPMO would give a call for a nationwide strike. The participation of a sizeable contingent of the State Government employees in the 9th March rally reflected the fighting mood of the State Government employees joining the nationwide strike will be an important development in the struggle of the Indian working class.

The All India Bank Employees Association, Bank Employees

Federation of India and other organisation of Bank employees have pledged their support to the strike action. The AIBEA's massive rally before Parliament on 8th March announced their full support to the NPMO strike call even before the official announcement of the date. The All India Insurance Employees Association and other unions in insurance industry have already endorsed the NPMO call. The insurance employees who are already in the thick of struggle against privatisation and entry of MNCs in the insurance sector are enthused to join the nationwide action by the entire working class.

Several industrywise federations have called upon the workers in their respective industries to join massively the nationwide action against the BJP led Government's policies which hit hard the working class. They have realised that without determined resistance from the entire working class, their economic conditions will deteriorate in a big way. By throwing out of jobs in the name of downsizing, huge manpower would be rendered as destitutes. Workers of all affiliations are coming together in local common actions to save their industry and protest their jobs.

## ALL IN CLASS UNITY

In order to organise a successful general strike, all in unity of the working class is extremely

essential. All sections of the working class are adversely affected by the Central Government's policy and they are coming together at local levels to defend their interests. Particularly, unity among the workers in sick industries is unique and workers of all affiliations are making collective efforts to save the units from closure. In industries where workers are not paid their earned wages for months together, united struggle for arrears of wages and other statutory dues are on. In the public sector alone, the sick industries have yet to pay Rs 2000 crores as statutory dues. The totally unhelpful attitude of the Finance Ministry is evoking strong reactions from the workers.

Anger among the workers is particular very high where the industries are unable to find market within India due to reduction of custom duty and opening up of floodgates for imported goods. The 2000-21 budget has not provided any relief to them and workers apprehend further deterioration in their working and living conditions.

Despite negative attitude of some sections of trade union leaders towards all India united movement, the urge among the rank and file workers is growing day by day due to prevailing objective conditions. The NPMO constituent trade unions should utilise this opportunity to build unity at lower levels, so that all sections of workers are mobilised during the preparation for general strike. Various forms

of demonstrative actions should be organised to involve more and more workers in united actions.

Trade unions who do not agree to join the general strike cannot oppose the demands raised by the NPMO, since they have also supported these demands, though reluctantly. The characterisation of the general strike as politically motivated does not cut much ice among the workers, since they have experienced the true nature of the so-called economic reforms and have realised that without struggle they cannot change the situation.

#### **ROLE OF OTHER MASS ORGANISATIONS**

When workers will be observing nationwide general strike, the mass organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, women students and youth have important role to play on 11th May 2000. The NPMO declaration have included their demands too and these mass organisations have already started to prepare for raising their powerful voice of protest on that day.

Apart from supporting the general strike of the working class they are also planning to organise massive demonstrations and rallies on the day, holding dharnas, picketing, rail roko, rasta roko programmes. This will lead to country wide involvement in the united movement of all the mass organisations. These mass organisations have already implemented these forms of actions on 11th December 1998 general strike and this time it

would be on a bigger scale than last time.

In this nationwide struggle of mass organisations, special emphasis should be paid to build worker-peasant alliance with a view to expand the coverage of the mass participation. Trade unions in their campaign should champion the demands of these mass organisations among the workers, since their interests are closely linked with the demands of other toiling sections. There is an urgent need to strengthen the unity of all mass organisations in the struggle. There is a tendency among a section of trade union leaders to emphasise only the working class issues which is adversely affecting building of stronger unity of all mass organisations. Hence, there is a special responsibility on the trade unions to see that all steps should be taken to ensure effective coming together of all the mass organisations so that the nationwide action programme is successfully carried out. Support of other mass organisations to the working class strike will make their struggle more popular and broad based.

#### **LAUNCH POWERFUL CAMPAIGN**

As decided by NPMO, a powerful nationwide campaign has to be launched to make the general strike a grand success. Immediate steps should be taken to hold local districtwise, regional, State level conventions to popularise the demands. In these conventions, the dangerous consequences of the suicidal policies of the Vajpayee

Govt should be explained, so as to rouse mass sentiments against these policies among all sections of masses including the supporters of NDA constituents. The remarkable support of the entire local people to save Salem plant in Tamil Nadu is an example worth emulating.

Pamphlets explaining the impact of the economic policies of the BJP led Government in simple language which can be understood by the people should be brought out in different languages so that the patriotic sentiments should be roused against the anti-national policies of the Central Government.

The opposition of the Left Front Governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura to these policies and support extended by them to the national campaign, is of immense importance in preparation of the general strike. The call for Bandh given by the political parties in different States in 1998 resulted in 8 States observing complete bandh. This is a additional solidarity received by

the common action of the NPMO. During this strike too such support may be forthcoming and efforts in that direction would be fruitful.

#### **AGAINST COMMUNALISM**

The NPMO has called for a struggle against communal and divisive forces who are seeking to disrupt the unity of the country. The growing fundamentalism in the society is dividing the people on religious lines and harm the common struggle of all masses who are victims of the policies of capitalist liberalisation. A secular unity of the mass movement is extremely important to make the call of general strike on 11th May a mighty success. The BJP led Government is tearing apart the secular fabric of the country. Under these circumstances, a struggle against the economic policies of the Government cannot be separated from the struggle against communal and divisive forces in the country. The NPMO campaign has to focus the need for unity of all secular forces in this struggle.

#### **STRENGTHEN THE NPMO**

The NPMO has become a popular forum of several mass organisations which is challenging forthrightly all aspects of financial globalisation. Newer and newer sections are joining the NPMO. However, we have yet to form State level committees of the type of NPMO, which should be expedited to strengthen the activities of the NPMO. Some States have already formed such committees and they are functioning well. There is paramount need to extend its activities in all the States so that the all India struggles can increase manifold.

Let us prepare for the 11th May strike in al the States in a planned and concerted manner so that the capitalist policies of globalisation can be given a mighty rebuff in all corner of the country. Let 11th May general strike be a precursor of several such bigger battles against the attempts of Vajpayee Government to put the country on sale!

#### **COM. GITA MUKHERJEE**

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the sudden passing away of Com. Gita Mukherjee, a veteran leader and Parliamentarian of the Communist Party of India who breathed her last in New Delhi on 4-3-2000, while preparing to go to Alligarh for a lecture against communalism.

Joining the student movement in early forties, Com. Gita Mukherjee devoted her entire life for the cause of toiling masses. A devoted fighter for the liberation of women, she played a notable role in the women's movement in India.

Com. Gita Mukherjee's passing away is a big loss to the left and democratic movement in India. Her simplicity in day to day life will always be cherished by those who knew her personally.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the memory of Com. Gita Mukherjee and convey heartfelt condolences to the bereaved members of her family.

# ILO DIRECTOR GENERAL VISITS INDIA

Juan Somavia, the Director General of the International Labour Organisation, was in India during February 2000. He inaugurated a workshop on job creation in the urban informal sector in India, in Surajkund. He met the representatives of Central trade union organisations in India, as also those of employers and the Government in separate sittings. He also addressed a public lecture on 'decent work in global economy.'

This was Somavia's first visit to India after taking over as the Director General of the ILO. He noted that India had been central both to his thinking and his world of action.

After a visit to Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in Rajghat, he advocated an understanding of the "social sins" listed by the Father of the Nation more than seven decades ago, "for addressing the moral and developmental challenges of globalisation"

- \* Politics without principle
- \* Wealth without work
- \* Pleasure without conscience
- \* Knowledge without character
- \* Commerce without morality
- \* Science without humanity

were the social since quoted by Somavia in which he found the answer to address the larger question of ensuring that globalisation leads to increasing benefit for ordinary people everywhere in the world right here."

Somavia said, India was on the threshold of incredible potential of finding policies, holding the capacity to dialogue and reach agreements and that the issues before the country today lay at the heart of ILO's concerns. These according to him, are reconciling social accountability with economic stability, facilitating adjustments without social

trauma and human distress and making markets work for all.

"Social justice has been an enduring theme in the Indian political tradition and of course the guiding principle of the ILO. But globalisation has created both unprecedented economic opportunities and deepened social inequalities and personal insecurities," he said, raising the question of how to steer the process of globalisation to provide assurances for people everywhere.

"Globalisation requires us to build an international framework within which economic processes can generate prosperity with equity in national life. This requires both national action and an enabling international environment, which the ILO seeks to create through a normative framework supported by institution building, technical programmes and development cooperation and reorganising itself to focus on the goal of decent work," Somavia said.

"The ILO is concerned not only with the creation of jobs but with creation of jobs of acceptable quality," the ILO chief stressed, adding that the world needed to develop a new concept of social efficiency.

"A political consensus to put employment at the heart of anti-poverty strategies of international development cooperation will powerfully support the fight to realise human rights at work in practise," he added.

Juan Somavia summed up the new policy emphasis on decent work in the following words: "The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity security and human dignity."

## Com. N. APPA RAO

Com. N. Appa Rao Veteran trade union leader and Vice-President, AIREC, S.E. Rly Zone, expired on 15.2.2000. at 7.30 hours at his residence in Imambara Lane, Raja Bazar, Khurda Road, due to cardiac failure. He joined S.E. Rly around 1950 and continued to associate with the railway trade union movement, and the left democratic movement in various capacities till his death. He led many struggles in railway trade union from successfully.

# ATROCIOUS UNION BUDGET!

The Finance minister's call to the country to be prepared for a harsh budget has now come home to roost. As usual, this budgetary proposal of Yashwant Sinha for the year 2000-2001 also is a package of concession and relief to the MNCs and big business lobby and the entire burden of "sacrifice" and harsh measures have been imposed on the common people and the working class.

## POVERTY WILL AGGRAVATE

In the background of growing rural poverty and bountiful food stocks, the Finance Minister has targeted food subsidies to be axed down by over Rs 1100 crore or by 12%. The households below poverty line would now have to pay 64% and 46% more for wheat (rise from Rs 2.50 to Rs 4.10 per kilo) and rice (rise from 3.50 to Rs 5.10 per kilo) respectively through Public Distribution System (PDS). In the background of such a hefty rise in prices of food articles for the people below poverty line, the provision for doubling the PDS quota for them is nothing but crudest joke with those poorest people.

## AGRICULTURE WILL SUFFER

The budget not only undermines the public distribution system, it further damages the growth prospects of already lagging foodgrain sector and thereby threatening food security of the country. In the background of decline of food-grain production by 4 million tonne in the current year, hiking of fertiliser prices through drastic cut in subsidies along with reduction in public outlays on agriculture and rural development and introduction of cost-based user charges for infrastructural services as revealed by the budget would cast severely negative impact on agricultural production and affect the poor farmers most. Further, while most of the agricultural products are going to be put in free-import list from April 1, 2000 as per commitment made by the Govt in the WTO, the reduction of maximum import duty on those items from abroad coupled with sharp hike in cost of domestic agricultural production fuelled by above-said budgetary measures exposes shameless capitulation by the Govt of India to the pressure of foreign lobby at the cost

of Indian agriculture.

## PRICE RISE TO BE FUELLED FURTHER

The inflationary pressure on the common people fuelled by rise in food and fertiliser prices would be further mounted by across-the-board increase in many other essential commodities due to sharp hike in excise duties in the name of so called rationalisation. Many essential items, which were earlier attracting 8% excise duty would now have to bear burden of 16% which would inevitably be passed on to the consumers in the form of increased price.

## ALL FOR MNCs

The Swadeshi Govt of the day has not faulted in reducing the customs duty to the tune of Rs 1400 crore while increasing the excise duty burden on Indian products by Rs 3250 crore — all in the name of rationalisation, thereby deliberately putting the Indian industries in competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis the foreign producers. Whom this Swadeshi Govt is serving, the Indian economy or the foreign companies?

The prospect of domestic industrial growth has been further dampened by significant shortfall in plan outlays in capital expenditure areas particularly in agriculture and rural development during the previous year (1999-2000). In the current budget again out of Rs 6513 crore of budgeted capital expenditure, 80% has gone to Defence leaving very little for the rest of the economy.

## DEREGULATION OF FINANCIAL SECTOR

The Finance Minister talked big in his budget speech in reviving the health of the financial institutions through privatisation courtesy Narasimham Committee and Verma panel report but kept absolutely silent on the recovery of the huge Rs 58000 crore of "Non performing asset" of the Nationalised banks, usurped by the big business houses with impunity. The budget has further dismantled almost all regulatory mechanisms for outflow and inflow of financial capital. It has hiked the permissible limit of equity holding by foreign institutional investors and granted huge concession to Venture capital, besides releasing parliamentary control over the

monetary management of the economy in the name so called autonomy for the Reserve Bank of India. All taken together, the current budgetary exercise is going to promote speculation and gambling activities at the cost of the real economy, much to the detriment of real meaningful economic growth, to the detriment of generating productive capacity and employment. Added to this is the budgetary declaration to reduce the Govt stake in Nationalised Banks to minority level. While making such declaration, simultaneous statement of the Finance Minister for strengthening the nationalised banking sector exposes nasty deceitful design of the Govt in power.

### **RAW DEAL TO WORKERS, BONANZA TO EMPLOYERS**

Despite demand of the entire trade union movement, the exemption limit of the income tax has not been raised affecting the salaried workers and employees most and compelling even the unskilled workers in the organised sector to pay income tax. Simultaneously, while talking big on tax compliance, the Finance Minister remained absolutely silent and indulgent on criminal tax evasion by the big business lobby leading to accumulation of huge direct tax arrears to the tune of Rs 41000 crore as noted by CAG. Going further, the finance minister has liberally allowed these big tax evaders to get their excise duty obligation assessed on the basis of their own declaration and the system of cross-assessment by the excise deptt has been done away with.

While denying the salaried employees and workers any relief, the budget of the BJP Govt has liberally showered concessions to those tax evaders' class like reduction in the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) by 2-1/2% and many others. The budget targeted the workers and the common people for expenditure control exercise and reduced the interest payable on General Provident Fund of the mass of the central Govt and state Govt employees, which is also indicative of similar attack on the Employees' Provident Fund in the days to come. The budget has also indicated drastic reduction in manpower in Govt offices and abolishing thousands of vacant posts.

### **CLOSURES OF SICK, SALE OF PROFIT-MAKING PSUs REITERATED**

The budget has reiterated its decision not to revive

the sick PSUs and push them to closure and has not apportioned any fund for that purpose. It has also repeated its commitment to sell out precious wealth of the country through outright privatisation of profitable public sector units. The assets of the PSUs would be sold out to pay for killing employment through VRS etc.

### **ANTI-DEVELOPMENT, ANTI-EMPLOYMENT BUDGET**

The budget took no measure for employment generation in the face of sky-rocketting unemployment. During the span of last one year, more than 2 lakh jobs were lost only in public sector, both state and central, 57000 jobs were killed in textile sector alone and the jobs lost in unorganised sector is anybody's guess. In such a situation, in stead of arresting such dangerous trend through suitable budgetary measures, the NDA Govt's budget further provokes job killings. Instead of promoting capital-investments for augmenting employment, the budget allows Govt guarantee for raising resources for funding voluntary retirement schemes.

The budget sought to cheat the people by imposing some tax on farmhouses and the finance minister's categorical statement on excluding the income of the farm house on agricultural operation from the said tax net itself would give the big land lords and farmhouse owners the escape route for tax evasion. The budget did practically nothing on developmental activities, poverty alleviation, infrastructure and sought to mislead the people by talking about creating some funding agencies like last year's budget without significant provision for resources. As a result, poverty will continue to increase, with mounting unemployment and aggravating industrial sickness pushing the whole economy towards disaster. The recovery in the economy as talked about by the minister is bound to be illusory if the same policy continues.

In fine the budget can be summed up as budget for the MNCs, big business and the speculators and it is atrocious so far as the common people and the country's future is concerned.

CITU in a statement issued on 29th February, 2000, denounced the budget terming it anti-people, pro monopoly and pro-MNC budget and called upon the working class to fight it back unitedly and resolutely.

## STEEL WORKERS ON WARPATH

The steel workers in the country have been in the midst of struggle against the Govt of India's design to dismantle and demolish the domestic steel industry in favour of the multinational companies. Now SAIL and VIZAG STEEL have become the targets of overzealous drive for privatisation by BJP led Government at the Centre.

The pro-MNC economic policies followed by Central Government have caused enormous damage to SAIL which suddenly tumbled down from huge profit making company to a massive loss making one just within three years despite rise in production and sales. Vizag Steel is most efficient plant in the country where productivity and quantity parameters are better than Bhilai and even TISCO. But Government apathy to help it by just converting the loans into equity and relieving it of its debt burden, has pushed it to BIFR. Government of India, at the instance of an American Consultancy Company, McKinsey & Co is taking jealous steps towards closure, sell-out and privatisation of various vital installations in both the units of SAIL and RINL at throw away prices. As reported earlier the steps suggested by McKinsey & Co. of America are - (a) Sale of Salem Steel now, (b) Sale of Alloy Steel, Durgapur by 2002, (c) Sale of Power Plants in Rourkela, Bokaro and Durgapur immediately (d) Sale of Visweswariaya Steel, (e) Sale of

IISCO, Burnpur, (f) Sale of Oxygen Plant at Bhilai, (g) hiving off stockyards, townships, Hospitals, Schools etc. in due course. For Vizag Steel the Government is going for wholesale privatisation. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh is also advocating for quick privatisation of Vizag Steel.

The foreign companies like KRUP, DEMAG and many others are waiting in the wings besides the TATAs and the Zindals etc to take over the Public sector steel plants for a platter.

Steel Workers are not going to take these anti-national retrograde steps lying low. They are on a warpath to defeat these designs. A wave of movement is going on in all the plants. There is a growing sense of unity among the workers that marks the militant mood of the workers and their families.

In Salem Steel Plant there were 3 strikes on 24.6.99, 2.2.2000 and 16.3.2000 where almost hundred percent workers struck work. Protest rallies, token fast, massive demonstrations are being held regularly along with the workers, their family members and common people in the area. A district wide bandh called on 4th March has been deferred because Shri M Karunanidhi requested that he would take up the matter with Prime Minister, failing which he promised to join the struggle later.

In Durgapur in both the plants namely Durgapur Steel Plant

and Alloy Steels Plant massive demonstration took place on 16th and 17th February, 2000 and before that on 2nd February, 2000 there was massive strike where 70 to 75% workers struck work. The workers are planning to go for further action and rally the common people in the industrial town in the struggle the public sector steel plants.

In Vizag steel plant, the workers went for a token strike on 2nd February, 2000 where 99.0% workers participated. In the referendum against privatisation, organised by the CITU union, more than 90% workers took active part. After that there have been hunger strike for 10 days and demonstrations on 1st and 7th March, 2000 (when Chandrababu Naidu visited Vizag) braving brutal lathi-charge by the police on both the days. 5 workers were implicated in police case and more than 100 workers were injured. Besides workers, common people in the locality and eminent persons and veteran freedom fighters also joined the united protest action against the retrograde bid of the Govt to hand over the most modern steel plant in the country to foreign companies with Indian private houses as their junior partner. In Rourkela, the representatives of multinational ENRON company who came to inspect the power plant for purchase were prevented from alighting from the train itself by thousands of demonstrating workers. This

year a continuous campaign is going on to stop selling of power plants, fertiliser plant etc. More than 1000 workers were arrested in massive protest demonstrations held on 24.2.2000 and on 14.3.2000.

In IISCO, Burnpur, workers struck work on 2nd February, 2000. Thereafter, numerous campaign meetings are being held in the plant and the township where workers and the local residents are participating in a big way. A jatha/procession campaign has been launched in the entire area and the workers are preparing for bigger struggle. The Steel Workers Federation of

India(SWFI), in its Working Committee Meeting held on 17.3.2000 at Calcutta has decided to intensify the struggle and approach to other Central Trade Unions as well as local unions so that a strong united movement against privatisation can be developed to stall the nefarious design of the Govt to demolish country's Steel industry. Meantime the Federation decided to launch intensive campaign and agitation in all the steel centres in the country, inside the plants and in the townships, and prepare for countrywide united strike action in the steel industry.

The SWFI also upheld the decision of National Platform of Mass Organisations(NPMO) for countrywide General Strike on 11th May 2000, and resolved to make it successful in all the steel plants, units and offices all over the country. It was decided to observe 3rd April, 2000 as the PROTEST DAY AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF UNITS OF SAIL AND VIZAG STEEL with massive dharna, demonstration and other forms of protest. The SWFI would be meeting soon after a round of consultation with other trade unions in the steel industry to decide on its next course of action programme.

#### **CITU DENOUNCE ENTRY OF FOREIGN LAWYERS, CONDEMN ASSAULT ON LEGAL PROFESSION**

The fall out of Globalisation and opening of the country to foreign companies are about to take its toll in the legal profession in India. The Govt is not concerned about the sufferings of the common people for delayed and prolonged litigation process owing to weak infrastructure of the judicial system, shortage of judges, shortage of supporting staff etc but is keen in allowing entry of foreign lawyers in Indian courts along with imposition of several conditionalities on Indian lawyers to the advantage of the foreign players.

The recent policy decision of the Govt of India to allow foreign lawyers to paractice in Indian Courts, and the move to convert the legal profession in India into a multidisciplinary commercial outfit and imposition of several restrictions on Indian Lawyers have evoked strong protest among the lawyers and also common people.

Some of the changes sought to be introduced by the Govt are 1) permitting setting up of multi-disciplinary firms, including non-lawyers to cater to variety of services, 2) permitting foreign lawyers to practice independently of their Indian agents/associates, 3) imposing conditions on Indian lawyers for renewal of registration after tests and on payment of every five years. Irony is that while the new move of the Govt seeks to allow non-lawyers(without law-qualification) to intrude in legal profession, at the same time it seeks to impose on the qualified persons from the recognised university/institutions, the condition for test every five years.

The lawyers' community, irrespective of affiliation have raised their voice of protest to hand over another service sector of the country to foreign agencies braving brutal police atrocities in Delhi and also in other cities.

In a letter written to Ram Jethmalani, Union Law Minister, M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU has denounced such damaging move of the Govt of India and demanded reversal of the move forthwith. Pandhe noted that "all those steps are being taken at the dictates of WTO, IMF and World Bank and Govt of India are bending backwards to appease them and prove them to be MNC friendly at the cost of country's prestige and interest....We are keen to see improvements in legal systems which should be speedy, cheap, people-oriented and relevant to modern day requirements. The Govt have done almost nothing so far to change the present state of affairs but suddenly become active when MNCs are demanding".

# ECONOMY ON RAILS !

## **INCREASING IMPORTS OF TEXTILE PRODUCTS... INCREASE IN CLOSURES OF MILLS & SHARPLY DECREASING EMPLOYMENT...**

The imports of various textile products increased during last three years.. from Rs 26398 crore in 1996-97 to RS 30126 crore in 1997-98 to Rs 32972 crore in 1998-99 as per latest data furnished by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics(DGCI&S).....

*(Financial Express, 9-02-2000)*

Till August 99, total number of closed spinning mills reached 218. Together with 105 idle composite units, the total number of closed textile mills reached 323 by the end of August 99... Thus, since March 1998, in just 17 months, as many as 103 textile mills became idle depriving near 57000 employees of their jobs directly, and indirectly affecting nearly 2.5 lakh people including their family members...but nothing seem to move New Delhi....

*(Financial Express, 9-11-1999 )*

## **ECONOMIC DISPARITY AMONG STATES GROWING IN POST REFORM ERA...**

....In the nineties, the prosperous states have prospered while poor ones have become poorer.... Bihar has gone down from eighth highest position in early nineties to tenth position in terms of its share in total states domestic products....Worse, small and economically poor states like Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura have

been marginalised further.... Similar is the position of Assam and Orissa....

A survey on the movement of state domestic product(SDP) and relative share of states in aggregate SDP of the major Indian states(source: Report on Currency and Finance, 1998-99, RBI)shows that the economic landscape of the country has changed little during the Reform years.....

....In the absence of powerful institutions, the benefit of progress is bound to go in favour of the richer states...What is disturbing, however, is that the existence of regional disparity has been institutionalised under the economic reforms. Planning Commission no longer worries about widening regional disparities and economic policies of the Union Govt has nearly stopped taking into consideration such issues....

*(From Economic Times, 14-02-2000)*

## **LOSS OR LOWER PROFIT DESPITE HIGHER PRODUCTION/ SALES !**

....An Economic Times study across third quarter performances reveals that a large number of companies, after recording higher sales have either posted higher losses or lower profits. Some companies even went into the red....Cement major ACC posted a loss of Rs 20 crore in the quarter ended in December 1999 despite recording a higher sale of Rs 28 crore compared to corresponding period previous year.....Tata Engineering is another company where margins

### **VOLTE FACE — BJP BRAND**

#### **Bring Farmers under Tax-net : BJP**

The BJP asked the Govt on Tuesday (15-02-2000) to bring the big farmers under the tax net....in the union budget for 2000-01....The BJP Vice-President, Jana Krishnamurthy, who is tipped to be the next party president, said so. ( The Observer, 16-02-2000 )

#### **No to farm tax : BJP**

Fearing a backlash from rural India and its allies, The Bharatiya Janta Party yesterday (16-02-2000) denied having advocated taxing rich farmers. The party declared that it was opposed to imposition of any tax on the farm sector and the views expressed by party vice-president Jana Krishnamurthy were his own and not the party's.

A volte face indeed !

# HEADING WHERE ?

## UNMASK CORPORATE DEFAULTERS OF BANK LOAN : CVC

Chief Vigilance Commissioner N Vittal said on Friday (18-02-2000) that greater transparency in the banking sector was essential if the issue of non-performing asset (NPA) had to be tackled and favoured making public names of wilful corporate defaulters. At the inauguration of a seminar organised by Assocham and MCCI, Mr Vittal said, "If we want to check NPAs, it is necessary to publicise the names of the companies which are wilful defaulters..... In India, industry becomes sick, but industrialists do not become sick at all. It is possible to make industry sick through corrupt collusion between bankers and borrowers and then refer the issue to BIFR."

Meanwhile, ICRA, Calcutta chief, Prof Mihir Rakshit in his address said that one of the main reasons for increasing NPAs was diversion of funds taken as loan by industrial houses. What was required is the change in rules and greater transparency, he noted.

*(The Observer, 19-02-2000)*

have been adversely affected despite 52% rise in sales... The trend is more evident in case of major

oil refineries and petroleum companies.....

*(Economic Times, 14-02-2000)*

## BORROWING OVERSHOTS BUDGET ESTIMATES BY Rs 9616 CRORE...

The central government has overshot the market borrowing limit envisaged in 1999-2000 budget by Rs 9616 crore, notwithstanding the repeated rhetoric about curbing expenditure and keeping a check on borrowing. As against budget estimate of Rs 83014 crore in gross market borrowing, the Govt's borrowing stood at Rs 92630 crore at the end of January 2000 with two months still left of the financial year... During the same period non tax revenue generation was only 71% and collection of tax revenue was only 60% of the budgeted target and the shortfall in revenue generation may not be met as per the concerned Officials ....

*( From Economic Times, 14-02-2000)*

## SAVING & INVESTMENT : DECLINE IN EVERY HEAD !

The Central Statistical Organisation has recently revised its estimates of savings and investments for the year 1998-99. These estimates should make everybody sit up. There is a decline under every head. The house hold sector, which saved 19% of GDP in in 1997-98 saved 18.5% in 1998-

99. The private corporate sector saved only 3.8% of GDP in 1998-99 against 4.3% in 1997-98.... Total gross domestic savings declined in 1998-99 to 22.3% from 24.7% in 1997-98. Net capital inflow also declined to 1% from 2.6% in 1997-98. As a result, gross domestic investment in 1998-

99 was only 23.4%. This stood at 26.2% in 1997-98.....The industrial growth rate of the 90s will not match that of 80s, notwithstanding all the noise about liberalisation, globalisation etc.

*(Kewal Varma in Business Standard, 18-02-2000)*

## BLACK ECONOMY REIGNING

There are many popular images of the black economy like it is all about bribes. Some believe that it is the result of high taxes and/or of Governmental controls.... Bribes are important but are a small part of the black economy and not even counted when measuring its size.....The growing black economy has led to policy failure and strengthened the well-off relative to the poor.....The black economy has grown from 2% in the mid fifties to about 15% in 1980 to about 40% of GDP in 1995-96, even though tax rates have come down from 97.5% to 30%. Illegal activities like drugs and flight of capital contribute 8% of GDP. A capital short country is exporting capital to the tune of Rs 75000 crore....The black economy are concentrated in 3% of the population and worsen the income disparities.

*( Prof Arun Kumar, JNU at The Observer, 5-01-2000 )*

## RAIL BUDGET: NO ANSWER TO THE CRISIS

The rail budget for 2000-2001 is nothing more than a carbon copy of the rail budgets of recent years. The only difference is that the Minister's budget speech this time abounds in hollow rhetoric along with quotations from Tagore and Swami Vivekananda with doubtful relevance to the context.

Passenger fare has been left untouched but the freight charges, except for a few items, have gone up by 5%. While passengers have undoubtedly heaved a sigh of relief for the time being, observers have reminded them that it has of late become the established routine that freight and passenger fares are hiked in alternate years: if freight is hiked this year, next year is the turn for passenger fare. But passengers may not have to wait for the next budget. It can be hiked, in the middle of the year also, any time in the year for that matter. There are many such instances.

As for 5% hike in freight, the effect of the inflationary pressure will be passed on to the consumers, to all people. They will have to pay more for all purchases, even the excepted items will not escape the cascading effect.

This fare and freight hike, though they affect the common people directly in the former case and almost directly in the latter are, however, a routine affair. But what is not quite apparent to the common man is the deep crisis of the railway system itself. The horrible accidents occurring with increasing frequency and frequent disruption of train services for other reasons, extremely overcrowded trains, habitual unpunctuality - these are visible symptoms of the crisis of the system. A rail budget is to be judged by the extent to which it reflects the awareness of the crisis and provides steps for overcoming it.

It is now known even to the common man that the railway system suffers seriously from line capacity constraint. Many of the problems including those related to safety arise from this constraint. Railway Minister, Mamata Banerjee has lamented in her budget speech that during the fifty three years "independent India has added less than one fourth of what was built in ninetyfour years of the colonial rule". One would expect the

Minister to declare at least a modest increase in the programme for expansion of the network. But to our dismay we find, against 241 route Kms. of new line provided for in previous years budget, provision has been made for 217 route Kms. of new line in this year.

The Minister has announced a larger number of new services for which there will obviously be the need for more engines and more coaches. Has the Minister made provision for increased number of locos and coaches? This table will give the answer:

Annual plan for 1999-2000	Annual plan for 2000-2001
Locos	
1) Diesel - 138	1) Diesel - 93
2) Electric - 120	2) Electric - 94
3) Coaches EMU - 245	3) Coaches EMU - 240
Others - 1882	Others - 1760

It will be clear from the above that when substantial increase in the number of rolling stock is an absolute necessity, considerably reduced number of them have been targetted in the budget.

In the status paper published by the Ministry of Railways on 27 May 1998, it was stated "Due to the constraint of line capacity and the overriding priority that has to be provided to freight traffic, development of passenger services had to be planned below demand. As a result, funds allocated for coaching stock procurement are not need based. However, to cope with the pressures to meet the demand for additional passenger services between 1992-93 and 1996-97, the net shortfall of broad gauge stock vis-a-vis bare requirement of additional services introduced, was to the extent of 2728 coaches. The inevitable consequences of this non provision of the requisite number of coaches has been a drawing down of the maintenance and traffic spares, which in turn have resulted in unreliability of the assets as well as running of passenger trains with lesser number of coaches. This has also led to declining standards of coaching stock maintenance with serious repercussions on quality and quantum of passenger services."

Further impact of reduced target of coaching stock in the new budget is anybody's guess.

About freight, the status paper has aptly

highlighted the mismatch between economic growth and Rail infrastructure development.

"Freight traffic on the Indian Railways has historically grown at 3.5% annually which has not matched the GDP growth rate whereas international experience indicates that rail freight should grow at a faster rate than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as already brought out earlier.

"The situation would be aggravated if the macro level economic policies of the Government launch the Indian economy to a higher growth trajectory of 7 - 8% during the 9th Plan and if rail infrastructure is not allowed to grow at a rate that will enable capacity expansion to be commensurate with GDP growth. Should that happen, the economy will soon face a transport bottleneck because any further diversion to road would only escalate both transport and social costs for the economy and the society as a whole, besides putting unsustainable pressure on the road infrastructure which itself is being over-stretched. Massive investments in capacity enhancement and technological upgradation of the Indian Railways in turn is, therefore, a necessary pre-condition for the Indian economy to shift to a higher growth path."

In the case of some items, marginally higher targets have been fixed, live track renewal. The target in the new budget is 3250 track Km. against 2710. But it must be remembered "arrear of track renewals continue to remain mainly due to paucity of funds. These arrears which were 9595 km. in the beginning of the VIII plan have grown to 10957 Km. in the beginning of the IX plan.

The effects on the system are speed restrictions and rail failures causing considerable erosion in traffic carrying capacity, besides loss of reliability." Will the meagre increase in target be able to overtake the fast growing arrear? Obviously not.

### **Financing of development**

On several items the budget shows slightly increased outlay. But rise in cost largely and even wholly offsets the increased outlay. Besides, the estimates of resource flow often prove wrong. For 1999-2000 "the Plan expenditure has been reassessed and kept at 8965 crores against budgeted outlay of Rs.9700" due to shortfall in internal resource generation. For the year 2000-

2001 the plan outlay has been kept at 11000 crores. Capital support from exchequer will be Rs.3540 Crores for the year. But will the market borrowing target really be attained? Even the estimate of internal resources is not quite reliable. In a letter addressed to the Railway Minister, Jibon Roy, Member of Rajya Sabha and Secretary of CITU, has pointed to the dubious character of the anticipation of Rs.750 crores from commercial publicity and exploitation of land and airspace and leasing of 'right of way' of optic fibre cables. It is entirely unrealistic to expect revenue from the last two items during this financial year.

The Explanatory Memorandum, under caption 'performance' during the IX Plan (1997-2002) reads "During the Mid-Term Review of the IX Plan, it is observed that at 1996-97 prices the likely plan expenditure for the first three years of the IX plan comes to Rs.23259 crores which is 51% of the total plan outlay of Rs.45,413 crores. The budgetary support provided to Railways in the first three years works out to Rs.5976 crores which is again about 51% of the total budgetary support of Rs.11,791 crores. It is indicated by the Planning Commission that there may be some cuts in the plan outlay as well as the budgetary support in the IX plan for Railways. Considering the performance in the first two years of the IX Plan, a Mid-Term Review was made and the targets of freight traffic are scaled down to 490 million tonnes (MT) of revenue earnings traffic, equivalent to 328.3 billion tonne kilometers (BTKM) of transport output. In view of the reduced targets, the targets for procurement of Rolling stock would have to be modified. The requirement of funds for undertaking even the reduced level of Rolling Stock may be much more than that can be provided based on the projected plan outlays. Hence Railways may not be able to achieve even the revised targets for the freight and passenger traffic if they are not provided a significantly enhanced budgetary support. Otherwise, the targets for some activities may have to be reduced even further to make available funds for procurement of Rolling stock."

### **Needed Massive Investment**

Investment on massive scale is necessary to lift the Railways from the depth of crisis. Gimmicks will not save Indian Railways. Will the Minister put up real struggle for survival of Indian Railways?

## REPORTS & EVENTS

### 42 DAYS - LONG STRIKE BY J&K EMPLOYEES

The recent strike by the employees of State Government and the State Public Sector Units is a significant event in the history of trade union movement in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, amidst the daily devastations caused by the activities of terrorists and subversive forces. After a long gap of 27 years, the 4 lakh employees launched their strike after coming together on an united platform, viz. J&K Employees Joint Action Committee (JKEJAC). With peace and tranquillity torn asunder in this multi-lingual and multi-religious state, the employees forged a common bond transcending all barriers of caste, religion, language etc., and carried on a powerful strike lasting for 42 days from the 20th December, '99 to 31st January, 2000. The strike had paralysed the entire administration in the State and all the offices, educational institutions, including the Civil Secretariat, stood deserted for the whole period. Only emergencies in hospitals, water and power supply were exempt from the strike.

The J&K Coordination Committee of Trade Unions played an important role in the formation of the united platform of JKEJAC. This joint forum comprised various federations and departmental associations in both the regions of Jammu & Kashmir. After a number of rallies,

demonstrations, dharnas and token strike programmes were held separately by the different federations, a massive rally was held in Shalimar Chowk in Jammu on 30.11.1999. That day a State-wide strike was observed and the JKEJAC was launched at the rally. Enthused by the success of the one day strike and the massive rally, the JKEJAC gave a call for 3 days strike on 6-8, December '99. A 17 point charter of demands was adopted, which included release of 2 instalments of DA due from January & July, '99, the 2nd instalment of 5th Pay Commission arrears due from April, 99, regularisation of daily rated employees, reorganisation of different departments, removal of anomalies in Bonus etc. The call for 3 days strike evoked tremendous response. The entire State of J&K reverberated with the massive demonstrations and rallies in all Taluk and District headquarters on all the three days. The JKEJAC then gave a call for a week-long strike from 20th December '99, which was subsequently extended to 30th December, 15th & 25th January, and 5th February.

The State Govt. invoked the ESMA on 12.1.2000 and let loose a brutal repression. More than 500 employees - leaders and activists - were arrested, jailed and suspended. Section 144 was invoked to ban all rallies throughout the State. All major

office complexes in the cities and towns were converted into Police camps. But the employees braved the brutal repression and gave a befitting reply by demonstrating in thousands throughout the State. In the process, hundreds of employees - men and women - were injured in Jammu, Srinagar, Kathua, Udamapur and other places.

Negotiations were held at different levels during the period of strike, beginning with a team of Senior Officials. Then a Cabinet Sub-Committee was formed by the Govt., which only offered to pay 50% of the 2nd instalment of 5th Pay Commission arrears in cash. This was not accepted by the JKEJAC. Then negotiations were resumed on 22.1.2000 at the level of Divisional Commissioner. But even after 4 rounds of discussions, there was no breakthrough.

Unfortunately, a section of the JKEJAC, comprising a few members of the State Council capitulated and took some opportunist stand during the dialogue with the Divisional Commissioner. The State Govt. cultivated this section, which entered into a dialogue with the Chief Minister on 30.1.2000. After holding mid-night long discussions, this section reached on understanding, accepting the same terms earlier offered by the Govt., which were rejected by the JKEJAC. They accepted conditional release of 2

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instalments of DA from January, 2000.

The J&K Coordination Committee of TUs and Several departmental associations and federations, who did not participate in the meeting with the Chief Minister, held a Press Conference and rejected the understanding reached by this

section of JKEJAC. They termed it as a "sell-out" and called upon the employees to expose the opportunist leaders and the divide and rule policy of the State Govt. The employees' resentment was evident as even after the strike being called off by this section of JKEJAC, in several office complexes and district

headquarters none resumed worked for two days.

Nevertheless, the 42 days long strike by the four lakh employees in J&K, is a historic struggle which has greatly helped the united advance of the trade union movement in the State.

*(Report from Mohd. Maqbool)*

## CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HOLD RALLY

Over 2000 workers, including 250 women, took out a procession under the banner of Construction Workers' Federation of India, in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, demanding hike in minimum

wages and implementation of pension scheme. They also demanded bringing down the abnormal increase in cement prices in the State. The rally declared that wherever increased

rate of wages are not paid the workers will refuse to work. The rally was addressed among others by C Govindaswamy, Secretary, CITU, Tamil Nadu.

*(Report from D. Kumar)*

## Chandigarh: Dharna by U.T. Admn. Employees

At the call of the Federation of A.U.T. Employees and Workers, Chandigarh, the employees working in various departments like Electricity, Transport, Roads, Health, Maintenance, I.C.C.W. held a massive rally in Sector 18 on 25.2.2000. The rally was in support of the employees demands to scrap the proposed move of the

Administration to privatise the functions of the Electricity Department and also to reverse the policy of handing over the works of departments like roads, transport, health, maintenance, electricals, horticulture and also to abolish contract system. The dharna also focused on other important but long pending demands like immediate release of

bonus for 1997-98 and 1998-99; regularisation of daily waged and work-charged employees and release of D.A., HRA, CCA to them; filling up all of the posts lying vacant since long etc. The rally adopted a resolution in the form of a Memorandum which was presented to the Adviser to the Administrator.

*(Report from Bhagnial Rana, General Secretary)*

## 29th Conference of AIRBEA

The twenty-ninth Conference of All India Reserve Bank Employees Association, took place in Bangalore from 5th to 7th February 2000. The inaugural

session was held on 5th at the Town Hall of the city preceded by a huge colourful procession of Reserve Bank employees led by delegates and observers who came

from all over the country. In the inaugural address Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court, Y. Bhaskara Rao emphasised that banks' fund should be made

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available to the poorer section of the nation who needs it most.

Economist Dr. Prabhat Patnaik, laid bare the mask of the new economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. He pointed out that the rate of investment in the post reform period actually declined.

The delegates' session participated by about 250 delegates and observers including 20 lady members from all units took place on 6th & 7th February.

B. Jeevan Reddy, former Justice of Supreme Court and presently the Chairman, National Law Commission addressed the delegates' session.

The need for building up of united struggle of all sections of RBI employees on common cause was emphasised by the conference.

An exclusive session of lady delegates and observers along with lady activists from Bangalore office was held. A lively and thought provoking interaction

made the session highly successful. Decision has been taken to form unitwise cells of lady members for mobilisation of lady employees and addressing their problems. An all-India Convention of lady employees of RBI has also been decided. The Conference elected a 27-member Central Executive Committee and 58 member strong General Council, with T.K. Ghosh as President and Samir Ghosh as General Secretary.

### FMRAI: Tamil Nadu State Conference

The 21st State Conference of The Tamil Nadu Medical and Sales Representatives Association (TNMSRA) was held, 10-12 March 2000, at Thiruchirappalli.

The Conference venue was named after Com. K.M. Haribhatt, who played a major role in advancing the working class movement and also in the formation of Dharmapuri District Unit of TNMSRA.

The Chairman of the Reception Committee and State President of IMA, M.S. Ashraf welcomed. W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU inaugurated the Conference.

He appealed to the delegates to discuss ways and means of successfully carrying out the 11th May strike call of the NPMO against economic policies and communalism.

J. Hemachandran, President, Tamil Nadu CITU, greeted the conference on behalf of the State Committee of CITU. K. Natarajan, TNMSRA President, chaired the conference proceedings. G Gopinath placed the General Secretary's report.

A mass rally was taken out in the evening. The public meeting held at the conclusion of the rally was

addressed by U. Vasuki (AIDWA) W.R. Varada Rajan (CITU) N. Nanmaran and Nandalala.

350 delegates participated in the Conference. D.P. Dubey, General Secretary, FMRAI and A K Padmanabhan, ASSt. General Secretary, CITU, Tamilnadu, addressed the delegate session.

The Conference elected the new State Committee with a 13 member Secretariat, which included K. Natarajan, President and G. Gopinath, General Secretary.

*(Report from S. Sukumar)*

### AP: United Struggle Forum

In the background of the growing unrest among the employees, workers and other toiling masses of the State, a convention was held on 13.02.2000 at Hyderabad by the Andhra Pradesh Employees, Workers, Mass Organisations

United Struggle Forum.

People's anger towards the State Government policies, reflected in the failure of Govt's 11th "Janama Bhoomi" programme, witnessed strong protests all over the State. Recently, several sections were on

agitation for their rights. State Govt employees could not get their increased D.A. since, July 99 and the Govt has not yet implemented the agreement reached with the joint struggle committee of NGO's and teachers.

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Youth and students are on the struggle path demanding filling up of vacancies in Govt departments and against rising unemployment in general.

Due to severe drought conditions in most parts of the State, peasants and agricultural workers are in deplorable conditions and they are resorting to voluntary participation in struggles like rasta rokos, resenting the apathy of the TDP Govt towards their problems. Working women in different sectors are agitated over the non implementation of pre-election

promises of the State Govt. In the background of these developments, together with the anti-people policies of the BJP Govt at the centre, the united struggle forum was formed.

About 1000 delegates took part in the convention, which was held in Gandhi Bhavan, representing people from middle class employees, industrial workers, women, peasants, agricultural labour, students, youth and artists from different organisations.

The convention has formulated 35 demands for united mass action.

It has given the following programme to form similar struggle forums at the bottom level.

1. United struggle forums have to be formed at the district, mandal and industrial area levels.
2. District conventions are to be conducted by March 15th.
3. Mandal and Industrial area conventions are to be completed by March 22nd.
4. In addition to the demands formulated at the State level, local demands are also to be added in the above conventions.

## POSTAL EMPLOYEES TO GO FOR INDEFINITE STRIKE

The Postal Joint Council For Action consisting of National Federation of Postal Employees, Federation of National Postal Organisation, Bharatiya Postal Employees Federation and their twenty two affiliated All India Unions and Associations representing overwhelming majority of Postal employees in the country have decided to go in for indefinite strike in all the post offices and related establishments from 2nd May 2000, demanding rights for the Extra Departmental

Employees, review of pay scales for sorting out distortions/anomalies, upgradation of posts etc among other demands.

The federations have been compelled to resort to indefinite strike action since repeated persuasion by them for implementation of the commitments already made by the authorities failed due to their unreasonable attitude and only after several rounds of demonstrations, Dharnas etc failed to bring authorities to sense.

A huge demonstration of postal employees in front of Dak Bhawan, New Delhi on 15th March submitted memorandum to the concerned minister and the notice for the indefinite strike with effect from 2nd May 2000, has been served on 24th March 2000. CITU extends wholehearted support to the indefinite strike of the postal employees and demands upon the Govt to come forward and sort out the just demands of the postal employees through negotiation with the Federations.

### MUNICIPAL WORKERS ON STRIKE FROM 21ST MARCH

5 lakh workers working in various municipal civic services of various cities of Maharashtra State went on strike from 21st March midnight demanding stoppage of privatisation move of the water supply, electricity, fire brigade, health service and other civic services and also revision and improvement of pay scales of the workers.

The "Maharashtra Nagar Parishad Mahanagar Palika Kamgar Karmachari Sangharsh Samity" has given the call for strike. Reports received till going to press revealed that strike was reported total in 198 Nagar Parishad in the state out of total 218. In others also sizable section of the workers have joined the strike. The workers were on strike braving the threat of invoking ESMA by the Govt.

## REPORTS & EVENTS

### MEERUT: TU RIGHTS TRAMPLED UPON

The All India Shaw Wallace Employees' Federation, planned to hold their 17th biennial conference on 10-12, March 2000, in Meerut (UP). The host unions in Meerut had booked the Chamber of Commerce Hall, opposite to the bus stand in Meerut, as early as 8.2.2000. Though the conference was to be held indoors, the ADM, Meerut City was approached on 14.2.2000 with a formal application for permission to hold the conference. The conference was to be addressed by several dignitaries including the local MP, Mahanagar Pramukh and others, besides the federation leaders.

Leaders of the Federation, members of its working committee and over 200 delegates and observers from all the 12 affiliated unions of the federation, all over the country, arrived in Meerut city on 9.3.2000.

But on 10.3.2000, the first day of the conference, the venue was sealed by the Police, at the behest of the Shaw Wallace management for no rhyme or reason. The story planted was that one Mehkar Singh, a labour contractor for the Shaw Wallace Company, who had nothing to do with the Federation, had also proposed to hold a meeting in the same hall on the same dates and time.

The office-bearers of the local unions along with P K Banerjee, General Secretary of the

Federation, went to the DM's office with all the relevant records, to seek justice. Avnish Awasthi, DM, met them around noon and directed them to meet the ADM, Meerut, J P Singh. The ADM told the delegation that law and order problem was apprehended if the conference were to be held. After long persuasion, the ADM, took a written undertaking from the federation that the conference would be held peacefully, and gave oral permission around 1.30 pm on 10.3.2000. The police opened the hall only around 3 pm, and the federation could start their meeting only by 4.30 pm that evening.

But, when the delegates and observers reached the conference venue the next day, i.e. on 11.3.2000, they found that the police had again locked the venue. The reason was that the ADM had given permission only for one day on 10th!

After long exchange of arguments, the police opened the locks and permitted the delegates to enter the hall. But the police were insisting on having a talk with the General Secretary of the federation. This was a ruse to take the General Secretary into custody. The delegates sensed that the police was in for a foul play and marched to the ADM's residence to meet him in deputation. (11th March being second Saturday, it was a holiday in Meerut). In spite of

repeated pleas and passionate arguments, the ADM was adamant that no more permission could be given.

Faced with the administration-management nexus to frustrate the conference and left with no other option (as the advocates were on strike and the last day of the conference was on Sunday) the organisers decided to pack off from Meerut. They apprehended that the leaders would be arrested and kept in police custody for both the days if they continued in Meerut. So the entire leadership and the delegates reached Delhi and held the conference in a hall in a hotel in Paharganj area.

Ever since the federation announced holding of the conference in Meerut, the Shaw Wallace management let loose a reign of terror in a move to frustrate the event. Nearly a dozen employees were suspended and pay cut (of 25 to 30%) was imposed on employees in the company units in West Bengal, Andhra and Maharashtra. Employees were refused leave for attending the conferences and threatened with penal wage cut for 8 days, if they absented. In Meerut FIRs were lodged on charges of breach of peace, against 18 leaders of the local units and 6 main functionaries of the federation. Desperate attempts were made by the local police to arrest the General Secretary of the

## REPORTS & EVENTS

Federation on the night of 9th March. The drama of sealing the conference venue came as the

culmination of these attempts to harass the trade union leaders and block holding of the conference.

Whither trade union rights and democracy?

*(Report from P K Banerjee)*

### Struggle against Privatisation of Visakh Steel Plant

Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is a product of the struggle of the people of Andhra Pradesh, in which 32 students and youth lost their lives. It took 12 years for the Central Government to release the funds, even after the Steel Plant was sanctioned. The Steel Plant was asked to raise 50% of the total capital of Rs. 9,000 crores through loans from commercial banks and LIC etc. While the repayment of this loan posed a heavy burden on the plant, the plant capacity was reduced to half during the regime of Rajiv Gandhi, with the flawed argument that "importing steel is cheaper and better than producing it". The advices of experts in the field - to increase production and to construct the Gangavaram Port in the public sector to cut transport costs and make the plant viable - fell on deaf ears. Added to all these troubles caused by the step motherly treatment of the Central Government, the policies of liberalisation and privatisation, pursued by the Government in the last 8-9 years, spelt disaster for the Steel Plant.

CITU anticipated the threat to the Steel Plant 5 years ago and started a campaign to prepare the workers for a serious struggle to protect the plant. When CITU started the campaign 5 years back, not many understood the seriousness of the problem. There were also a few

who ridiculed and alleged that the campaign was motivated. In spite of this, CITU continued with its campaign. A series of general body meetings and seminars were held. All the trade unions, irrespective of their affiliations, the plant executives and leaders of all the political parties were invited to the Seminars, which discussed the various means to save the plant and offered suggestions to the Central Government in this regard. Thousands of handbills and posters were released to mobilise public opinion on the need for a struggle to protect the plant. These consistent and sustained efforts by CITU have installed a sense of determination among all the workers of the Steel Plant, irrespective of their union affiliations, to fight against privatisation and to save the plant. Due to this urge among the workers, all the unions, including those whose leadership vacillates or supports the liberalisation policies, are forced to participate in the struggles against privatisation.

The campaign gained momentum in the last three months, as the anticipated threat is becoming a close reality. Large numbers of workers participated in struggles, braving police brutality. In March, in a week, police resorted to lathicharge twice. More than 2000

workers demonstrated when the Chief Minister went to Vizag on the eve of local body elections. More than 100 workers were injured in the lathicharge. Protest meetings and demonstrations were held against the lathicharge. On 11th January more than 14,000 workers participated in the referendum, opposing privatisation. The strike on 2nd February was total.

The struggle to save the Steel Plant is also receiving immense public support. Two Sarvodaya leaders of the region - Patti Seshaiyah and Baivagi Naidu - threatened self-immolation by drowning in the Bay of Bengal. Police resorted to lathicharge against the people and workers who gathered there in thousands and arrested the leaders. The call for a bandh on 24th January received wide public support and the bandh was total. The entire working class in the city condemned the lathicharge against Steel Plant workers by holding massive demonstrations and releasing press statements. Workers in other public sector undertakings stood in support. The workers are now convinced that united struggles alone can save the steel plant. They are getting ready for more intense and broad-based struggles.

*(Report from Ch. Narasinga Rao, Secretary CITU AP State Committee)*

## CLINTON'S INDIA VISIT

# VAJPAYEE GOVT'S SURRENDER TO IMPERIALIST MACHINATION

The Swadeshi brand Govt at the centre led by BJP has been demonstrating worst kind of capitulation to their Bideshi masters on the occasion of the visit of US President Bill Clinton to India, the leader of the imperialist machinations on the entire third world countries and their people. According to the Govt, the visit of Clinton would facilitate economic development of the country and curbing of terrorism through Joint Indo-US cooperation.

This is nothing but an attempt of befooling the people. The US Administration headed by Clinton is the fountainhead of worst kind of terrorist and subversive activities all over the world. It sponsored worst genocidal attack and subversive activities in many of the developing countries to destabilise the independent Govts there and grab their economy and market. The imprint of US sponsored terrorism is still there in Nicaragua, Iraq, Kosovo, Latin America, Bosnia and where-not. The Economic blockade being perpetrated against Cuba, Iraq, Lybia etc just because they are not obliging the musclemen of US Administration. The subversive activities in Kashmir and Punjab, Assam etc were all earlier initiated by forces aided and abated by the US imperialist power and now the same US Administration is preaching against terrorism and wants to be mediator in Kashmir dispute. And the US seeks to be mediator on Kashmir Dispute and is mounting pressure on India to sign CTBT on US term.

Who else in this world can be a bigger terrorist than the US Administration itself with Clinton heading the team? Now, at the instance of Clinton, the Govt of India made itself a part of US political enterprise joining the US sponsored Community of Democracies, as revealed by the Indo-US joint statement. This is indicative of a tending shift from the policy of nonalignment towards the trap of the American block.

People were being told that through American co-operation and assistance, India's economy will

gain and prosper. Hence welcome Clinton kneeling down with folded hands. What can be a bigger lie than this? It is at the behest of The Clinton & Co, worst kind of conditionalities are being imposed on the Govt through IMF/World Bank/WTO in the name of liberalisation, which has weakened our economy. The Clinton economy being pursued by the Swadeshi brand BJP Govt is seeking to make the manufacturing country of ours, a country of shopkeepers, that too to sell the items produced in Clinton's group of countries, the richest nations in the world.

It is a relationship of the hunter and the targeted victim between the Clinton-flock and India, which the slave minded BJP Govt is calling the strategic partnership. It is this slave-like mentality of the Vajpayee-flock which prompted them to ban all demonstration in the embassy locality of the capital city, and reject permission for any anti-Clinton demonstration, it is those slave like worshippers of Clinton in the Vajpayee's NDA who had forcibly driven out all beggars and street dwellers from the city of Hyderabad to keep the city clean for Clinton's visit. By doing so they exposed



Photo Courtesy: J Balkrishna

themselves as beggars before their master called Bill Clinton.

Bill Clinton may be the master of those in Vajpayee/BJP's so called "swadeshi" tribe but not of the great people of this great country. The Vajpayee-tribe may not have self dignity and pride of being Indian of independent India. And how can they have so since they, in the camouflage of ultra swadeshi jingoism, are out to mortgage country's economic sovereignty to Clinton-tribe, to sell out whatever precious the country has created since last fifty years, the best of country's industries, the

steel, telecom, oil and gas, ports and coalfields to the Clinton companies for a platter.

But the workers and toiling people of India do have the pride of being an independent Indian. The working class all over the country are condemning the head of the international gangster's gang, the biggest sponsor of the international terrorism, and the biggest plunderer of the people of the developing world, and the most heinous enemy of the humankind, the US Administration on the occasion of his visit to this great country.

## THE WHOLE COUNTRY PROTESTS CLINTON'S VISIT

While the Swadeshi brand Govt at the centre welcomed Bill Clinton in kneel down posture, the people of India refused to do so through massive protest demonstration and burning of effigies of Clinton all over the country. All the metropolis of the country, all the industrial centres, all the major towns witnessed protest rallies of several thousand people from all walks of lives, the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth women, cultural workers, teachers, professors etc. braving prohibitive orders, lathi-charge and water-cannon and mass scale arrests. The rulers of the day left no stone unturned to make the visit of their Clinton-god

haste-free but people did not oblige the rulers. All out condemnation and hatred against the head of the biggest imperialist and terrorist power demonstrated itself on 19th and 21st March all over the country.

In the Capital city of Delhi, prohibitory order against all kinds of demonstration was invoked by the Govt for the whole month. At the call of left parties, trade unions and other mass organisations, several thousands demonstrated before the United States Information Centre at Kasturba Gandhi Marg on 21st March. Lathi-charge and massive water-cannoning by police, to disperse the demonstrators, was in vain.

Reports of massive demonstrations in Lucknow, Kanpur and Saharanpur in UP, Jaipur and Kota in Rajasthan, Bangalore, Hyderabad.

In Tamilnadu, protest rallies were held in all the districts including Chennai.

As per reports from Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala massive protest rallies were held in all the district headquarters. In Assam, demonstration was held in Guwahati. In Tripura, rallies were held in the capital and district centres. On 19th March, in all the district headquarters, subdivisional towns and industrial centres of West Bengal demonstration of several thousands took place. In Calcutta, a massive rally was held before the US Information Centre at the call of Left parties and other mass organisations and effigies of Clinton was burnt. On 21st also West Bengal witnessed demonstrations and procession at several districts and towns.

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Nov 99	Dec 99	Jan 2000	Sr. No.	Centre	Nov 99	Dec 99	Jan 2000
1	Gudur	447	430	427	45	Amritsar	383	376	378
2	Guntur	425	422	420	46	Ludhiana	391	382	382
3	Hyderabad	403	404	401	47	Ajmer	426	419	421
4	Visakhapatnam	425	428	430	48	Jaipur	393	390	392
5	Warangal	434	436	438	49	Chennai	453	452	458
6	D D Tinsukia	402	395	393	50	Coimbatore	429	426	423
7	Guwahati	450	443	453	51	Coonoor	436	433	424
8	Labac-Silchar	390	386	370	52	Madurai	441	436	431
9	Mariani Jorhat	433	433	423	53	Salem	438	430	420
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	440	431	401	54	Tiruchirapally	493	480	481
11	Jamshedpur	418	409	402	55	Agra	407	401	396
12	Jharia	377	370	367	56	Ghaziabad	447	439	439
13	Kodarma	401	380	368	57	Kanpur	439	427	424
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	441	431	424	58	Saharanpur	396	392	392
15	Noamundi	396	396	388	59	Varanasi	484	474	468
16	Ranchi-Hatia	430	425	414	60	Asansol	424	413	404
17	Ahmedabad	435	435	430	61	Calcutta	472	447	434
18	Bhavnagar	465	456	460	62	Darjeeling	397	391	384
19	Rajkot	416	412	414	63	Durgapur	479	464	457
20	Surat	442	436	437	64	Haldia	493	484	469
21	Vadodra	415	404	409	65	Howrah	516	488	480
22	Faridabad	444	432	432	66	Jalpaiguri	415	406	394
23	Yamunanagar	410	400	399	67	Raniganj	389	379	377
24	Srinagar	477	476	480	68	Chandigarh	454	450	449
25	Bangalore	418	416	416	69	Delhi	496	488	490
26	Belgaum	468	463	471	70	Pondicherry	486	477	471
27	Hubli-Dharwar	437	428	428					
28	Mercara	452	452	453		All India	438	431	431
29	Alwaye	429	429	431		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
30	Mundakayam	454	454	453					
31	Quilon	443	445	447	1	Kothagudem	444	431	424
32	Thiruvananthapuram	471	482	488	2	Himachal Pradesh	420	413	415
33	Balaghat	392	386	381	3	Bhilwara	430	431	429
34	Bhilai	390	386	382	4	Chhindwara	429	423	419
35	Bhopal	452	445	444	5	Tripura	435	416	399
36	Indore	432	428	426	6	Goa	494	496	504
37	Jabalpur	449	440	433					
38	Mumbai	468	468	484					
39	Nagpur	442	435	438					
40	Nasik	440	439	442					
41	Pune	471	459	466					
42	Solapur	459	455	461					
43	Barbil	410	404	401					
44	Rourkela	412	407	405					

Government of India  
Ministry of Labour  
Labour Bureau  
Shimla - 171 004

# CITU GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

KOZHIKODE, KERALA

20-22 APRIL, 2000

## FOR KIND ATTENTION OF COMRADES

A Reception Committee, with M. Dasen, M.L.A., as Chairman and T.P. Ramakrishnan as General Secretary, was formed for the successful conduct of the All India Council Meeting scheduled to be held at Kozhikode (Calicut), from 20.4.2000 to 22.4.2000. The Reception Committee Office has started functioning at the Dist. Centre of CITU, YMCA Cross Road, Kozhikode 673 001 and the telephone numbers are (0495) 368807 & 765507. Various Sub-committees such as catering, accommodation, publicity, stage & decoration, volunteers, procession, etc., are formed and all these committees are working in full swing to make the Council Meeting historic and a memorable one.

Our Accommodation Committee has already made arrangements for comfortable stay of the Council Members from 19.4.2000 to 22.4.2000. We request our State Units to furnish the following details with the Reception Committee at the above address:-

- 1) Date and time of arrival of Council Members at Kozhikode. mode of travel (ie. travel by train, flight or bus) so that the Accommodation Committee can receive them at railway station, airport or bus stand on arrival.
- 2) Details of departure from Kozhikode after the conclusion of the General Council meeting on 22.4.2000 (i.e., train number/flight and date of departure).

Since computerised reservation is available in most of the centres, comrades who are coming for the meeting must have booked their return journey tickets too. If, however, any comrade who requires return journey reservation may inform the Reception Committee well in advance with the required amount of train-fare with details of return journey. This is very urgent in view of the ensuing summer holiday rush.

The above information will indeed help the Reception Committee to take necessary arrangements for the stay at Kozhikode and the return journey of the comrades, as much comfortable as possible.

T.P. Ramakrishnan  
General Secretary  
Reception Committee

