



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## GREETINGS

## FOR THE NEW YEAR 1998

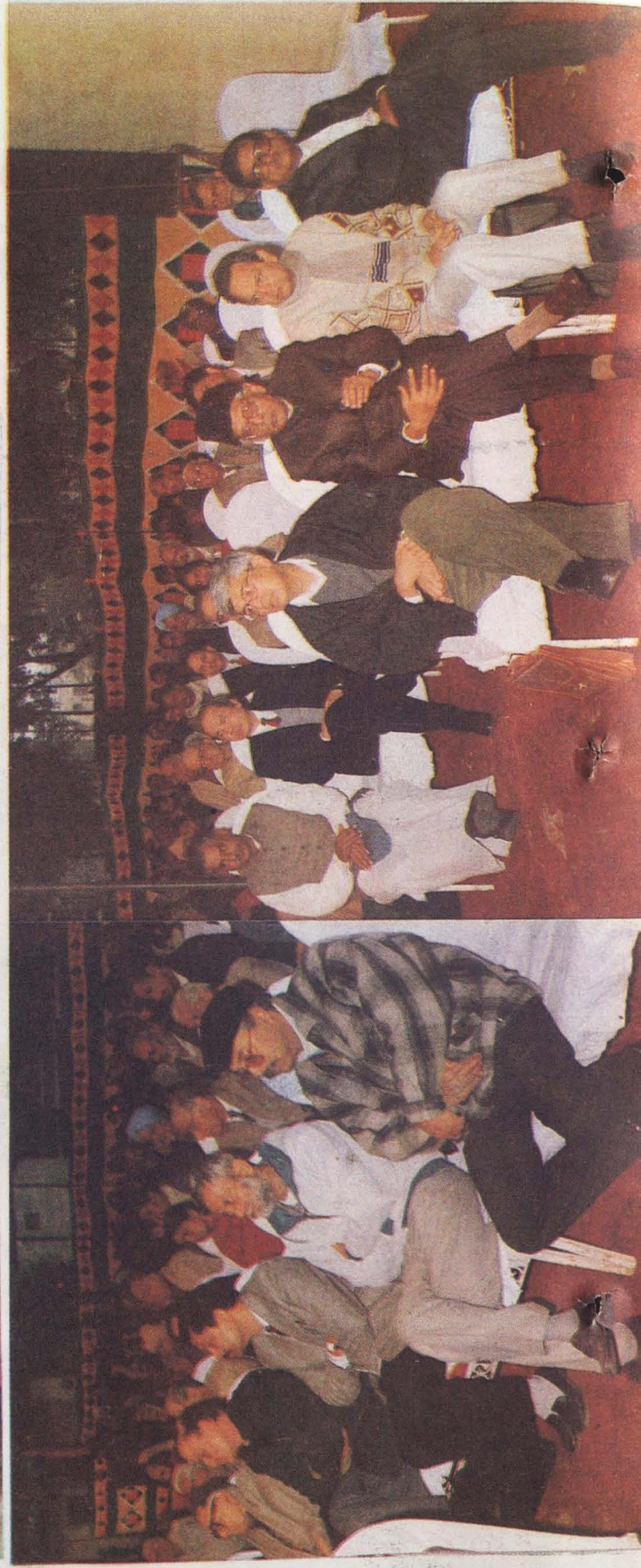


Foundation Stone  
Laying Ceremony for  
BTR Bhawan

(Photos Courtesy: J. BALLABH)



A View of Audience  
At the Function  
(Report on Page 26)



# THE MIDTERM POLL AND WORKING CLASS

M K PANDHE

Within 18 months of the general elections to the 11th Lok Sabha in 1996, India is forced to hold a mid-term polls in February 1998. Soon election atmosphere will engulf the country. This avoidable situation was imposed on the country as a result of the political gamble resorted to by the Congress Party, particularly its maverick leader Sitaram Kesri.

The timing of the deliberate leak out of the Jain Commission report which singled out DMK for the murder of Rajiv Gandhi to the Press was systematically planned. The Congress Party demanded ouster of DMK from the ruling coalition in India. Though the Jain Commission Report was interim, it squarely blamed DMK without giving any proof to substantiate the charges. Kesri thought that United Front would split on the issue and succumb to his blackmail as in case of removal of Deve Gowda from the Prime Minister's post some months ago. Kesri had the temerity to demand that UF should support Congress to form a government at the Centre to avert mid-term poll.

Kesri's gamble, however, misfired. All constituents of UF remained united and resolutely opposed Congress demand for exclusion of DMK from the UF Government. His diabolical plan to propose Moopanar or Mulayam Singh as the Prime Minister also was powerfully rebuffed by UF.

## LOK SABHA DISSOLUTION

The Congress Party became a butt of ridicule when it staked claim to form a government without giving indication of the support it will receive from other parties.

BJP having developed expertise in the game of defection and horse trading through bribes in UP, took advantage of the situation and attempted engineering of defections from Congress Party. Price offered by the BJP for MPs in return for support to its government was openly quoted in daily Press. However, its machinations failed miserably. After demanding tabling of the Jain Commission Report by the UF Government, the Congress Party wanted to avoid discussion on the Report. They stalled the proceedings in Parliament forcing the Speaker to adjourn the House *sine die*.

When the Congress Party officially withdrew the support to UF Government, Gujral Cabinet first resigned and later recommended dissolution of Lok Sabha.

Seeing the growing political instability in the country, the President of India had no other alternative but to order dissolution of Parliament and hold mid-term poll in the country which would cost over Rs 800 crore to public exchequer.

The official announcement of the elections is likely to be made in the first week of January 1998.

## CHANGING POLITICAL SCENARIO

The Eleventh Lok Sabha election results highlighted the following features of the political situation in India.

Firstly, the BJP, the arch communal party in the country emerged as a largest single party in Parliament but failed to get clear majority. It, however, with the help of Shiv Sena, Akalis and Samata Party staked its claim to form a government which lasted for 13 days only.

Secondly, the Congress party which ruled the country for 50 years with two breaks was severely mauled in the elections. It got only 142 seats in Parliament, lowest ever since independence. Its credibility was lost due to involvement of its leaders in several scandals and court cases.

Thirdly, the non-Congress non-BJP parties could form a UF Government with the support of Congress from outside. The UF parties, despite mutual differences, came together to form a non-Congress, non-BJP govt.

Fourthly, though the Left parties could not strengthen their position with regards to seats won and votes polled they held crucial position within UF.

Though UF Government adopted pro-liberalisation policies, the left and democratic movement had to support it since it alone could keep the BJP and Congress out of power.

## **WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES**

However, the trade union movement had to organise consistent struggles against the economic policies pursued by the UF government. The working class had to launch a movement to get the assurances in the Common Minimum Programme for the workers implemented. However, the government did not demonstrate the political will to implement the CMP.

During this period the working class of India had to face the offensive of growing industrial sickness with large number of undertakings both in public and private sector facing closures. Unemployment has grown rapidly with reduction in manpower in several industrial units. The rising prices of essential commodities have made the life of working class more difficult while the people below the poverty line are increasing rapidly.

With recession looming large in the economy the industrial development is slowing down gradually. The criminalisation of politics is further aggravating the situation in the country. Over and above this corruption among the bourgeois parties is increasing at menacing proportions eating into the vitals of our economy.

Taking advantage of the grave situation the communal and divisive forces are raising their ugly head to hit at the very basis of national unity. These elements get all moral and material assistance from imperialist forces to destabilise the situation in the country.

The acute crisis among some of the

Asian Tigers has convincingly shown to the world that the path of IMF and World Bank would only make the developing countries more dependent on the multinational countries.

All these developments will cast their shadows on the forthcoming Parliamentary elections and the working class has to take up its position in a clear cut manner.

## **THREE POLITICAL FORMATIONS**

Three major political formations are coming in the country to seek support from the public to form a government at the Centre.

The working class must oppose resolutely this party and give it a more crushing defeat than in the last elections.

The other political combination is led by arch-communal BJP, openly flaunting Hindutva card. Its opportunism was clearly seen in UP while its alliance with Jayalalita has exposed its claim for value based politics. The working class must do everything to defeat the BJP and its allies so that the strength of this reactionary political force is reduced in Parliament.

The third political combination is the United Front of 13 parties. It is the only combination which can stop the Congress and BJP from coming to power. The Left parties and some influential regional parties are in this front which has a sizeable voting base. Though some of the constituents support IMF World Bank economic policies, the working class should impress upon the UF candidates the need to fight against these policies so that they come out

against these policies during the election campaign.

## **TASKS BEFORE WORKING CLASS**

It is the paramount duty of the working class to ensure that the Left Front candidates win in this elections in substantially large numbers. The strengthening of the Left will give more emphasis on people oriented policies of the UF government.

The working class must see that in this elections the UF should emerge much stronger that it would not have to depend on the outside support of the Congress party for its government's survival.

The outcome of the electoral battle will decide the immediate destiny of the country. The working class, therefore, must rise to the occasion and come forward with all its might to:

\* Defeat Congress, the party seething with corruption and scandals which champions the cause of big business houses, landlords and multinationals;

\* Defeat BJP, the party of arch communal forces, using Hindutva card and resorting to all opportunist dealings and alliances;

\* Vote for UF candidates to defeat both Congress and BJP and for victory of secular and democratic forces in the country;

\* Oppose the IMF, World Bank economic reforms which brought country in the grip of multinationals, increased poverty and leading to dismantling of public sector adversely affecting the struggles for building a self-reliant economy of India. \*

## 34TH SESSION OF INDIAN LABOUR CONFERENCE - a Hoax to the Unorganised Sector Workers

**P.K. GANGULY**

The 34th Session of the Indian Labour Conference held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on December 18 and 19 turned out to be a hoax for the workers in the Unorganised Sector. The Government went ahead with the preparations for the Conference with a lot of fanfare, starting from the meeting of the Standing Labour Committee (SLC) on 19th September, 1997. The SLC unanimously recommended to have only one item in the agenda for the 34th ILC, i.e. on unorganised sector workers, to have indepth discussion on the subject so as to find out solutions to deliver the goods.

The Labour Minister in his inaugural address also pointed out that even though there was subsequent quick turn of events leading to dissolution of Parliament and directing fresh elections, it was decided to go ahead with the conference with the same sense of urgency which had propelled the SLC to make the recommendations. He further said that if the conference was not held, then the issues relating to the Unorganised Sector of workers would have been left unresolved for a long period.

The conference of course discussed the issues relating to the Unorganised Sector workers. The background paper placed by the Labour Secretary, Dr. L.D. Mishra on the subject, also laid bare the stark realities regarding the conditions of the vast multitude of the Indian workforce. It did focus the deplorable minimum wage, absence of social security measures, unemployment, under employment, excessive seasonality of employment, abject poverty, lack of housing, increase in contractual services, lack of PDS, deplorable conditions of the women workers, growth of child labour, indebtedness, landlessness, and above all the adverse effect of the policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation which resulted in the shrinkage of the organised sector and off-loading of workers in the Unorganised sector.

But it was all too general in nature and failed to identify or concretise and vital problems faced by the workers, not to speak of resolution of the problems. On the contrary the paper laid undue importance of the role of the NGOs to 'organise' the workers and give succour to them. It totally ignored the role of the trade unions and the consistent demands raise by them for resolution of each and every problems of the workers in the Unorganised sector.

Although the conference had only this agenda to discuss, the major part of the conference was devoted to general discussions and discussions on the Action Taken Report

(ATR).

The first priority was given to the employers to initiate the discussion. The representatives of the employers unequivocally pointed out that the Labour legislations have become out of date and should be thrown in the archives and new legislations should be enacted in commensurate with the economic reforms. They opposed abolition of contract labour on the plea that it will adversely affect the economic reforms. They opposed amendment of the Minimum Wages Act for the betterment of the workers, not to speak of including it in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution, and commented that the Minimum Wages Act had become "Minimum Employment Act".

They openly demonstrated their rabid reactionary attitude to state that there cannot be any guarantee for minimum wages and the Minimum Wages Act should be amended accordingly. On the issue of the tripartism also they demonstrated their negative attitude and exhorted that the attitude of "dogmatic socialism" which has been the bane of Tripartism since the last 50 years, should be discarded.

Their attitude towards the workers in the Unorganised Sector was a mockery on their conditions. One of them even claimed that the Powerloom workers had Bhiwandi earned Rs.16,000 per month.

The trade union representatives pointed to the all round deterioration in the condition of all sections of the working people, being further aggravated by the economic reforms. They pointed out the issue of growing sickness, privatisation, dismantling of public sector, growth of unemployment, price rise, etc. They demanded abolition of the bonus ceiling, national minimum wages, revival of sick units, implementation of agreement, etc.

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU made a sharp criticism of the ongoing economic reforms being pursued by the government more aggressively and denounced privatisation of the public sector and opening up of various vital sector like the financial sector to the multinationals. He pointed out that Tripartism was declining and sharply attacked the attitude of the employers in this regard. He demanded that a special session of the SLC should be held to discuss tripartism both at Central and State level. The sharply criticised the government for its failure to implement a single positive factor in its CMP, for example, secret ballot for recognition of unions, workers' participation in management, enactment of central legislation for the agricultural workers, the women's reservation bill etc. He further demanded amendment of

the Construction Workers Act and incorporation of the provision for a tripartite Construction Labour Board in it. He demanded removal bonus ceilings and commented that when there was no ceiling on profits of the employers, why there should ceiling on bonus. He sharply attacked the employers for their comment on the Minimum Wages Act and demanded that the Act should be amended so as to incorporate the provision that minimum wages should be above the poverty line and linked to price index, also taking into consideration the verdict of the Supreme Court. He also demanded that the Act should be included in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution so that the employers cannot go to the court. He opposed the SICA Bill and said that the Bill instead of revival of the sick units has rather paved the way for closure of the sick units. He severely attacked the government for non-implementation of unanimous agreement for the revival of the NTC mills. He also demanded implementation of Convention on Home Based workers and amendment of the Contract Labour Law as directed by the Supreme Court.

On the issue of Unorganised Sector, Small Scale and Tiny Sectors, he opposed the recommendations of Abid Hussain Committee for dereservation of the items and demanded that monopolists and multinationals must not be allowed to enter the arena of these sectors. On the issue of ATR, he pointed out how each and every decision taken in the 33rd Session of the ILC remained unimplemented. The whole day was devoted on general discussions and on ATR. Since the Prime Minister who was inaugurate the conference, could not come on the first day, it was announced that he would be coming on the second day afternoon to deliver the valedictory address. The deliberations of the conference would therefore be ended at lunch on the second day. The discussion on the main and the only agenda, that is, the Unorganised Sector was thus held only for half a day in the forenoon of the second day. The discussion therefore turned out to be a mere formality and a rude mockery on the conditions of the Unorganised Sector workers.

Initiating the debate, M.K. Pandhe sharply criticised the government for totally diluting the main agenda. He criticised the document placed by the Labour Secretary as devoid of any direction. He said instead of elaboration of the definition of the Unorganised Sector and projection of the entire problem from an academic angle, it should have concentrated on how to improve the conditions of these workers particularly when the document had admitted about their destitute conditions. He suggested that there must be a central law on the Unorganised Sector workers relating to minimum wage, social security and welfare measures, working conditions, women workers, home

based workers, child labour and trade union rights. He specifically pointed to the condition of Beedi workers, Brick Kiln workers, hand loom, power loom workers, construction workers, contract and casual workers, home based workers, the women workers, and child labour etc in the vast unorganised sector. He condemned the role of the NGOs and took the government to task for encouraging them by bypassing a trade unions. The Government had practically shed its responsibilities to mitigate the condition of the unorganised sector workers and depended on the so-called NGOs to deliver the goods. Others who spoke on the subject were K.L. Mahendra (AITUC), Umraomal Purohit (HMS), Ela Bhatt (SEWA), Geetha Ramakrishnan (National Commission on Women), R. Venugopal (BMS), Tara Singh Niyogi (INTUC), J.S. Mazumdar, Tapan Sen and P.K. Ganguly (CITU). The employers as usual opposed any progressive move. The State Government representatives however in general spoke for the betterment of the conditions of these workers.

### Conclusion

A hue and cry was raised by the trade union delegates for drawing decisive conclusions of the conference before it came to an end. This was done because last year the 33rd Session of the ILC ended without any conclusion and the government had unilaterally declared a minimum wage of Rs.35 daily, which was below poverty line. The trade union demanded as earlier Rs.50 linked to price index along with the Supreme Court verdict for addition of another 25% to be declared as minimum wage. The Drafting Committee was of course constituted this time also and M.K. Pandhe, CITU, was included in the Drafting Committee as well. But because of the programme of the valedictory address by the prime Minister at 4.30 PM, the conclusion was hurriedly drafted by the Labour Secretary himself in absence of M.K. Pandhe and read out just prior to the arrival of the Prime Minister. The conclusions thus were not discussed, nor approved by the trade unions nor adopted by the conference. The conclusions were as big and vague as the main documents itself and did not point out to any concrete decision regarding any point nor the vital issue of the minimum wage. As a matter of fact during the deliberations in the conference itself on each and every issue the Labour Minister pointed out that we have to wait till the new government is formed at the centre. Thus the entire fanfare made about the conference and the promises given to the unorganised sector workers turned out to be a damp squib and a hoax for the 92% of the Indian workforce. The trade unions therefore have to intensify their struggle for the betterment of the condition of the Unorganised sector workers unitedly. \*

*(34th Session of Indian Labour Conference held on 18/19th December 1997 at New Delhi have "Unorganised Labour including women workers in rural and urban areas" as its main agenda. The background paper on "Unorganised Labour" submitted by Dr L Mishra, Labour Secretary on behalf of Govt of India, detailed out the deplorable state of the unorganised sector workers in the country, which amounts to admission of the grim reality, so long being given exposure by the trade union movement: We are reproducing below certain factual details from the paper presented on behalf of Govt of India - Editor)*

## **State of Unorganised Sector Workers**

### **GRIM REALITY ADMITTED**

\* Out of the total labour force of 286 million, about 27 million are in the organised sector and 259 million are in the unorganised labour. In relative terms unorganised labour accounts for 90.6%.... Agricultural labour accounts for 75 million. Women worker accounts for 83.4 million.

\* In the manufacturing sector, unorganised sector accounts for 21.62 million workers.

\* Majority of rural workers do not have stable/durable avenues of employment throughout the year...On the average workers are employed in wage-paid employment for about 60% of the days in a year - leading to rural urban migration with all the attendant problems of dislocation of home and family life, deprivation of basic irreducible basic minimum facilities and amenities at the place of work, etc.

\* Sixth Rural Labour Enquiry Report (1993-94) shows that the average daily earnings of many workers of the agricultural labour household stood at Rs 21.35 in 1993-94 as against Rs 1.43 in 1963-65 in money terms. If adjusted with the agricultural price index it is observed that agricultural labour households were getting Rs 1.80 as average daily earnings, it increased approximately to Rs 1.90 after 30 years, (in real terms).

\* India account for largest child labour population :

\* Unorganised and informal sectors both account for the entire child labour force of which male child labour is 54.88% and girl child labour 45.12%.

\* Lot of efforts (through various schemes) have been made since independence to improve the lot of urban and rural poor.

\* And yet it will a travesty of truth to say that the situation has improved anywhere near the expected outcome.

\* To illustrate, with the skewed nature of distribution of land, over 90 million people continue to be landless, even today.

\* During last 20 years or so, we have gradually been moving away from regular employment to casual employment.

\* while there are number of special employment generation programmes specifically designed for absorbing surplus rural manpower, they have not succeeded in absorbing them.

\* Govt is conscious of the fact that inequality and poverty

are the direct outcome of inequitable distribution of resources on the one hand and denial of access to many of the opportunities available for their physical and economic development on the other.

\* Due to unsatisfactory implementation of ceiling laws in several of the State....the objective of acquiring surplus land and distributing the same among landless has not been achieved....widespread landlessness has severe adverse impact on agricultural labour.

\* According to 26th round of National Sample Survey, while 63% of rural households own less than 10% of the total agricultural land holding (less than one hectare of land) only 3.3% of rural household owned more than 30% of the total landholding.

\* Instance of debt bondage and migration are two important consequences which flow from weak bargaining power of the workers in the unorganised sector. The bonded labour system basically represents an unequal exchange system between the rich and the poor, haves and have-nots, the advantaged and the disadvantaged.

\* Contract Labour, like bonded and migrant labour is yet another form of unorganised labour - extremely vulnerable to machinations of contractors or sub-contractors.

\* In the wake of liberalisation and attempt to link National economy with global economy, certain new market force have been unleashed which favour contractualisation and casualisation of workforce.

\* While laws relating to bonded labour, migrant labour and contract labour have been enacted with lot of positive intention, they remain largely elusive in terms of implementation and enforcement.

\* It is the same enforcement machinery whose indifference, callousness and insensitivity (led to non-implementation.

\* The law which they (the poor people encounter in their day to day life is not the law of the poor, ....which is based upon police powers and presumed right of the society to preserve law and protect one class of society from another

\* Against this limited background it is futile to expect that the law can be a panacea against all ailment.

\* The question, therefore, naturally arises, what is the ultimate remedy?.....Permanent redress of wrongs committed and indignities and injustices meted out...lies in organising them into viable groups or collectivities."

# ELECTIONS, BIG BUSINESS AND SAFFRON SCRIBES

W R Varada Rajan

General elections are round the corner. While political parties have commenced their own exercises to face the electorate in the aftermath of dissolution of 11th Lok Sabha, the industry and business in the country is also active. Media-scribes have also started not only speculating on the outcome of the mid-term poll, but also proffering advice to the business circles.

In the business page column 'point-counterpoint' in the Hindu dated 5th December, 1997, S. Swaminathan has posed the question: 'whom will business back?' He has answered the question himself as under:

"Should it be impossible for the CII, ASSOCHAM and FICCI to organise a national election fund and publicly announce that the fund would be used for helping this or that particular national party to emerge with absolute majority in Parliament? Should the incongruities in the Congress party convince our business leaders against plumping for the congress, why should they not come out openly for the BJP?"

## **BLATANT CANVASSING FOR BJP**

Not that Swaminathan considers BJP to be a sure horse to win. He adds a provison to his advice, cautioning about BJP: "that party (BJP)'s faring in the coming elections will be influenced by how effectively that party can live down its haunted image as an anti-

secular outfit."

It is a pity that the columns of a national daily like 'The Hindu' has been permitted to be used for doing a bit of blatant canvassing for pumping in funds in favour of an outright communal party. It is for the readers to judge the credentials of the daily in this background.

But as citizens who will be going to the polling booths to elect the new Lok Sabha, workers and common public have to be concerned about this open invitation to vested interests to step in with huge funds to turn the elections in favour of a particular party, that too a party with a communal agenda detrimental to the unity of the people and the country.

Not that our industry and business leaders have the habit of sitting pretty whenever elections are held. As Swaminathan himself has noted over the last five decades. Indian business, particularly corporate business has financially identified itself with the electoral ambitions of the key political parties in India.

## **TATA FUND: REJECTED BY LEFT**

Public memory will recall that in the none too distant past, the Tatas had come up with a proposal to set up a separate fund to finance the political parties. It is only the CPI(M) and other left parties rejected the proposal outright and refused to avail the patronage of

industrial houses. On the other hand the leading parties representing the interests of Indian monopoly capital, business and landed gentry, the Congress and BJP welcomed with glee the proposal by the TATA house. This has, perhaps, prompted Swaminathan to record that "both those parties (the Congress and the BJP) will count on the patronage of the leading business houses, for financing their election campaigns, needs no strong reiteration."

Press has reported that the Congress President, Sitaram Kesri is worried about raising funds for election campaign and has started wooing industrialists with whom he had cultivated friendship, over his long years as Treasurer of his party. The BJP for its part is reportedly to be flush with funds. After all, they had enough in their kitty to "purchase" over 80 odd MPs to conjure up a majority in the 11th Lok Sabha itself.

## **SHOW OF RELUCTANCE**

Why them the anxiety on the part of Swaminathans to go public over business firms financing the electoral ambitions of the BJP?

At least for the sake of gullible public, the leading apex industrial bodies had publicly expressed their reluctance to provide funds for the election campaign.

The FICCI Secretary General Amit Mitra has said "There is need to curtail the demand for funds by keeping a tab on election

expenses." FICCI is reportedly thinking of making a representation to the Election Commission seeking strict measures to keep election expenses low.

Tarun Das, Director-General of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) also has said, "Industry is disinclined to provide funds for elections. There will have to be a real effort in curtailing election expenses."

The Business Times Bureau assesses that the reluctance of Indian industry to provide funds for election campaign is not because this election has come so close on the heels of the previous one. There are other reasons too. One, the economy is experiencing a slow down. Two, the general sentiment is why pay when one is not sure who will form the government, meaning thereby there can be no *quid pro quo*. Three, in the days of liberalisation, what can parties do in return?

### **'REFORMS IN JEOPARDY'**

Perhaps it is this reluctance, at least for outward appearance, of business houses, compels Swaminathan to jump in with strong advices to overcome the so called reluctance. He is worried because "the present mood of Indian business class seems to be a strange admixture of a sense of frustration that the United Front bubble has been pricked and an attitude of blind faith that whatever the new scenario emerges in the national polity, economic reforms will not be jeopardised."

This worry is not unfounded. Even as the Gujral government was

collapsing leading to the inevitability of a mid term poll, a delegation of top Indian industrialists from the CII was in Paris building bridges with their French counterparts. Rahul Bajaj, Chairman of CII stated in Paris: "The question of political stability came up in our discussions with members of the CNPF, the French Employers' Federation. We were able to tell them that from our point of view, a change in government would not mean a radical change in economic policy. The BJP might attempt to throw in a bit of Swadeshi but it was essentially a businessman's party and understood the need for continued liberalisation. As for the Congress(I), it was the party that started the reform process. The United Front too has continued with that policy. We told them that whatever the government in place, there was nothing to fear on the economic front." (Hindu, 30 Nov 1997)

This exercise by CII is not acceptable to Swaminathan. He dubs it as a 'global education campaign to persuade foreign investors that India does enjoy the prospect of continued economic reform,' whatever be the cast of political personalities at the Centre.

### **OPEN PLEA FOR REFORM MINDED GOVT**

Swaminathan hastens to add that corporate leaders in India must build on the realisation that 'a strong majority for a reform minded government' is in their interests. He wants serious attempt to be made by Indian business "to look closely into the dynamics of

parliamentary democracy, rather than **leave it all to the people of India** " (emphasis added). The stakes of Indian business in the political system is, it is averred, "much more immediate and visible than those of the common people." What is the prescription? "Indian business should strive to support one party massively in order that the shibboleth about the inevitability of coalition governments can be exorcised from people's minds."

Media-scribes of the tribe to which Swaminathan belongs, have a contempt for people. The people cannot be trusted to give a judicious verdict. Parliamentary democracy cannot be left all to the people. Industry and business should intervene as their stakes are high. Coalition is a shibboleth.

For these saffron-scribes, in the coming election, preserving the secular fabric of the country's polity is not the issue: strengthening the federal characteristics of our democracy is not important; welfare of the huge masses with unbearable burdens thrust by liberalisation of the economy is not of any concern. This affront to the people, this contempt towards the democratic rights of the people must be taken as a challenge by the workers and the common public. No matter if the big business chips in with their vast resources, the two representatives of the vested interests, the Congress and the BJP, must be forced to bite the dust. Throw the money bags out. Weed out the corrupt and the communal. Opt for the third alternative.

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# PACT ON FINANCIAL SERVICES IN WTO: AMERICAN INVASION IN THIRD WORLD MARKET

**D**ECEMBER 13, 1997, Decades long effort of the advanced industrialised countries and the giant financial companies thereof got into fruition after the ultimate surrender of the representatives from the 3rd world countries to continuous pressure of USA in WTO session. It is by far the biggest victory of the giant financial companies of US, Europe and Japan to freely exploit the financial market and allied service sector of the third world countries, and assert more decisive control on their economy through dominance in the financial sector. By the agreement concluded on 13th December, more than 98% of the world financial business in over 60 countries would be brought within a system of binding foreign trade principle and it will ensure removal of international barriers to expansion of banking insurance and securities industries.

The importance of financial sectors in these days' finance capital-dominated world wide trade operation is immense, that too for the industrialised countries. "The stakes are access to as much as US\$1.2 trillion in daily foreign exchange transactions for industrialised countries. The economic analysts say that this the fastest growing sector in international economic activity. WTO estimates global insurance premiums as total US\$ 2 trillion and banking assets

US\$22 trillion.

For the developing countries, opening of their financial sector to US and European giant financial companies would mean complete marginalisation of their domestic banking and insurance business and cornering of the entire business by MNCs and also cornering of the savings/deposits by common people by the Financial Companies of the US, Europe and Japan. 51% equity in the stock market sector as licensed by the just concluded WTO pact also would mean easy access of 'take over, or acquisition of domestic companies by the foreign business house by brute money power.

It is but natural that US financial lobby present at the venue of WTO session did not try to conceal their joy on conclusion of the pact after night-long hectic negotiation.

Mr John Crozine, Chairman of M/s Goldman Sachs said, "This liberalisation will not only create new opportunities for US but it will be a powerful engine of prosperity in the US and through out the world, (for the US companies)."

After the Asian Financial market turmoil, the so-called Asian tigers like Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand fell already subjugated by IMF and World Bank and succumbed to US pressure. They had little option to do otherwise as through IMF package mechanism, the US and

European Companies already made inroad to their financial sector. After Thailand accepted the IMF reform package after US\$17 billion bail out loan, the Citi Bank of USA took over the third biggest bank of Thailand.

But while most of the developed countries conceded to WTO mechanism with despair, Indian delegation in this session of WTO headed by the finance Minister P Chidambaram expressed happiness on the WTO pact and said "I am happy that the deal has been clinched. It will benefit India in the medium to long term".

After the conclusion of the agreement in WTO on Saturday last, (13.12.97) Mr Jacques Leg Lu of the Committee of European Assurances (CEA) representing leading European Insurance companies commented that "WTO would keep up pressure on India to open their insurance market to foreign companies." Among the 19 countries, shortlisted by WTO, who committed themselves, to allowing greater access to foreign Insurance Companies under new WTO agreement, India tops the list with Brazil as commented by CEA, reports Reuter.

The WTO pact on financial services is a surrender of the developing countries to US blackmail, since success of TNC giants in Finance Sector, in invading the other third world countries' financial sector makes India's position extremely fragile.

# The Supreme Court Verdict on Bandh

P K Ganguly

On November 12 the Supreme Court declared Bandhs as unconstitutional and illegal, upholding the judgement of the Kerala High Court on July 28, 1997. It was indeed a Black Day in legal jurisprudence, in so far as the verdict came from the highest court of law, interpreting the basic law of the land the fundamental principles on which the State and its people are governed.

The purpose of this article is not to make a legal dissection of the judgement, because many comments have come in its wake from a host of trade unions, political parties, several lawyers and some retired judges of High Courts on one hand and in editorials of the bourgeois press, and the industrial cartels and their associations, on the other. While the former have unequivocally expressed their indignation over the judgement, the latter have welcomed it. Obviously true to its character, the rightist Hindu Party BJP has echoed the voice of the latter. It will however be pertinent to point out some contradictions in the judgement, which in its fumbling attempt to make some face saving formulae in an utterly reactionary verdict, has exposed its bias against the democratic movement of the people and the working class.

## DUBIOUS DISTINCTION

The distinction drawn by the Kerala High Court and approved by the Supreme Court between a

Bandh and general strike or Hartal is not only unconvincing, impractical and ridiculous, but also does not have any rationale behind it. Probably they could not have the temerity to declare a blanket ban on general strikes which is a worldwide phenomena. It is good they could not do this, otherwise it would have been termed as a scandalous judgement by the highest court of judicature in the country. But the banning of Bandhs tantamounts to same.

Bandh and Hartal are both Hindi words customarily used to denote General Strike. For this one need not have to struggle through the pages of an Oxford or Chambers dictionary to get the exact meanings and the distinctions. To draw a distinction therefore to term one as prone to coercion and violence is nothing but wishful thinking of brains with pre-conceived ideas tilted in favour of the ruling classes. The working class must thank the honourable judges that another most popular and commonly used form of struggle, i.e. "picketing", which does mean to dissuade men to work during strikes, etc. has slipped their mind.

## Question of Violence

To justify their analysis of Bandhs, the learned judges have talked of realities that happen during Bandhs, i.e. violence, destruction of national properties, curtailing the "fundamental rights" of other citizens and so on

making a scapegoat of the sponsors of a Bandh, and have declared a bandh on Bandhs.

This type of unrealistic analysis is not expected, rather it is unwarranted from court judges. If a judge talks of violence on destruction of national properties, he has to go deep into this to find out the causes, the circumstances leading to violence and above all, identify the culprits according to the actual situation. And the realities are, violence is engineered by the hired hoodlums of the employers and the ruling classes. Innumerable cases are happening throughout the country during bandhs and strikes where these hired hoodlums possessing even unlicensed guns, fire at the workers and throw bombs at public and private transports and in processions and rallies, and the police, the organised state machinery of violence, swoop on the workers, arrest them and inflict false charges on them, while the real culprits and their mentors go scotfree.

These are the realities which have been overlooked by the learned judges. And such acts of the anti-socials do find place in the bourgeois papers, which also have been overlooked by the learned judges. It may however be true that some organisations some times give call for Bandhs on frivolous issues in pursuance of their narrow political gains and violence do occur. But to

generalise it as a matter of routine occurrence would amount to what is called illicit generalisation. Blanket ban on Bandhs cannot be justified by reference to these activities.

### **Psychological Impact**

The learned judges have talked of psychological fear of the people about Bandhs. But a fact could not be thought of in their psychology that the sponsors of a bandh, at least the left parties and the trade unions are avowedly against the culture of violence, coercion and destruction of national properties, when they give call for Bandh. On the contrary, they launch thorough campaign to convince the working people about the cause of the Bandh and get their voluntary participation in it.

Some editorials while hailing the verdict as a landmark judgement, have tried to give a "balanced" view of Bandh by giving the example of Gandhiji, who also gave calls for hartals or bandh of shops, trades, etc during the freedom struggle, but in a non-violent way. Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence is definitely commendable. But Gandhiji did not say how to defend oneself non-violently if he is attacked violently.

### **Fundamental Rights**

The other points which invites strong criticism, is negation of the inviolable spirit of the fundamental rights. The judgment says that there cannot be any right to call or "enforce" a Bandh which interferes with the exercise of the fundamental freedoms of other citizens. The fundamental rights in the Constitution say that, "All

citizens shall have the right, (a) to freedom of speech and expression, (b) to assemble peacefully and without arms, (c) to form associations or unions, etc. The framers of the Constitution guaranteeing these freedoms did not make any provision negating these freedoms. Further they certainly did not point out or meant in any way that "some other citizens" or individuals shall have equal fundamental freedom to counter these freedoms as a part of fundamental right.

The judgement therefore is a very perverse interpretation of the fundamental rights and exposes the class bias of the learned judges and likely to incite the trouble shooters and anti-socials to cause violence during Bandhs or general strikes and Hartals. Further, in the name of freedom of "other citizens," it gives importance to individual rights to oppose Bandhs and strikes over that of the collective and the overwhelming majority, and thereby hits at the root of a democratic polity.

### **Crocodile tears**

The judgement further mentions of national loss in many ways. The industry magnates - CII, FICCI, etc have added words like hampering the economy as a whole particularly in the new liberalised set up, loss in production and productivity, blunting the competitive edge of the economy, mandays loss and also shed crocodile tears for the loss of wages of the workers during Bandhs.

But what about all these losses which are being incurred due to growing closures and sickness of

industries, mass retrenchments, lock outs, etc, which have become the alarming features, especially in the new liberalised set up, and are resorted to by the same very employers now shedding tears for possible loss of a day's wage? What about the loot of various legitimate dues of the working people and deliberate non-payment of wages by the employers including the Government undertakings? Did the learned judges go into details as to which factor causes more national loss—Bandhs by political parties and organisations or closures of industries by the monopolists. Will they agree that closures which create joblessness and make tens of thousands of working people and their families destitute are waste of valuable human resources and are acts against the society and cause the worst national loss? Will they realise that these are the major reasons for which the calls for Bandhs or Hartals are given? They many not. Because they have not analysed the causes and they have not realised that response to such calls by the people are overwhelming and voluntary. They have simply accepted the plea of the minority exploiters. They have also not gone through the fact that despite Bandhs the profits of the monopolists are increasing. It is to be noted that one of the petitioners against Bandh was the Cochin Chambers of Commerce.

### **BEYOND JURISDICTION**

They have further arrogated themselves as the custodians of "national interest" by stating that "Bandhs are not in the interests

of the nation." They have in fact subserved the interests of the monopolists by equating them as the "nation" and championed their "national interests." The people's interests and the country's interests as a whole are not in their conception at all. It is further audacious to call for compensation of the losses to be made by the sponsors of Bandh. It would have been better if the learned judges had strictly adhered to the issue of fundamental rights vis-a-vis Bandhs and not crossed over their jurisdiction by entering the arena of national losses and national interests.

The judges have entered yet another area of great controversy. In their over enthusiasm to ban Bandhs they have stated that, "if the legislature does not make any law either prohibiting Bandh or curtailing it or regulating it, we think that it is the duty of the court to step in to protect the rights of the citizens to ensure that freedoms available to them are not curtailed by any person or any political organisation."

By such remarks the learned judges have set the judiciary against the legislature. It is to be noted that judiciary, legislature and the executive are the three main arms of the State. Each has its own specific field of operation and is supreme in that field only. None should try to arrogate to itself all the powers or try to subordinate the other two to its own authority.

The judiciary is only to interpret the law as it is. Any attempt to set one against the other or to presume that one is supreme and the others

are subordinate to it, would be contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. The learned judges should realise that they have overstepped themselves while making this remark.

### DEFECTS GALORE

Thus it can be seen that defects in the judgement are in galore. It has certainly offended the aspirations and sentiment and sentiment of all sections of the working people. It is therefore necessary to intensify the struggle against any fall out of the judgement against any fall out of the judgement armed with a political understanding that the judgement is a true reflection of the fundamental defects of the capitalist system as it obtains today. It will be pertinent to quote a few sentences from the famous writing of Engels regarding judiciary in the "Condition of the Working Class in England:"

"At the root of all laws lies the idea that the proletariat is an enemy, which must be defeated. This can be seen from the way in which the law is administered by the judges. This is particularly true of the Justices of the Peace....The Justices of the Peace have no hesitation in regarding the administration of the law as a means of keeping the working class down....The prejudice of the Justices of the Peace against the working class beggars description...And the Justices of the Peace really believe that the interests of the bourgeoisie are the true corner stone of law and order."

### STRUGGLE IS THE ANSWER

Therefore, the judiciary, which is an important organ of the State

power, alongwith the standing army, police and bureaucracy, is weighted against the workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. The laws and the systems of justice, though holding the rich and the poor equal in principle, essentially serve the interests of the exploiting classes and uphold their class rule. Even the bourgeois-democratic principle of separation of the judiciary from the executive is not adhered to, and the judiciary becomes subject to the influence and control of the latter.

In the above circumstances the judiciary and the entire state structure will come into constant clash with all sections of the working people. The working people therefore, while struggling to utilise the rights guaranteed under the Constitution - freedom of speech, organisation, etc, will have to be politically armed so as to bring about fundamental changes in the economic and political power structure. With the surging tides of struggle the Supreme Court judgement will become farcical in the long run.\*

**The CITU deeply mourns the passing away of Com. Tridib Chowdhury, the veteran freedom fighter and leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India. He devoted his life to the cause of India's freedom and also the working class and the down trodden of the people country.**

**The CITU strongly denounces the dastardly attack with the intention to murder, on Com. Gulab Singh, the leader of UP state Committee of CITU and CPI(M). Com. Singh was fired at during the proceedings of UP State Conference of CPI(M) at Saharanpur.**

# CLOSURE OF GAS VICTIMS' REHABILITATION CENTRES DEPRIVE VICTIM WOMEN OF THEIR LIVELIHOOD

**Zulekha Zabin**

13th Anniversary of the Bhopal Gas tragedy, the biggest and unprecedented in the world is being observed. The government and their henchmen are claiming that they have done so much for the gas affected people, but fact is crystal clear that how meagre an amount the government has paid from its own treasury or could claim from Union Carbide and distributed without going to the claims of the Government. One example is sufficient to expose the total lack of concern on the part of government about the rehabilitation of the gas affected people.

This example will show that without the monetary help from the government, how the own rehabilitation scheme is arranged not only that through this scheme Rs 4 crores and 75 lakhs has been deposited in the government treasury. The story of the 'Gas perit Silai Kendra' will reveal the truth about the government's claim.

## **SOME STATISTICAL FACTS**

After the gas tragedy at Bhopal, the people lost their capability to work and due to which they are not able to do their work or business, which they were doing before the tragedy. The Madhya Pradesh Government started some rehabilitation programmes and schemes. Under those schemes, the government started the Silai centres (Sewing Centres) to provide employment to affected women in 1987 through Madhya Pradesh State Industries Corporation. In these silai centres 2300 gas affected women were getting regular employment and they used to get Rs 300 to Rs 350 per month, though this amount was not sufficient. There were plenty of orders in these silai centres. Generally the uniforms for government departments, public sector units, and cloth bags are being stitched in these Mahila Silai centres.

Owing to plenty of orders, quality of work, besides the hard work of the women employees, these silai centres were able to become self sufficient as regards monthly resources. Not only that, they earned Rs 3 crores as profit for State Industries Corporation and also saved cloth worth of Rs one crores and seventy five lakhs within a short span of the 5 years. Without

any big investment or technical involvement the Silai centres could earn about Rs 5 crores.

It is peculiar that the scheme which was meant for giving relief to the gas affected people, has generated its own resources but the profit earned was given to state Industrial Corporation for giving loan to other industries run by State Industrial Corporations. Suddenly these centres were closed despite the fact that there were orders.

It is worth noting from the funds generated by the Mahila Silai Centres Rs. 34 lakh thirty one thousand were disbursed as loan to ten industrial units to fund their operation and the State Industries corporation is earning interest out of that.

Funds with Silai centres after the closure was Rs 3 crores and seventy nine lakhs which is lying in different banks.

## **INEXPLICABLE CLOSURE**

It is really a sorrowful affair that with out even following the minimum norms and labour laws these Silai centres have been closed down in 1992. Not only that the women employees were not even paid the retrenchment compensation which is not more than Rs 25 lakhs. Besides this the due bonus is also not paid.

The closure of the centres is the after-effect of new economic and industrial policy despite the fact is that there was order of Rs 40 lakhs from Railways, Seed Corporation, and Revenue department.

These above examples reveal the real character of the government and its henchmen. But there are some issues, for whom there is no reply:

1. Whether the closing of silai centres started for the rehabilitation of gas affected women is at all warranted in view of the very purpose of the scheme.
2. Whether state government is really sincere and serious about their stated women policy and declaration regarding 30% reservation for women in employment? If it is so, then why these women are being deprived of employment?
3. Whether in the name of rehabilitation of Gas-victims, the Govt. is making a mockery or not?

## TASKS BEFORE THE GOVT

Realities have cleared that if government wants to do some thing for gas affected people of Bhopal in real sense then following steps should be taken:

1. The Madhya Pradesh Shramkalyan Board should be made nodal agency for running these silai centres and it should run the centres in line with the provisions of Madhya Pradesh Shram Kalyan Nidhi Adhiniyam of 1982 vide clause 11 2 (b).
2. The Rs 3 crores profit earned by the Silai centres and Rs 1 crores seventy five lakhs of clothes left with the centre to be taken out from MP State Industries Corporation and different banks and Madhya Pradesh Shram Kalyan Board should take possession of that amount. The interest should be charged from the concerns whom loan has been given, and credited to the account of the centres.
3. For running these silai centres a broad based committee should be formed with proper representation by Shram Kalyan Board.

4. Representation should be given to all the Registered Trade Unions working amongst the gas affected women.

5. Women who were working in these silai centres to be given employment

6. During this period all women employees should be paid some amount as compensation. The Bonus of this period should also be distributed.

7. The profit earned by these silai centres should be used for the expansion of these centres and for more employment.

8. Instruction should be given to all government departments and public sector undertakings to place orders of their requirements of uniforms to these centres. The Shrama Kalyan Board should explore the possibilities for having more orders from different sources.

These silai centres can be run as profit making centres. The closure of these centres was against all humanitarian norms and unreasonable and whimsical. \*

## AGAINST SC VERDICT ON BANDH

**D**ecember 3, 1997, Several Hundreds of workers, students, youth, women and others demonstrated before the Supreme Court protesting the verdict of the Supreme Court in upholding the judgement of Kerala High Court putting a ban on BANDH. The demonstration was called by National Platform of Mass Organisations consisting of major central trade unions viz CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC, UTUC(LS), TUCC and AICCTU and various mass organizations of peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women and others.

People assembled at Mandi house chowk at around 11.30 and marched in a procession towards Supreme Court.

The rally and demonstration in front of Supreme Court was addressed by E. Balanandan, President, CITU, Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, K.L. Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC, Dipankar Bharracharya, General Secretary, AICCTU, Samir Roy (HMS), R.K. Shastri (TUCC), RK Sharma (UTUC-LS), Brinda Karat, General Secretary, of AIDWA

Kumudini Pati (AIPWA), Pramila Loomba (NFIW), P.K. Kodyan (BKMU), Pushpender Tyagi (SFI), Rahul Bhajji, AISF, Ranjit Bhuyan (AISA).

The speakers while protesting the decision of Supreme Court to put a ban on the peoples right to observe and call for Bandh described the verdict as encroachment of the democratic right of the people to collectively voice their opposition and protest through Bandh/General Strike and called for united movement to resist such onslaught on the democratic right of the toiling people.

The meeting also condemned the brutal killing of poor peasants, women and children in Bathe Laxmanpur village of Jehanabad District of Bihar on 1st December night by the banned gangster outfit of the landlords the Ranabir Sena and extended solidarity to, the 'Bihar Bandh' on 5th December 1997 called by the left and democratic parties in the state and adopted a resolution to that effect.

TAPAN SEN

Govt of South Korea - the great Asian Tiger, has been compelled to accept the IMF package of reform in lieu of a \$55 billion dollar loan stated to be for restraining its financial set up from imminent collapse. South Korea-IMF accord has set a record both in terms of the quantum of loan and the intensity and width of the reform prescriptions.

The liberalisers in India has all along been citing the example of South Korea in support of their so called outward looking policy based on unrestricted entry of foreign companies and liberalised imports and free play of foreign speculators in country's stock market, etc.

But unfortunately, the said country has become the biggest victim of the recent turmoil in Asian Financial Markets. South Korea in spite of being the world's eleventh largest economy has found its currency dipping fast compared to US dollars and its some of the big corporate houses going bankrupt. Condition has become so precarious that the country has to knock the door of IMF for rescue package - in Mexican way.

### IMF PACKAGE

The IMF lost no time to offer loan and alongwith the bitter pills of so-called structural reform package to the world's leading developing country aspiring to become a challenge to the G-7 countries in the international market.

Of the major IMF conditionalities in lieu of US \$ 55 billion bail out package, most notable is the prescription (or direction) for clipping the annual GDP growth target to 2 to 3 per cent which is otherwise slated as 6% for 1998. This would inevitably mean non-utilisation of huge production capacity of South Korean industries created over the years and such a prescription, as observed by 'Korea Herald' the leading newspaper of South Korea, would inevitably further weaken the already fragile financial condition of Korean business conglomerates who have already been heavily indebted both inside the country and to abroad and such a situation would also create heavy unemployment in the entire country.

Among other measures suggested by IMF are complete deregulation of labour market and dismantling of labour legislations, complete opening of the financial services and other service sectors, complete deregulation of the legal structure pertaining particularly to company organisations and equity participation stringent restriction on credit flow etc. Such measures, it has been observed by Korean Press, would further dampen growth and stimulate recession.

### BLOW FOR PEOPLE

The immediate blow is coming on the Common people. As the editorial of KOREAN HERALD News observed "Agreement with IMF....to provide South Korea

with a \$55 billion bail out, entailing a dramatic restructuring of the country's economy....leave little room for Korean Nationals to rejoice....The road before us is winding and painful....Its details include a tightening of fiscal and monetary policies, streamlining financial institutions, liberalisation of trade and capital flows and renovation of structure and governance of corporations." The South Korean surrender to IMF design is by far the gravest in the financial sector. Foreign financial institutions will now be freely allowed to set up locally incorporated firms in South Korea, courtesy IMF.

As a result, the economic commentator of KOREA HERALD, Lee Kap Soo, observed "some US and Japanese Banks here including Citi Bank are expected to take over domestic banks, securities and insurance companies through mergers and acquisitions. Korea will also have to increase foreign ownership limit in the stock market to 50% of any listed company..."

### LOSS OF JOBS AND WAGES TOO

Mr Song Jung Tae of Korea Herald pointed out "should Korea follow the IMF's growth advice, its unemployment rate may soar to a 30 year high of 6 per cent with the total number of jobless people topping 1.2 million." The Labour Minister of South Korea Lee Ki Ho said in his report submitted in the Economic Ministers' meeting

that 900000 will lose their jobs and an additional 3,50,000 will be referred to in terms of hidden unemployment" thanks to growth rate prescription of IMF.

Job-losses are not all. Prospect of wage losses are also running high. As Korea Herald reported, the large business conglomerates of South Korea are stepping up efforts to down size the organisations through wage-freeze or cut. "Senior officials of large business house 'Wednesday' Called for wage cut of 20% next

retrenchment is expected to bring about great pains for the Korean people including a sharp rise in unemployment and a hike in public utility charges."

Labour Minister of South Korea Lee-Ki-HO urged the business house to refrain from lay-offs during the inevitable restructuring process since "Employees" salaries account for just 12% of the industrial cost compared to the financial cost of 16.7%" Apprehending a backlash from the organised workers in the face of

onslaughts on their rights and livelihood "The Fund wants Korean labour market to be deregulated but the militant trade union movement there are bound to fight back."

HA-SUNG Change, the director of Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice characterised IMF package as conspiracy.

The National Federation of Democracy and National Unification predicting the danger of the control of country's financial sector being taken over

## AGRICULTURAL WORKERS : HEALTH RISKS

An international meeting of farm safety and health experts was held under the aegis of the ILO, in October, 1997. Stark revelations came to the fore at that forum.

Agricultural mortality rates remain high throughout the world. The ILO has estimated that at least 1,70,000 agricultural workers are killed every year, several millions of the world's agricultural workers are seriously injured in workplace accidents involving machinery (cutting etc. tools, tractors and the like) or poisoned by pesticides and other agro chemicals. Agricultural workers in developing countries are naturally exposed to higher risks as their population is high. In most industrialised countries an average of 9% of the total workforce is engaged in agriculture. But worldwide position is that almost half the world's total workforce is engaged in agricultural production. Yet another feature is that the share of women in agricultural employment worldwide is growing mainly due to migration of men to urban centres seeking better job opportunities. Women account for

around 43% of the agricultural work force.

Child labour also is predominant in farm operations. Children between the ages 5 to 14, constitute 10% of the total economically active population in the developing countries. Of these working children 70% are engaged in agriculture.

Developing countries consume more than 20% of the world production of agro-chemicals, which are responsible for acute poisoning of the agri-workers. The World Health Organisation, another UN agency has estimated the total losses of pesticide poisoning worldwide at between 20 to 50 lakhs workers per year. Of these 40000 are fatal.

Agricultural workers are dispersed in remote rural areas, where public health services are inadequate. Labour laws are inaccessible to them. There is no application of safety provision for them. They are excluded from any employment injury benefit or insurance scheme.

The hands that feed nations are not even raised to seek protection against the health risks!

year." It was also reported that the SAMSUNG group is seeking to slim its set up by 20%. "In exchange of IMF bail out the Seoul government also has to endure massive lay-offs and other negative factor," the same Daily reported. It has been noted with alarm that "IMF suggested fiscal

ensuing job losses and wage losses, the Govt is likely to begin a crusade against foreign workers in Korean soil estimated at 1,40,000 now.

### RESISTANCE TO THE FORE

On the other hand the Korean workers are preparing for resistance against the impending

by United States declared "In cooperation with other Labour and Social groups, we strongly oppose IMF demands which will bring disaster to the country and we cannot allow this to happen."

South Korea is expected to witness rising people's movement in the days to come. \*

*Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions, (CFTU), one of the foremost organisations of workers in the island country of Sri Lanka, held its 23rd delegates session on 29th November 1997 in Colombo. CITU was invited to this conference. A K Padmanabhan, Secretary, attended the conference deputed by the CITU Secretariate. On the request of CFTU A K Padmanabhan, reached Colombo on 28.11.97 and stayed as a guest of CFTU upto 3.12.97. He was the only representative of a National Trade Centre from outside Srilanka. The Conference was also attended by D.K. Ganguly, Secretary of WFTU, of which CFTU is an affiliate. After attending the conference and holding discussions with the leaders of various Trade Unions in Sri Lanka, A K Padmanabhan reports on the developments and the problems in Sri Lanka.*

## ON A VISIT TO SRI LANKA

**A K Padmanabhan**

The conference of CFTU was attended by 403 delegates including 60 women. One important point was that majority of the delegates were youngsters.

The Report submitted by General Secretary Subha Singhe and the experiences and problems narrated by the men and women who participated in the discussion made it clear that almost all the developing countries, especially those from the South Asian Region are facing the same type of problems.

General Secretary's report referred to their experiences about the UNP Government which continued to be in power for 17 years from 1977 to 1994. That was a period of serious attack against the working people and on their trade union and democratic rights. United movements under the banner of a Joint Action Committee were conducted in those days. There were large scale victimisations of workers from various sectors. On the economic front, the so called reforms ended up in throwing out large number of workers and in privatising many of the Government owned establishments including plantations.

As is well known, the General elections in 1994 resulted in the defeat of UNP Government and formation of the People's Alliance Government led by SLFP. Trade Unions and people in general heaved a sigh of relief and had a lot of expectations. But, the experience of the last four years of PA rule was not up to their expectations. This Government has also been following the dictates of IMF and World Bank and all problems have further deepened. Privatisation has been extended plantation, Telecommunication, Cooking Gas, Steel Industry and Ports.

The participants in the discussion in the conference

referred to all the problems which an Indian trade unionist is familiar with-privatisation, price rise, unemployment, contract system, casualisation non implementation of statutes and then all the unkept promises of the administration. Cost of living index has gone up by 51% between 1993 and 1997. Srilankan Rupee is continuously going down and is now at Rs.60 for a US Dollar.

The inaugural session was addressed by leaders of all the leading Trade Unions who were all participant in the People's Alliance Government. They included leader of Ceylon Federation of Labour, Trade Union led by SLFP, Public employees union, General Secretaries of both the left parties, Communist Party of Sri Lanka and LSSP and 5 Ministers including the Labour Minister.

### WORKERS CHARTER

All the speakers referred to the promises made by People's Alliance, which included the implementation of 'Workers Charter' which has not been taken up.

The story of the workers charter is a very long one. The assurance of implementation of workers charter was at first given by the previous SLFP Government in 1970. Then during the 17 years of UNP Government, 'Worker's Charter' was a prime point in the campaign. Peoples' Alliance, in the election manifesto, had assured implementation of the charter. Immediately after coming to power, the Government had taken steps to formulate the charter. The then Labour Minister also was very keen in this. Then, with the participation of various trade unions and other the charter was finalised.

As could be expected, the Employers' Federations were in all out opposition to the charter. The charter

was officially published in 1995 and the Minister had assured getting it approved in Parliament. On the day it was listed for debate in Parliament, we were told, the President of the country had intervened to postpone the same. It is now an open secret that the President had intervened at the instance of the Employers' Federations. They had openly stated that they had to take steps to save the country and ensure investment by foreign industrialists. The next step from the Government was the removal of the Labour Minister from that Department and the portfolio was entrusted to another Minister. The new Minister who also addressed the conference again 'assured' implementation of the charter. The consensus among the Trade Unions is that the Government is dragging its feet on this question at the behest of the employers and MNCS.

The Charter includes the question of trade union recognition and implementation of various statutes etc. While there is pressure from employers to further dilute various enactments, the workers are raising their voice for implementation of the workers charter.

### **On Trade Union rights**

According to trade union leaders, the trade union rights are under attack. In the Industries coming under the Bureau of Investments(BOI) in free trade zones, workers are not being allowed to form unions. Many struggles have been conducted and some of these companies have been forced to agree to talk to unions and settle issues.

### **Foreign Investments**

Some of the Indian Plantation giants like Tatas and Malayalam Plantations have entered the privatised plantation sector. Not much has come as new investments in major sectors as new investments. garment and ceramic industries have come in search of cheap labour. More than 35,000 young workers, mainly girls, are in garment industry and ceramic industry is also growing. Number of workers in established industries like Ceylon Tobacco(BAT) have gone down with many sections abolished due to outsourcing.

As a small country in the region, Srilankan people have many apprehensions about liberalisation. They expect severe crisis when the Government go ahead with the WTO regulations and that of the proposed SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) under

SAARC countries agreement of SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement). According to them, Srilankan Agricultural Sector is facing a serious threat with imports of items like potato, onion and chillies.

### **THE EHTNIC DIVIDE**

In addition to all these problems, is the question of ethnic issues on which a civil war is continuing in the northern parts of the country. The PA Government has come out with a package of power devolution and it is being hotly debated. The effects of the civil war is severe. The General Secretary of CFTU, in his report noted that the working people have been divided on ethnic basis, when the unity of the working people, against the onslaught of various anti people policies and forces, is the need of the hour.

The conference was extended greetings on behalf of CITU and the working people of India, the necessity of close co-operation and co-ordination of activities among the trade unions in the region was emphasised. During the discussions with various trade union leaders also, the necessity of closer relationship was stressed. All of them were unanimous on the necessity of closer co-ordination. Efforts taken by CITU and other Indian trade unions on Regional Co-ordination like Indian Ocean Region were explained. Details about the Havana Conference against Globalisation was also referred to. Srilankan unions could not take part in the Havana conference. It was agreed that with the present international situation, all efforts should be made for Regional and International Co-operation among Trade Unions.

The experience with in the short period of stay in Srilanka shows that with the working people in the region facing serious problems of identical nature, the efforts taken in India for strengthening co-operation and co-ordination at various levels should be continued. With the proposed summit of SAARC nations in August, co-ordination at this level has become an urgent task.\*

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## Bihar: Electricity Workers Agitate

The Bihar Govt led by RJD has in principle decided to privatise the Electricity Board following the footsteps of neighbouring Orissa Govt run by Cong(I). They have already privatised the part work in four major cities i.e. Patna, Ranchi, Dhanbad and Muzaffarpur. Now they are planning to hand over the generation units of Kanti of Muzaffarpur district and Barauni of Begusarai to an American Company. Vast assets worth about Rs 10,000 crores are being thrown away for the meagre amount of Rs 250 crores loans by World Bank. All these moves on the part of the govt have created mass revulsion among the workers of State Electricity Board and they are quite apprehensive of their retrenchment and dismantling of the Board itself.

The Bihar Vidyut Parishad Field Kamgar Union (CITU) has been mobilising the workers against the impending onslaught and has been successful in putting brakes to the hasty move towards privatisation.

For the last two years the CITU union is in the forefront in spearheading the movement. Two months back the union gave a call for three days strike which got wide spread response in all the major units of generation and distribution centres of the Board. Before that a massive dharna was staged before the Board headquarters at Patna.

The union has issued many pamphlets highlighting the achievements of the Board despite the callousness of the successive govts. The sustained propaganda work along with agitational programmes by the CITU union has raised a new hope among the struggling workers of the Electricity Board.

Demonstration before the Electricity Board headquarter at Patna on 28.11.97 was a resounding success. About 4 thousand workers from every major centres participated. The participants assembled near the office of Patna electricity supply unit (PESU) and marched in a

procession. The demonstration was led by Chandi headquarters at 1 pm. The demonstration was led by Chandi Prasad, President, Bihar State CITU, Amrendra Mishra, General Secretary, Bihar Rajya Vidyut Parishad Field Kamgar Union (CITU) Ram Prasad Singh, President and Arun Kumar Mishra, Secretary, CITU, Bihar State Committee.

Later on a mass meeting was held before the board office which was addressed by the leaders.

The CITU union has planned further actions and time and again tried to bring all the unions on a single platform but of no avail. The other so-called major union is not interested in struggle against privatisation move. Rather it is only interested in organising some seminar and issuing statements. The CITU union has embarked on the path of agitation knowing fully well the enormous task ahead. The situation will force other unions to take note of the workers mood and join hands in the struggle.

*(Report from Arun Kumar Mishra)*

## Coal Ash and Parcel Workers on the move

With the abolition of coal engines in the Railway the coal ash handling workers had lost their hope of getting absorbed in the mother industry. But the Indian Railways Coal Ash handling and Parcel Transhipment Mazdoor Union (CITU) kept their

hope alive by mobilising the parcel workers under their wings and conducting series of struggles in the last two years. The Union raps on the favourable apex court judgment which directed the Central Govt to absorb the retrenched coal ash workers in the

Railways where ever possible treating their case sympathetically. In the last 18 months of United Front rule Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan assured the various delegation of the union led by Basudev Acharya MP and Chairman Railway Standing

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Committee, that the coal ash workers will be absorbed as "Safaiwalas". He also assured the absorption of parcel workers in view of the many decisions of the apex court in favour of them (parcel workers). But things are not moving in the right direction and workers are getting restive. In the month of November many

demonstrations were held before the different Railway divisional headquarters. On 30.11.97 big demonstration of about 500 coal ash and parcel workers was held before the Danapur divisional head quarter.

On 5.12.97, a massive mass meeting of about 5,000 workers was held before the Asansol

Railway division office. Workers from Bihar and Bengal participated in the meeting. Bsudev Acharya MP Arun Mishra and Arjun Paswan addressed the gathering Satyanarayan Sarkar Later on a delegation led by Basudev Acharya met the DRM and presented individual petitions of the workers for their absorption in the Railways.

*(Report from A K Mishra)*

## Successful Bandh Against Bathe Killings in Bihar

On 1st December night for about three and half hours landlords-led private army Ranbir Sena surrounded Lakhman-Bathe village in Jahanabad district in Bihar and killed 61 persons, most of them women and children. The gangsters came from nearby Bhojpur district, crossed the river, killed 5 fishermen by slitting their throats on the river banks.

Those who were killed and dozens more injured belong to scheduled castes and socially and economically backward sections. The main reason of such attack is the renewed offensive of landlords against the scheduled castes and socially weaker sections. Most of them are landless agricultural workers and marginal peasants. This carnage was to create terror and to establish the might of the landlords by use of force. BJP is undoubtedly helping and supporting the landlords. A section of Laloo Prasad-Rabri

Devi government is in collusion with the landlords. Bathe carnage is not due to a small piece of land as a section of media tried to project; nor it was the result of any running battle between left extremists groups and landlord's private army. The issue is more deeper, target wider and the purpose more sinister.

The failures and complicity of the state administration with the landlords, contractor-criminals nexus under political patronage of the ruling party and other bourgeois landlord parties have deeply been entrenched in the state.

Against these killings at Bathe the Left parties of Bihar and their secular allies, fighting against BJP, Congress as well as corrupt RJD government gave a call for Bihar Bandh on 5th December, '97. CITU and workers participated in this Bandh. The National Platform of Mass

Organisations also supported this bandh. The people's revulsion against this carnage was reflected when Bihar bandh was completely successful throughout the state due to spontaneous support of the people. The Supreme Court judgment proved to be wrong as there was no prevention, mobilisation or even campaign. The people voluntarily responded magnificently. Police arrested the leaders and party supporters for even bringing out rally in support of bandh.

Fight for land reforms, right to land records and fight against social oppression have become part of the integrated democratic movement to expose, isolate and eliminate the feudal elements who are using the caste feelings and private army. The bourgeois landlord political parties are using this caste feelings for electoral purposes and to remain in power.

*(Report by J S Majumdar)*

## IISCO: STEEL WORKERS DEMONSTRATE

The five thousand strong massive demonstration in Indian Iron & Steel Co (IISCO), Burnpur on 18.12.97 denounced continuous bungling of successive Govt in the matter of modernisation of IISCO, the premier and the pioneer steel plant of the country in West Bengal.

The issue of IISCO modernisation is being bungled over decade by the successive govts at the centre. Although workers demonstrated their readiness to undergo maximum sacrifices and considerable depletion of workforce has already taken place, the commitments made by either by Steel Authority of India or the Central Govt were never implemented. Meanwhile, efforts were on to sell IISCO including its huge assets and land to a private sector company, with no

guarantee for modernisation. Through united trade union movement not only in IISCO but in the entire steel industry, that nefarious move to sell IISCO was stalled. In that process govt started reconsidering modernising of IISCO within PSU frame work.

But it is learnt that the Central Govt has backed from their commitment. The demonstration took place in IISCO, Burnpur at the call of SAVE IISCO COMMITTEE comprising of the unions belonging to CITU, INTUC, HMS, AITUC and BMS alongwith IISCO officers association.

A massive rally of workers alongwith the students, youth, women of the IISCO township marched from plant gate of administrative building in procession to hand over

memorandum to Managing Director and copies for Chairman, SAIL, and Prime Minister, Steel Minister and Finance Minister.

The memorandum demanded immediate step to modernise IISCO by the Govt of India expressing the resolve of the Steel Workers to fight against any more of privatisation/sell out.

The workers' rally was addressed by Bamapada Mukherjee, Chandrasekhar Mukherjee (CITU), K C Prasad (INTUC) Taher Hossain (AITUC), R Verma (HMS), Umesh Singh (BMS) and Malay Mazumdar (IISCO Officers Association)

Also in Durgapur Steel township, the workers of Durgapur Steel Plant and Alloy Steels Plant held massive demonstration on the same day.

## WESTERN HEMISPHERE WORKERS' CONFERENCE AND DEREGULATION

**S**ANFRANSISCO, 14-16, November, 1997, 396 trade union leaders and activists of the labour movement of 20 countries of North and South American continent and the Carribean region participated in the Western Hemisphere Workers Conference against NAFTA (north American Free Trade Agreement) and similar free trade agreements in the region and resultant spree of deregulation of labour right and privatisation and globalised attack on rights and

livelihood of the working class. In the conference deliberation all the so called Free Trade Agreements like NAFTA, MERCOSUR, MAASTRICHT, etc have been described as "instruments of galloping profit of the TNCs on the one hand and mechanism to destroy the workers' rights on the other." The clarion statement "since the multinationals and governments develop their attacks on a global scale, we must globalise also the

## NAFTA PRIVATISATION

defence of workers' rights" - was the theme of the conference.

The leader of the American TU AFL-CIO in California, welcoming the delegates called - "We want to change the world and change our place in the world."

The Cuban trade union delegates were also invited to the conference but could not attend owing to denial of visa by the US Govt. Out of 17 Haitian delegates and 22 delegates from Equador, only four and eight delegates respectively

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could obtain visa from US Govt which reveals the hell-bent effort of the US govt to spoil the conference.

The conference decided to observe a common day of protest through massive workers' demonstration

in April 1998.

The declaration adopted in the conference says "We aim to hold this common day of action in April 1998 on the day when the heads of States from throughout the Americas will meet at Chile to

If FTAA..Ours is a call for justice..for a militant campaign to stem the tide of vicious assault against unions. In the face of global capital, we seek to build global unionism."

## Pension: Settlement of Claims

By yet another notification on 27.10.1997 the Government of India have amended the Employees Pension Scheme to the

effect that pension claims, complete in all respects shall be settled within 30 days of its receipt. In case of failure, the

commissioner has been made liable for the delay and penal interest at the rate of 12% p.a. on the benefit amount to be deducted from his salary.

## Workmen Compensation Act

By a notification dated 3.11.1997 the Government of India, Ministry of Labour have added persons employed as "divers for work under water" to

Schedule II of the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923.

A draft notification for adding persons "employed as cooks in hotels or restaurants, using power,

liquified petroleum gas or any other mechanical device in the process of cooking" to the Schedule II, has also been issued on 6.11.1997.

## Paternity Leave for Govt Employees

Consequent upon the Government decisions on the fifth Central Pay Commission recommendation, the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules have been amended effective from 7.10.97 to provide

for the following:

- 1) Enhancement of maternity leave from 90 days to 135 days.
- 2) A male employee with less than two surviving children may be granted paternity leave for a

period of 15 days during the confinement of his wife. Paternity leave can be combined with any other kind of leave as in the case of maternity leave.

## STRIKE HITS ISRAEL

In Israel, 700,000 public sector workers commenced a powerful strike from 2nd December, 1997 at the call of Histadrut Trade Union Federation. The strike has paralyzed Israel's international airport, banks, public transport, government offices and state

industrial firms.

The strikers ignored an order by the labour court acting on a demand by the employers' association and the government, to get back to work.

The strike is called to protest Israel's right-wing government of

Benjamin Netanyahu refusing to enact a pension reform plan approved by the predecessor labour administration. The Netanyahu government has planned to effect across the board budget cuts and widescale privatisation of Israel's vast public sector.

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## NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATION

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) strongly condemned the gruesome killing of the agricultural workers majority of whom were women and children near Jahanabad, Bihar by the Ranbir Sena, the

armed hoodlums of the landlords. It castigated the Bihar Government for its total inaction and demanded capital punishment to the culprits. The meeting further extended support to the call of Bihar Bandh on 5th December

given by the Left Parties in Bihar. It called upon all the mass organisations to send protest telegrammes to the Bihar Chief Minister, demanding immediate action against the culprits.

## ASIA PACIFIC GRAPHICAL FEDERATION

The International Graphical Federation decided to form a Asia-Pacific regional organisation comprising South Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, Australia and Pacific. The foundation congress of the Asia Pacific Graphical Federation was held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 25-27 Sep. 97. Madan Phadnis, Secretary, All India Newspaper Employees Federation participated in the congress. Besides India, Australia, Bangladesh, Japan, Honkong,

Indonesia, South Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia were represented at the congress.

Three reports were placed by the women's organisations, including the one on the service conditions in graphic industry in Latin America.

The Congress adopted the constitution for the regional organisation and elected John Cahill from Australia as Regional President and Ng. Beng Teck as Secretary.

The congress focussed on two aspects. (i) The advent of modern technology in printing like Video Display Terminal etc has underlined the need for training workers in handling new technology. For this the congress decided to establish a school by APGF and urged IGF to resume its educational projects for Asia-Pacific. (2) The innovative modern technology also poses problems of ill-health for which the congress demanded physical and medical check up and protection/treatment provisions. (Report from K.L. Kapur)

## ILO Proposal for a Declaration on Fundamental Rights.

A key decision on how best to promote universal respect for fundamental rights relevant to ILO's mandate is expected to be made by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. The Governing Body will decide on placing on the agenda of the next International Labour Conference a proposal concerning the possible consideration and adoption of a solemn Declaration on fundamental rights, including a follow-up mechanism.

The Declaration would seek to reaffirm the meaning and scope of the commitments to which all ILO member-states have subscribed when freely accepting, upon their admission, the ILO Constitution enshrining the fundamental values and principles which have been developed in the seven "core" Conventions of the ILO relating to fundamental rights.

These fundamental rights concern the prohibition of forced labour and of child labour, freedom of

association and the right to organise and bargain collectively, equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value, and non-discrimination in employment.

According to the proposal by the ILO even where Members are not yet ready to ratify the specific Conventions adopted by the International Labour Conference in which these rights are developed, they would acknowledge in a Declaration

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their commitment to work towards the elimination of situations that are incompatible with their

principles. To assist them in this endeavor, the Declaration would be accompanied by a mechanism,

based on existing constitutional provisions, that would ensure a proper and effective follow-up.

## MAHARASHTRA : PROTEST AGAINST REPRESSION

Nasik is a fast growing industrial centre. The employers here do not adhere to or implement the labour legislations. They blatantly resort to large-scale employment of contract system in all industries and go on ruthlessly forcing the workers to work on starvation wages, despite applicability of statutory minimum wages. But when resistance movement is organised, employers come out openly with powerful gangs of anti-social elements, systematically maintained by them, with threatening postures. This method is often followed with the full support of the local police and in collusion with the Shiv Sena-BJP leadership.

The management of a factory in Nasik called Nav Bharat Industries, like other employers around the city, did not like the workers joining the CITU affiliated Nasik Workers Union of

which Dr. Karad and Thombre are the leaders. Instead of settling the just demands of the workers, the management of Nav Bharat Industries dispensed with the services of its entire work-force and then recruited fresh hands with the help of local police and goondas. Where this modes-operandi was resisted boldly by the dismissed workers, the police picked them up and put them behind bars. Dr. Karad, who was ill and undergoing treatment for typhoid and jaundice since long and was confined to his house during the last 2 months, was also not spared. He was also picked up and brought to jail after 4 days of the incident implicating him for violence and conspiracy to murder. Dr. Karad, Thombre and 22 other have been lodged in central jail from 29.10.1997. This is just one example of Shiv Sena-BJP Government ganging up with

employers and their goonda gangs with full police support.

The working class in Nasik came out in protest and organised a 10,000 strong solidarity morcha and demonstration in and around Nasik on 5.11.1997 demanding the release of Dr. Karad and the other arrested leaders and functionaries.

The CITU gave a call for a statewide protest action on 15.11.1997. Accordingly, dharnas were staged and demonstration held in various parts of Maharashtra. The meetings and demonstrations held in this connection in Aurangabad, Jalna, Nagpur, Ichalkaranji, Kolhapur, Poona, Solapur and Nasik on that day were quite impressive. The dharna organised in South Mumbai at Churchgate near Mantralaya was joined by AITUC, HMS, Sarva Sramik sangh, HMKP, BUCTU and UTUC.

*(Report from P.R. Krishnan)*

## PF: Government Notification

The Government of India, Ministry of Labour have issued a notification dated 27.10.97 amending the Employees Provident Scheme, providing for the following:

1) Enhancing the rate of contribution from 10% to 12%

(Where the rate applicable is 8.33%, it is raised to 10%).

2) A person representing employers or employees shall be eligible for appointment as a member of the Central Board of Trustees for a maximum of not more than two terms, (However, a

sitting member of CBT will be allowed to continue his present term even if he has already completed two or more terms).  
3) Similar restriction of a maximum of two terms (term of office being 5 years) has been placed for the trustees in exempted establishments also.

## FOUNDATION STONE FOR BTR BHAVAN LAID

Describing it as an "historic occasion for the working class movement of the country," the CITU President E Balanandan laid the foundation stone for the B T Ranadive Bhavan at Rouse Avenue in the heart of the city which will serve as the headquarters of the CITU and a vibrant centre for the trade union movement as a whole. The function was held on 19.12.97, the 94th birth day of late Com.BTR. Despite the biting cold, a large number of workers and activists of the trade union movement gathered under the colourful shamiana covering the entire area in which the BTR Bhavan will be built. Many prominent personalities and guests were present on the occasion. The CITU President as well as the CITU General Secretary M K Pandhe were hopeful that the building would be ready soon. The construction will begin shortly.

Addressing the gathering, Balanandan said today which is the birth anniversary of Com.BT Ranadive, one of the foremost leaders of the working class movement and a Marxist theoretician in the world arena, was a rare occasion when "one of the dreams of the CITU is going to take shape." He said the BTR Bhavan would not only be the central office of the CITU but a centre for developing the trade union movement as a whole.

Referring to the current political situation, he said India was facing a grave situation. The basic tenets of the Constitution—democracy and secularism—were under threat. Pointing out that the nation's unity was based on the "rock of secularism," he lambasted the BJP for its communal politics and crass corruption (as evident from its MLA-buying spree in UP recently). What kind of a "stable government could such a party provide, he asked.

Asserting that the working class must take the lead in fighting for the country's unity and secularism, he said if democracy was lost the working class would suffer the most. Regarding the BTR Bhavan he said it would be a modern office with all the modern technology because in order to fight the bourgeoisie, the working class must be equipped with the best of modern equipment and technology. In order to construct the building with all the facilities, Balanandan appealed to "each and every worker" in

the country to help because BTR Bhavan was meant not just for CITU but for the entire working class of the country.

### VIBRANT CENTRE OF THE WORKING CLASS

In his speech, M K Pandhe dwelt at length on the problems and prospects before the working class in India and stressed the importance of BTR's central teaching—that the working class must be ideologically and politically educated and equipped to carry out its historic task of transforming society. He said some trade unions tried to propagate the view that workers should remain aloof from politics. But the truth is that the working class is the most advanced class which can lead the struggles to change society. The trade union movement must train the working class to undertake these responsibilities. BTR constantly stressed this imperative.

The BTR Bhavan, therefore, would not be just a building in the name of the great leader who guided the CITU for two decades but be a vibrant reflection of his teachings. To this end, the CITU hoped to set up a permanent school to educate working class cadres, a research unit to study hitherto neglected issues such as health safety, environment, technological changes etc and its impact on the working class, a fully equipped library, and other necessary departments in the BTR Bhavan. Pandhe also spoke of the challenges facing the trade union movement and said BTR's efforts to set up a Confederation of Trade Unions in order to unite the working class as far as possible was beginning to bear fruit. The five central trade unions had decided to meet once a month in Delhi to discuss issues facing the trade union movement. More and more united and joint actions with trade unions as well as with other mass organisations were being undertaken in order to fight back the massive onslaught by the World Bank-IMF-WQTO trio on the working people of India. Given the global nature of the offensive, there was need to step up coordination with trade unions throughout the world, he said, while stressing the important role expected to be played by the working class movement in the coming days. \*

# Consumer price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

## (Base 1982=100)

State	Sr.No.	Centre	Sep'97	Oct'97	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Sep'97	Oct'97		
AP	1	Gudur	359	366	PB	45	Amritsar	318	322		
	2	Guntur	358	361		46	Ludhiana	323	325		
	3	Hyderabad	332	336	RAJ	47	Ajmer	361	360		
	4	Visakhapatnam	348	353		48	Jaipur	348	349		
	5	Warangal	341	345	TN	49	Chennai	382	389		
ASM	6	D D Tinsukia	315	327		50	Coimbatore	350	355		
	7	Guwahati	365	366		51	Coonoor	369	375		
	8	Labac-Silchar	314	316		52	Madurai	360	367		
	9	Mariani Jorhat	340	346		53	Salem	352	359		
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	343	354		54	Tiruchirapally	400	403		
BHR	11	Jamshedpur	343	348	UP	55	Agra	337	337		
	12	Jharia	306	307		56	Ghaziabad	350	357		
	13	Kodarma	313	311		57	Kanpur	354	355		
	14	Monghyr	330	337		58	Sharanpur	325	329		
	15	Noamundi	337	337		59	Varanasi	371	371		
	16	Ranchi-Hatia	349	353	WB	60	Asansol	330	332		
GUJ	17	Ahmedabad	363	359		61	Calcutta	368	375		
	18	Bhavnagar	377	380		62	Darjeeling	307	313		
	19	Rajkot	352	355		63	Durgapur	380	384		
	20	Surat	373	378		64	Haldia	395	399		
	21	Vadodra	360	357		65	Howrah	370	373		
HRY	22	Faridabad	367	369		66	Jalpaiguri	323	323		
	23	Yamunanagar	336	339		67	Raniganj	317	321		
J&K	24	Srinagar	354	357	CHD	68	Chandigarh	358	359		
KAR	25	Bangalore	364	370	DEL	69	Delhi	387	397		
	26	Belgaum	384	385	PON	70	Pondicherry	429	434		
	27	Hubli-Dharwar	364	368			<b>ALL INDIA</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>365</b>		
	28	Mercara	378	387			<b>Additional Series of Labour Bureau</b>				
KER	29	Alwaye	373	373			AP	1	Kothagudem	363	374
	30	Mundakayam	382	396			HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	346	350
	31	Quilon	387	389			RAJ	3	Bhilwara	353	356
	32	Thiruvananthapuram	400	420			MP	4	Chhindwara	365	367
MP	33	Balaghat	352	352			TRI	5	Tripura	340	344
	34	Bhillai	327	327			GOA	6	Goa	427	423
	35	Bhopal	379	387			Government of India Ministry of Labour Labour Bureau Shimla				
	36	Indore	359	357							
	37	Jabalpur	356	355							
MHR	38	Mumbai	407	413							
	39	Nagpur	370	366							
	40	Nasik	383	384							
	41	Pune	390	401							
	42	Solapur	370	370							
ORI	43	Barbil	347	345							
	44	Rourkela	350	353							



December 3,  
Demos, Protesting  
Supreme Court  
Verdict Against  
Bandh

E Balanandan  
CITU President  
addressing the  
gathering  
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