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GLORIOUS MAY 21 GENERAL STRIKE!
RELENTLESS STRUGGLES. THE WAY FORWARD!

NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE, A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

The leaders of the Central Trade Unions viz. AICCTU, AITUC, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC and UTUC-LS, addressing the media persons at 4 p.m. on 21st May at the Press Club in Delhi, hailed the strike as a resounding success. In a joint press release issued at the meet, they stated: "The All India General Strike today (21st May) is a resounding success. Since the days of the freedom struggle, never before the workers, in agriculture, manufacturing, financial, commercial, and services sectors had risen en masse to give vent to their indignation as they have done today against the BJP-led NDA Government's thoughtless pursuit of the anti-national and anti-people policies.

According to reports pouring into the offices of Central Trade Unions, the operations in all the ports of the country were severely affected because of the total strike. Banking operations in the country came to a grinding halt. Despite the intimidation by the management, the employees of Reserve Bank of India, struck work along with the officers and employees in all commercial banks. Industries such as oil, power, coal, and other mining, steel, engineering and textiles experienced massive participation in the strike.

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Scores of unorganized sector workers have also joined the strike throughout the country.

"There are also reports of large-scale resort to intimidatory measures, arrests, etc by the police in different states to prevent the workers from joining the strike. Workers have bravely countered these measures.

"In several states, bandh or bandh like situation had been reported.

"Supporting the workers on strike, lakhs of kisans, agricultural workers, students, youth and women staged actions like rasta roko/rail roko in several parts of the country resulting in wide-spread disruption of transport.

1. Halt to privatisation of profit making and potentially viable public sector undertakings,
2. No change in labour laws in favour of employers and against the interest of the workers,
3. Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for the agricultural workers,
4. No to policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment,
5. Wider comprehensive social security schemes for all, including workers in unorganised sector,
6. Restoration of quantitative restriction on import,
7. Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings,
8. Restoration of 12% interest rate on PF deposits.

"We warmly congratulate the workers and employees in all sectors, and members of the other mass organisations for making this strike a remarkable event in the resistance struggle against the anti-people and anti-labour policies of the government. We deplore the attempt from some quarters to malign the strike as politically motivated. We appeal to the leadership of INTUC and BMS to come forward to join the mainstream of struggle at least from now on.

"The Central Trade Unions and independent unions and federations will soon meet again to chalk out the next phase of action programmes in pursuance of the common demands".

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JUNE 2003

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



What does it cost to build
a public health system
half as smart as a bomb?

Courtesy: Indian Express

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EDITORIAL

GLORIOUS MAY 21 STRIKE! FORWARD TO RELENTLESS STRUGGLES

Working people of India had magnificently responded to make 21st May strike a glorious success!

The Labour Minister in the NDA Government indulged in a vain attempt to dismiss this united resistance of the working class as 'an annual ritual of the Left'. Later, he had to come out with an announcement that the Prime Minister would soon be meeting the trade unions, including the BMS and the INTUC - even though they had formally disassociated from the strike. The Prime Minister, busy with the problem of keeping together the flock in his motley coalition, may or may not engage the trade unions in a dialogue.

The Economic Times chose to editorially comment on the strike even before the magnitude of the action unfolded on 21st May. Posing a question "Is there some disconnect between economic reforms which yield positive results, and the political response to it?", it passed a verdict that 'those who have called a strike do not represent the majority among the employees'.

The 'reforms' savvy scribes would do well to realise that the May 21 action witnessed not just a strike by the organised sector workers, but also by the majority of the workforce in both the rural and urban India. The peasantry, the rural poor, the unorganised sector workers, students, youth and women - all took to the streets to demonstrate their anger against the policies spelling disaster and ruin. In a sense, it was the people's rebuff to the chorus of 'the feel good factor' articulated by the reform-addicts. It gave vent to the sum total of the '**feel bad factors**' generated by these policies. That is why the empty prating indulged in by the leaders of BMS and INTUC could not distract even their own followers from joining the strike.

The Economic Times edit (on 21st May) further wrote: "By all accounts, the strike today is aimed more at testing the will of the NDA regime in pursuing further reforms, especially in the run up to several key assembly elections in the states". It patronisingly advised the Government: "The BJP-led coalition would do well to call the bluff of the opposition and, for once, prove that positive reforms, with the labour getting its due, is for the larger good of the people". It is precisely these assessments of the reform that 'they yield positive results' and are 'positive' that they are 'for the larger good of the people' and that 'labour can get its due by pursuing further reforms' have all been mightily challenged by the May 21 strike.

Yet, the task ahead of the working people of the country is still onerous. Relentless struggle is the only way forward. The trade unions must not allow any complacency to set in. The success of the May 21 strike should be followed by meticulously planned efforts to take the struggle to further militant heights. This brooks no delay.

Against anti-national economic policies

COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE, A MASSIVE SUCCESS

Tapan Sen

The call for General strike of 21st May 2003 has been magnificently responded to by the working class all over the country.

This has been the eighth countrywide General strike by the working class against the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. It has been the culmination of almost a one year long campaign and started with the involvement of all the trade union centers in the country. Eight point charter of demands aimed at reversal of the anti-national economic policies of the NDA Govt was formulated jointly by all the trade unions and it was an unanimous one. But when the time for concrete action on that commonly agreed charter of demands came to fore, the national leadership of both INTUC and BMS backtracked calling it "politically motivated". But the major section of the followings of INTUC and BMS did reject such rank opportunism of their leadership and joined with the strikers. Gopeswar, former General Secretary of INTUC, in a letter addressed to M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU on 15th May 2003, conveyed his strong support to the call for General Strike against 'economic imperialism'. The INTUC unions at Oil sector of Assam, In Bharat Electronics Ltd, Ghaziabad, at ONGC,

Tripura and many other places served strike notices and joined the strike. The near total strike in coal and port & dock sector where INTUC and BMS also are having followings established beyond doubt that the major section of their own ranks outrightly rejected such opportunist stance of not joining the united countrywide action. Thus the unity of the working class movement got a new dimension and reiterated the time-tested truth: "unity of the working class is meant for action and built through action only" and "such urge for action and unity at the grass root level can ensure and sustain tangible unity in the trade union movement" in the forthcoming struggle.

The strike turned into a complete BANDH in around six States like West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand owing to massive support from people from all walks of life. In AP, the Congress Party supported the Bandh-call. In the State of Orissa also a BANDH like situation emerged. Owing to participation in strike by the Roadways and public transport workers in Haryana and massive demonstration by the striking workers on the main roads, bandh-like situation was witnessed in various pockets of the State. In Karnataka also

there was BANDH in six districts like Bellary, Tumkur, Koppala, Gangavati, Uttarakannada, and Mysore. Reports have also been received from UP, Maharashtra, and other places about paralysing effect of the massive demonstration and blockade by the striking workers along with other sections of the people in various centers. Reports of arrests and lathicharges on the demonstrating workers and leaders were received from Ranchi (145 arrested), Dhanbad, Jamshedpur in Jharkhand, Patna in Bihar, Sundargarh, Rourkela in Orissa and Sonapat, Hissar in Haryana.

MASSIVE RESPONSE

The strike action was also massive in almost all the vital sectors of the economy.

◆ In the Electricity sector all over the country, overwhelming majority of the workers, including engineers in many of the States joined the strike enmasse.

◆ In Fertiliser sector, all the four plants of the giant National Fertilisers Ltd at Panipat, Bhatinda, Nangal and Pune, FACT units in Kerala and Namrup Fertiliser at Assam and Madras Fertilisers in Tamilnadu reported complete strike.

◆ In coal industry covering more than nine States from north to south and nine companies, more than eighty percent workers including those having allegiance to INTUC and BMS, participated in the strike. In BCCL, ECL and CCL, strike was almost hundred percent.

◆ In Steel industry, the steel plants in Durgapur,

Burnpur, Salem reported strike by more than eighty percent of the workers. Around 40% workers joined strike in Bokaro steel plant severely affecting crucial production deptts like coke-oven and blast-furnace, while in other places strike was partial. In the iron-ore mines in Orissa and Bihar and in the countrywide marketing centers of public sector SAIL, strike was complete.

◆ In all the major ports and docks of the country, strike was more than ninety percent, paralysing the operations in a big way.

◆ In the Oil PSUs, particularly in the refinery and marketing segments in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilanadu and Maharashtra, massive strike took place. In the ONGC units also strike was total in Assam, Tripura and West Bengal and partial in other places. INTUC union also joined strike in ONGC Tripura.

◆ Strike was almost total in all the Banks and Insurance companies in the financial sector, throughout the country.

◆ In Post offices and telecom offices and installations under BSNL all over the country, majority of employees joined the strike.

◆ More than eighty per cent of the 60 lakh State Govt employees in most of the States joined the strike in a big way including municipal and panchayat workers and local bodies, severely affecting the State administration.

◆ The Employees of

Central Govt offices all over the country also took part in the strike in a massive way at the call of the Confederation of Central Govt Employees and Workers.

◆ In all the public sector units, the response to strike was overwhelming and spontaneous. The Centres of PSU-clusters like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Calcutta, Chennai etc witnessed near-total strike.

◆ In almost all the Defence industry-units all over the country right from Uttaranchal to extreme south of the country strike was almost total.

◆ The women workers took part in the strike in a big way throughout the country. Anganwadi workers in lakhs took part in the strike and plantation sector also witnessed massive strike.

◆ The workers of the unorganised sector throughout the country viz., beedi, loading-unloading, contract workers in different trades, brick-kilns, forest workers, sweeping and cleaning and various other occupations joined the General strike and mobilised in a big way in the road-blockade, rail-roko demonstrations braving arrests and police-atrocities.

STATEWISE REPORTS

Statewise Reports received till the time of going to press:

In **West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura**, there was a total BANDH with the overwhelming response of the mass of the people of those States to the call for countrywide action.

Jharkhand: The General strike became a virtual bandh in most

parts of the State. Besides near total strike in coal sector under BCCL and CCL, the workers of the industrial areas of Ranchi, Hatia Bokaro, Dhanbad, Jamshedpur etc joined the strike in a big way. Among the workers of the unorganised sector particularly from Beedi and stone quarries strike was almost total and they joined in militant demonstration for road-blockade in many places in the State braving arrests and police atrocities.

Haryana: The strike in Electricity sector Statewide was complete. More than 85 per cent buses of Haryana Roadways were off the road. The industrial areas of Sonapat and GT Karnal Road including major units like Vogue Textile, Roland, Haryana Sheet Glass, Hilton Rubbers, Steel and alloys were practically closed. Complete strike in National Fertiliser Ltd at Panipat and the clusters of Handloom and Powerloom were paralysed. At Panchkula- Pinjore area, Bharat Electronics Ltd and HMT and along with its ancillaries in private sector, strike was almost total. In Faridabad industrial areas also workers took part in the strike in a big way including big industrial units like Escorts, Avery etc. Massive participation in strike is also reported from the Gurgaon-Dharuhera industrial belt. The Agricultural university in the state remained virtually closed. Brick kiln workers, workers of the construction sector and quarries and forest workers joined the strike *enmasse* and organised big demonstrations in all the district headquarters.

Delhi: Delhi and surrounding industrial centers like Ghaziabad, and Noida witnessed a massive response to the strike call. In most of the major industrial areas of the capital, like Okhla, Mayapuri, Naraina, Mangolpuri, Wazirpur, Kirtinagar, Samaipur-Badli, Friends Colony, Jhilmil etc., workers collected in huge numbers and took out processions, shouting anti-govt. slogans. In a few places clashes took place with local police acting at the behest of factory owners. Several hotels, offices, and other establishments were also affected. The strike was also successfully observed in industrial areas of Ghaziabad, like Sahibabad, public sector units like BEL and CEL, and State Govt. employees. Similarly strike affected industrial areas in all four phases of Noida, and various sectors of Faridabad. In all these places too workers took out huge processions. Delhi University employees also joined the strike in a big way.

Tamilnadu: Almost all the major industries in Tamilnadu like Ashok Leyland, Ennore Foundries, EID, MRF, Enfield India, Wimco, Carborandum Universal, Madras Fertilisers, GEC Alsthom, Rane Madras along with the public sector units in the state like BHEL, IOC, NLC witnessed massive strike. In the textile sector also response to strike was substantial. Madras Export Processing Zone was also severely affected. The strike in State Transport was partial. In Ambathur & Thiruvamiyur industrial estate workers joined the strike in a big

way. Demonstration were held in all districts.

Karnataka: General strike was successful throughout the state. The PSUs like HAL, BEML, BEL, ITI, BHEL, HMT witnessed near total strike. In six districts BANDH was observed. Only in Bangalore itself, road-blockade was organised in 13 places. Around 200 workers were arrested.

Andhra Pradesh: Bandh call was largely successful. More than 60% State transport workers were on strike, along with more than eighty percent workers in other public transport like auto-rickshaw etc. All the industrial areas throughout the State like Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Vijawada etc witnessed massive strike. Unorganised sector workers responded to strike call magnificently and joined in rallies and demonstration statewide. In all the PSUs like ECIL, HCL, BDL, Midhani etc Strike was near total.

Maharashtra: General strike call received a very good response throughout the State despite opposition from the leadership of INTUC, BMS and Shiv Sena. Mass of the workers from almost all the industrial units in Mumbai and suburban areas, Thane, Nasik, Pune, Nagpur, Ichalkaranji, Solapur, Kolhapur and other areas joined the strike. Port operation was completely out of gear. Food Corporation workers and the mathadi workers attached to it joined strike. Anganwadi workers and sugarcane workers also struck work and joined demonstration at many places. In the oil refineries, Banks,

insurance, strike was total. The State Govt employees and the central govt employees were mostly on strike. In Mumbai, at Andheri and Bhandup, road-blockade was organized and sixty were arrested by Police.

Chhattisgarh: Besides more than eighty per cent strike action by the coal mine workers throughout the state, the workers in all the industrial areas joined the strike. Striking workers of Balco staged day long dharna before the factory. In Dhamtari, Bilaspur, Raipur and other areas workers of Beedi, loading-unloading workers and other unorganised sectors staged complete strike and marketplace operation was severely affected. Militant demonstrations were organised in Raipur, Dhamtari, Korba, Bilaspur and other places.

Madhya Pradesh: Besides massive strike in the coal mining sector, and a total strike in Bank and insurance sector, good response to strike was also reported from the industrial areas at Bhopal, Gwalior, Guna, Rewa, Muraina, Bhind, Narasinghpur, Shahdol, Indore, Jabalpur and other places. The striking workers of Mandidwip and Gobindpura and adjoining areas marched in procession. At Bhopal, the striking workers courted arrest massively. Rail-roko was organised at Gwalior station., Rasta Roko was organized at Mahu subdivision of Indore and Shahdol jointly by the workers and peasants and mass scale arrests took place.

Uttar Pradesh: Good strike by industrial workers was reported from Kanpur, Lucknow,

Varanasi, Meerut, Agra, Jhansi, Bulandsahar, Sonbhadra etc. Rail roko was reported from Kanpur. At Banarasi, massive roadblockade was reported from Pindra, Saidupur, at 4 places at Chadoli District organised by peasants and agricultural workers along with striking workers.

Uttaranchal: Besides complete strike in the defence production unit, Banks and Insurance sector, massive strike was also reported from Garwal Mandal Vikash Nigam, Jal-Nigam. The strike in State transport, Roadways and BHEL Hardwar was partial. Strike was complete in Electricity, Hotels and Mining and Power Generation units.

Himachal Pradesh: In all the Hydel Projects in the State viz., Nathpa Jhakri, Parvati, Coal-dam, Lurgi, Chamara etc strike was complete. Hotel workers took part in the strike in Shimla and held massive rally before Panchayat Bhawan. Anganwadi workers joined the strike and held demonstration before district headquarters. In the industrial areas at Solan, Baddi Berotiwalla, Sirmaour etc, the response to strike was fairly good. PWD and health workers also went on strike.

Assam: The General Strike took the shape of a virtual BANDH throughout the State, particularly in the districts of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Darrang, Dhubri, Barpeta, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Cachar and Kamrup. Even education institutions were closed. Besides complete strike in Oil and Natural Gas installations,

Banks, Insurance etc, good response to strike call was also received in plantation and other industries as well. Demonstrations were held at several parts of the State braving arrests and police atrocities. Deben Bhattacharya, State General Secretary of CITU was also arrested along with leaders of other mass organisations.

Orissa: Good response to strike was reported from the industrial workers from Bhubaneswar, Rourkela, Cuttack, Dhenkanol, Kalta, Purnapani, Bolani, Balasore and other places. In the mining belt, both in coal, iron-ore and others, strike was almost total. Nalco remained paralysed in all its three units as the workers, officers and engineers joined the strike *enmasse*, and courted arrest. In the steel plant, strike was partial. Road blockades were organised at numerous centers in the State, leading to arrest of more than 5000 workers including Bishnu Mohanty, State General Secretary of CITU.

Rajasthan: The industrial areas of Sriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Khetry, Sikar, Bharatpur, Alwar, Udaypur, Kankroli and Jodhpur remained virtually closed. Among the major industrial units where strike was near total were Hindustan Copper Ltd at Khetry, J K Tyre at Kankroli and also the Kamani Engineering. The strike was so widespread among the workers of unorganised sectors throughout the State. Most of the big markets, godowns remained closed or inoperative.

Demonstrations and road-blockade were organised at various spots at Sriganganagar and Hanumangarh. At Jaipur, the striking workers held a massive rally at Saheed Minar Park.

In **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**, day long dharna was held by the striking workers of various industries and Govt employees at Mohanpura in Port Blair and Diglipur at North Andaman.

Reports of widespread strike and demonstration were reported from Punjab, Bihar and Gujarat also.

The sweep and coverage of the 21st May General Strike is unprecedented and it reflected the struggling mood of the mass of the workers all around. This success enjoins upon the trade union movement the responsibility to continue the initiative and carry the struggle to further militant heights. The momentum generated by the massive strike action must be pushed forward.

ASUTHOSH BANERJEE

Com. Asuthosh Banerjee, President of UTUC - LS, passed away after a prolonged illness at Kolkata on 8th May 2003. M K Pandhe and W R Varada Rajan visited the UTUC - LS to pay homage and convey condolences on behalf of CITU. Homage was also paid at a condolence meeting held in Constitution Club, New Delhi on 23rd May 2003.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF 21st MAY STRIKE

Swadesh Dev Roye

Indian working class movement has emerged as the leading patriotic force in India, defending the country, its sovereignty and the people, against the Fund-Bank-WTO dictated policies. The successive Governments at the centre, first under the Congress (I) and now by the BJP-led NDA, have been continuously pursuing the policies of imperialist driven globalisation. Yet the working class struggle against these policies have either defeated or at least delayed many areas of the disastrous reform moves. Even the IMF has recorded their anger against the trade union movement of India for their 'stiff opposition to the economic reforms' initiated by the Government. The 21st May strike is the 8th one since 1991, besides many other wide-ranging, innovative, diversified and multi-pronged forms of agitation and propaganda, carried out in different phases, each phase culminating in a one-day countrywide general strike. At every phase, new sections of the working class have joined the movement expanding its horizon.

Importantly, workers of different industrial sectors had organised many a high-pitch battle during last 12 years. Anti-privatisation struggles of the workers of Dallas Cement Factory, BALCO, NALCO, Coal India Ltd., the different State Electricity Boards, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and many other industries, as also the struggles in the banking and Insurance industries, are memorable. These sectoral struggles have supplemented and complemented the nationwide general struggles, manifesting total industry-level unity.

8-POINT DEMANDS

The 8-point demands for the 21st May strike comprise the most burning issues confronted by the entire working people. The entire trade union movement of the country, including the BMS and the INTUC, are also parties in formulating these demands. The INTUC participated in the National Assembly of Workers held on 15th July and thereafter even in the 26th February, 2003 March to Parliament. The BMS recently adopted resolutions demanding total ban on privatisation

of public sector industries, scrapping the disinvestments ministry of the government and debundling the group of secretaries and group of ministers. Yet, they both kept away from the strike.

The escape route articulated by the leadership of BMS and INTUC to stay away from the struggle is by ascribing 'political motivation' to all such struggles. Since the working class is seriously affected by the disastrous policies of Government, it is the political right of the working class to oppose such policies. By staying away from such struggles, the INTUC and BMS are espousing the political cause of the employers' class. Tendering lip service to the working class and rendering actual services to the capitalist class shall not be countenanced by the people for long.

THE BACKDROP

Faced with the intensified privatisation onslaught on even the profit making, strategically important public sector companies, the workers in these industries have ventured to fight back. For instance, in the case of energy sector, coal, electricity and oil & natural gas industries are top in the agenda for privatisation. The workers of these industries have embarked on protracted industry wise struggles. The latest has been the most successful 3-day strike jointly organised by 26 trade unions of Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation on 25-27 March, 2003, against privatisation of these two oil PSUs. Similar is the situation in the coal industry. The mighty united struggles launched by the electricity workers could block for quite some time the disastrous move of the so called reform of electricity industry aimed at privatisation. Now, the recently enacted Electricity Bill, 2003 has thrown a serious challenge before the countrymen in general and the workers of the industry in particular. The other strategically important sector is the financial sector, where the powerful unity achieved through the United Forum of Bank Unions has set a shining example before the trade union movement. The Insurance workers have also conducted one of the best anti-

privatisation movements in the country.

IN STRATEGIC SECTORS

The 21st May strike has conclusively demonstrated that the workers in the strategic sectors have responded in an unprecedented manner. The participation of the workers of the Financial, coal, oil & petroleum and electricity sectors in the strike have been massive. The other worth mentioning industries, where the strike witnessed resounding success, are Port & Docks, NALCO, NFL, FACT, MFL, Steel PSUs, BHEL etc. It is noteworthy that workers of some strategically important public sector industries have taken part in such strike for the first time, along with those who have been in the thick of anti-privatisation

movement. The present situation of extreme height of the attack and surge in the united resistance movement makes it imperative to bring together these strategic industry-wise united forums and go in for a joint struggle of all these workers.

Moreover, it is also very important to see that the continuity of the struggles must be ensured, taking forward the momentum generated by the 21st May strike. But above all, it is very necessary that the next course of movement will have to be innovative, taking the struggles ahead to much higher forms than what we had witnessed since 1991.

PF: INTEREST REDUCTION IN OFFING?

Even as the workers staged a glorious strike on May 21, reiterating, *inter-alia*, the demand, unanimously voiced by all the trade unions for restoration of the interest rate on provident fund to 12%, the Government is moving ahead to slash the rate further down. It is regrettable that the Government of India has chosen to turn a deaf ear to the united voice of the workers in the country.

By April end, the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) took an unprecedented step by stopping release of any interest-payment to members' account from the month of April 2003. It also advised the offices to settle the PF claims of the outgoing members - owing to superannuation, death or otherwise - in part, without crediting any interest for the period from April 2003 onwards.

When the present Labour Minister reconstituted the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the EPF, without the representation of AITUC and CITU, it was amply clear that the grand design behind it was just to ensure 'smooth sail' of such anti-worker moves like reduction of interest. The Finance and Investment Committee of the truncated CBT had made the retrograde recommendations - first of stopping the interest and next (on 22nd May) to further reduce the interest rate on Employees Provident Fund (EPF), in the name of making various projections of surplus/deficit.

CITU had forewarned that the ploy of getting the EPF interest rate question examined by a committee, including experts, was only to push through the rate reduction, already announced by the Finance Minister in his budget speech, on the 2.4 crore worker-subscribers of the EPF. The oft repeated assertions of the present Minister of Labour, Sahib Singh Varma, that he was against any reduction in the present 9.5 per cent interest-rate had only turned out to be dubious statements to mislead the gullible. If the Minister was sincere to his public postures, he ought to have pursued the matter with the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister and prevailed upon them not to reduce the interest on Special Deposits Scheme, in which over 80 per cent of the EPF corpus stands invested. With the successive doses of reduction in the interest rate bringing it down from the earlier 12 per cent, the Government is only seeking to grab around 2600 crore of rupees every year from the workers and use it for fiscal management.

It is a pity that the Presidents of the BMS and INTUC, who are members of the Finance and Investment Committee, have acquiesced with the Government move.

As we go to the press, the Central Board of Trustees is slated to meet on 31st May. It is incumbent on the members of the CBT, at least those representing the workers, to reject the proposal and urge the Government to restore the original rate of 12 per cent interest. CITU calls upon the working class to remain vigilant and unitedly rise in resistance, if the Government persists with this patently anti worker move.

'CRISIS' CONDITIONS OF THE TEA GARDEN WORKERS

K Hemalata

Assam is the largest producer of Tea in the country. Around 428.174 million Kgs of tea is produced in the State. Tea gardens are spread over 2, 31,890 hectares in almost all the districts. Around 5, 60,000 permanent workers and almost an equal number of temporary workers are employed in the tea gardens. Approximately 60% of the tea garden workers are women. Big national and multinational corporations like Hindustan Lever, Tata, Goodricke, etc along with a large number of medium and small producers have their tea gardens and factories in Assam.

But the tea garden workers continue to be mired in poverty and illiteracy. The Plantation Labour Act, which is supposed to provide some benefits to them, is not being implemented. The quarters provided in many estates are in dilapidated conditions; no repairs have been undertaken since many years. In most of the lines there is no drinking water facility. While in some estates like the Disam Tea Estate (TE) of the Andrew Yule Company, a Government of India undertaking, there is one tube well for 10-12 quarters. In many others like the Kharikhatia TE in Jorhat district, workers use the water in a nearby pond. This has caused gastro enteritis among the workers and five people died due to the disease within a few days recently. No medicine was available in the hospital for such a common disease as diarrhoea. Most of the quarters have no electricity or toilets. Hospitals do exist but medicines were not available. In several gardens, like those under the Assam Tea Corporation, a State Government Undertaking, the doctors and nurses have left the garden as their salaries were not paid for many months. Workers complained that though primary schools exist, the teachers were burdened with so much other work in the garden that they find little time to teach the children.

WOMEN WORKERS

Sexual harassment of women workers is quite frequent. According to Juliannie Kangadi, of Mornoi TE, some managers ask women workers to work in their homes and sexually abuse them.

Some supervisors and 'sardars' too are reported to use bad language and resort to sexual harassment of the women workers. But women rarely complain of such instances. 'What is the use?', asks Maya Tasha from Sakhomato TE in Sonitpur district, 'They only try to make a compromise.' Instead, when the women are united, they teach a lesson by giving a good thrashing to the culprit. But often, poverty forces the women to remain silent or compromise. The women workers do not know anything about the Supreme Court judgement on sexual harassment at work place. But when told about the judgement, they feel that complaints committees are necessary in the gardens.

In some gardens, there is a peculiar type of discrimination against women workers. In the Empire Tosimlo garden in Rangapada in Sonitpur district, when the son or daughter of a woman permanent worker is given job in her place, he or she is not allotted a quarter, whereas, the son or daughter of a male permanent worker is given a quarter. In the Mornoi TE in Kokrajhar district, the husband of a woman worker is not given ration, though as per the Act, the spouse of the worker is entitled to it. But the wife of a male worker is given ration.

Attacks on the rights of workers and attempts to curtail even the existing benefits have increased in the last few years. In several gardens, particularly in the gardens belonging to the Assam Tea Corporation, and some medium sized gardens, wages have not been paid since 2-3 years; in many others it is irregular. In Moriani TE, under the ATC, wages have not been paid since the last 3 years. Ration too is not being given since the last 3 years. Recently the garden has been handed over to a contractor. There is no crèche. Earlier the Government appointed 2 old women to look after the children, but now that facility is also withdrawn. Bonus has been reduced from 20% to 15%. Bonus has been reduced in Chapor TE of the Doars Tea Company in Dhubri district, though there is no wage cut. In Mornoi

TE, six months' wages are pending. Bonus has not been paid at all. No ration is being provided since November 2002. In Disam TE in Dibrugarh district too the wages are irregular and are paid only after the intervention of the union. In Rangapada, the Empire Tosimlo company has closed the dispensaries; at present there is only one hospital with 2 doctors for 8 gardens and only one ambulance for 2 gardens.

CRISIS IN INDUSTRY

The employers blame the 'crisis' in the tea industry as the reason for all this - The price of tea in auction has come down; tea is not being sold. The extortionist demands of the extremist outfits are also shown as one of the reasons for incurring losses. They force the workers to accept the reductions and curtailment of other benefits. When the union approaches with any demand, the managers threaten that in future they would get nothing. But the workers are sceptic. 'Why would they create new posts in the office, if they are incurring losses?', ask the workers. 'We are pressurised to work more. In the morning the whistle is blown 15 minutes earlier. The lunch break is reduced from 1 hour to half an hour. If the tea is not sold, why are we asked to produce more tea?' Some allege mismanagement and quarrels within the partners as the main reason. 'The earlier manager sold some machines and went away. Now the factory is not working fully. The workers are being asked to work on contract basis- Re. 1/- for 1 Kg of tea plucked. The garden is selling green leaves.' But most of the workers are confused. 'We do not understand whether what they say is the truth or not.' A large number of Bought Leaf Factories have come up, which do not grow tea but purchase the green leaf from thousands of small growers. On both sides of the Sibsagar- Jorhat road one sees scores of small tea gardens, even houses with tea gardens in their courtyards. Bought Leaf Factories and even big tea companies are buying tea from these small growers, sometimes through middle men. If they are incurring losses why do they buy tea from outside their gardens, is a question raised by many.

The Centre for Education and Communication, a labour support group, organised a Fact Finding Team to study the crisis in the Tea Industry in

South India. It provides some insights into the various aspects of the problem in the entire country as well. The report states that the planters have told that the over supply situation was the main reason behind the fall in tea prices. This was due to the falling exports, growing cheap imports, falling tea consumption in India and rising labour costs.

The report noted that the average exports have not fallen drastically to influence the tea market prices. Besides, out of the total of 16.58 million Kgs of tea imported in the year 2001, 16.24 million Kgs were re exported. It also notes with interest that the price paid by the importers for the tea bought from outside the country from the year 1997, has remained much higher than the average tea auction prices. The domestic consumption of tea in India has also been growing faster than the rate of growth of Indian tea production. On the argument of rising costs of production, the report quotes a study by the Tea Board of India, which states that most of the expenses incurred by planters are on establishment costs rather than for plucking and cultivation.

In 2002, AF Ferguson & Co, made a study of the tea auctions on behalf of the Tea Board of India. It has pointed out that the big brokers not only do the valuation of tea but also fix the tea prices even before the auctions. For example, five brokers decide the price beforehand, get the tea at the mutually agreed price, and then share it among them. Thus, the brokers keep the prices low and then sell it at higher prices to the foreign buyers. According to a report by the World Bank (1997) the processing and distribution of tea world wide, in 1990 was controlled by four major Corporations. These big tea corporations have remained mostly unaffected by the present crisis and have shown consistent profits.

The fall in tea auction prices has also led to multinational companies entering the made tea business in a major way.

The smaller and medium tea plantations completely dependent on tea auctions, are slowly closing down or are being abandoned. The big corporations are utilising the situation to increase the exploitation of the workers by curtailing their hard earned rights and benefits.

DOES THE BMS REALLY OPPOSE ANTI LABOUR POLICIES?

Ardendhu Dakshi

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) had, until early last year, been part of the joint trade union resistance to the 'economic reforms' vigorously pursued by the NDA Government. Even when the BMS leadership decided to pull out of the National Assembly of Workers held in July last year, they reiterated that the BMS was "against the anti-poor, anti-labour policies of globalisation and against the menace of WTO". They also reaffirmed that the "BMS commitment to continue the joint struggles on the industrial level depending upon the need of the situation shall continue as was in the past". (*Letter dated 27.6.2002 addressed to the central trade unions by Hasmukh Bhai Dave, President, BMS.*)

In fact, the eight-point demands around which the campaign and struggle had been built up during the recent past were just the same which were endorsed by the BMS, as also the INTUC. Strangely, the BMS has refused to join the all India general strike on 21st May 2003, which has been called by the AICCTU, AITUC, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC, UTUC-LS and independent unions and federations on the same demands. The BMS has not come out with any coherent explanation for not supporting the strike.

It may be recalled that the BMS

had joined the country wide strike by public sector workers on 16h April 2002, against disinvestment/privatisation of PSUs. The 21st May general strike is only a carry forward of that resistance to the Government policies. The Government of India has failed to pay heed to the demand by all sections of the working people for total reversal of the anti-people policies; it persists with its vengeful pursuit of these very policies, as is evident from the move to go ahead with the programme of privatisation/disinvestment of BPCL, HPCL and many other industries. In such a situation, it is but natural that all the central trade unions carry the struggle further ahead. When the situation has worsened, the BMS has, for mysterious reasons, disassociated from the path of struggle.

SOFT PEDALLING?

It is in this backdrop, the resolutions adopted by the BMS, in the meeting of their central working committee, held on 6-8 April, 2003 at Satara, make an interesting reading. In one of the resolutions adopted at the meeting, the BMS had demanded the Government to "reject theory and practice of FDI" and to "scrap the present disinvestments ministry of the government and debundle the group of secretaries and group of ministers". Very well, indeed!

But, how the BMS leadership proposes to pursue these demands? Here, the very first resolutions adopted by the BMS central working committee gives the clue. It, no doubt, notes that various social organisations and different trade unions have been opposing the foreign 'economic aggression'. But, the BMS exhorts all its workers to dedicate their personal lives to 'complete bharathiyatva' and to join the swadeshi jagran manch yatras from April to June, 2003! The BMS has been mandated by its 'gurus' in the RSS to disassociate from the joint trade union action programmes and take to the 'saffron agenda' in toto!

The BMS has also chosen to soft pedal on the issue of the report of Second National Commission on Labour. The resolution on this subject, for the record reiterates that 'the report contained certain contentious issues'. It also recalls that 'the BMS had submitted dissenting note'. But, the resolution lavishes praise on Sahib Singh Varma in the following words: "At the instance of the present Labour Minister lot of discussions on the report took place and some bills were drafted". The resolution commends that the report "needs serious consideration by the social partners". For the record, the BMS demands that the Labour Management Relations Bill - and not the entire report - before the next Indian Labour Conference for discussing the 'contentious issues'. But, the resolution elucidates the BMS stand further

as under:

a) Implement non controversial recommendations at the earliest.

b) The Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, Social Security Bill and bill on workers participation in management drafted by the Labour Ministry with modification made in various discussions held with the partners in labour field, be placed before the Parliament immediately and get passed.

According to the BMS these bills are 'not controversial' and 'are welcomed by all the social partners' and enactment thereof 'will create history'.

PARTISAN POLITICS

These are nothing but blatant exercises in political partisanship. Firstly it is patently wrong to term these bills as 'not controversial'. The Labour Ministry had till date not made any modification to the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, a draft of which was circulated to the central trade unions. To our knowledge no new bill on workers participation in management has been drafted by the Labour Ministry nor had the stand of the NDA Government on the earlier bill, introduced during 1990, been clarified. The 'Social Security Bill' that the BMS resolution lauds has also not been forwarded to the central trade unions.

On the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill itself, the five major central trade unions including the BMS, had, in a joint letter dated as far back as 22nd January, 2003, communicated to the Ministry of Labour the

following major shortcomings:

1) None of the basic features of either the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour or the conclusions of the National Seminar on Unorganised Workers held during November, 2002 are reflected in the draft bill.

2) There is no provision for regulation of employment and minimum employment earnings.

3) The bill enables the Government to assume absolute authority to decide about the application, modification and alteration of the existing structures in force, which is most objectionable.

4) The emphasis is on contributory social security and welfare.

5) The provision for the state to bear the burden of contribution for both the workers and the employers, where the employers are not identifiable, is absent.

6) Even to cover the welfare part, lot more modifications are required in which trade unions have to be essential partner.

Even subsequently the BMS is a signatory to a joint letter, dated the 5th March, 2003, suggesting that the Draft Bill and the entire report of the Labour Commission be placed (for discussion in Indian Labour Conference).

The present *volte face* on the part of the BMS points only to one inference - the BMS leadership is desperate to oblige the BJP Govt. to push ahead with the implementation of the Labour Commission report,

albeit in part.

The resolution of the BMS meeting on the interest rate on Employees Provident Fund is also reflective of the same urge. It only demands that there should be no reduction in the present rate of interest (i.e. 9.5 per cent), thereby giving a go bye to the demand for restoration of 12 per cent. Moreover, the BMS demand is that the EPF Organisation should have the freedom to decide the interest based on the return on investment. The fact is that when the Government, has reduced the rate of interest payable over 80 per cent of the EPF investments to just 8 per cent, such 'freedom' has no substance. This is nothing but a dilatory tactics.

Thus, the BMS is playing the proverbial game of hunting with the hound and running with the hare. It opposes Government policies, sometimes in shriller voice than others, but is keeping aloof when the question of movement comes against those policies.

The situation today demands an all out struggle by the workers. But, the BMS leadership consciously opts to leave the arena of this united struggle, under one pretext or the other. We can only suggest to the BMS leadership: "It is never too late to mend; please rethink and join the united movement, for the sake of our country and the people". We only hope that they are at least free to listen and they have not had their ears plugged by the RSS high command!

1.5% FALL IN ORGANISED SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

Arise in voluntary retirement schemes (VRS) and closure of industrial units led to a reduction in jobs in the organised sector by over 420,000 in 2001-02, an official study said. As per the latest quick estimates of employment available with the directorate-general of employment and training in the labour ministry, though the decline is only 1.5 per cent during the period under review, the reduction in jobs in the organised sector has been going on for five years. The statistics pertain to all establishments in the public sector, irrespective of the size of establishments, and non-agricultural establishments in the private sector employing 10 or more workers.

However, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Laskhadweep are not covered under the Employment Market Information programme.

In case of women, the employment in the states and the Union Territories during the period under review has fallen by 35,000 from 5.07 million on March 31, 2001, to 5.03 million on March 31, 2002. With 97 per cent of the country's total workforce eking out a living in the unorganised sector, the organised sector accounts for a meagre 7 per cent of the overall employment in the country.

An analysis of the employment scenario indicates that mining and quarrying registered the highest decrease of 5.1 per cent, followed by 2.6 per cent in manufacturing.

Public sector banks have shed over 100,000 jobs between 2000-01 and 2001-02 through voluntary retirement schemes.

Official figures show that around 90,000 employees in various public sector undertakings took voluntary retirements in 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

According to the salient features mentioned in the latest employment review, the number of establishments in the organised sector as on March 31, 2001, was 287,000 with the public sector accounting for 172,000 and the private sector 115,000.

The report said the overall growth of

establishments was 2.1 per cent from March 2000 to March 2001.

Total employment in the organised sector was 27.7 million on March 31, 2001, registering a 0.61 per cent decline from 27.9 million on March 31, 2000. At the end of March 2001, the public sector employed 19.1 million people and the private sector 8.65 million people. The negative growth of employment in the public sector was 0.91 per cent, whereas the private sector registered a marginal growth of 0.07 per cent over the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Zone-wise analysis of the growth of employment in the quarter ended March 2001 over the quarter ended March 2000 indicates the highest decrease of 3.01 per cent in the central zone, followed by 1.06 per cent decrease in the western zone and 0.84 per cent in the northern zone.

The north-eastern zone recorded an increase of 2.25 per cent in employment.

State and Union Territory-wise analysis reflects that only Pondicherry, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh recorded a decrease of more than 3 per cent. Decrease in employment over 1 per cent was conspicuously notable in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

More than 3 per cent growth in employment was observed in Orissa and over 1 per cent increase was noticed in Assam, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Kerala and Manipur, the report said.

An analysis of the growth of employment by various branches of the public sector reflects that local bodies recorded a positive growth of 0.24 per cent.

Quasi government (central) registered a highest negative growth of employment (3.59 per cent) followed by state government, quasi government (state) and central government, which recorded a negative growth of 0.47 per cent, 0.41 per cent and 0.38 per cent, respectively.

As on March 2001, 4.94 million women employees were engaged in the organised sector, of which 2.85 million were in the public sector and 2.09 million in the private sector.

The growth of women's employment over the

previous year in the private sector alone was registered at 1.18 per cent and the public sector indicated an increase of 0.08 per cent during 2000-01, the report said.

It is, however, encouraging that women employment reflected an increase in almost all the zones of the country with the exception of the central zone, which reflected a decrease of 0.18 per cent over the corresponding quarter of the

previous year.

An increase of 3 per cent and above in women's employment was observed in Orissa, Kerala, Karnataka and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Women's employment in all major industry divisions registered an appreciable growth during the quarter ended March 2001 over March 2000, the report pointed out.

(PTI Release dated May 16, 2003)

HEADS — I WIN, TAIL - YOU LOSE !

India is being denied market access in USA and European Union market for textile and thus losing heavily. The flagrant violation of WTO rules is being made by USA and also the European Unions in the matter of progressive lifting of restrictive quota regime for textile articles in their market, lamented the officials of Commerce and Textile Ministry of Govt of India (*The Financial Express*, 25-04-2003).

The WTO agreement envisaged progressive elimination of restrictive quota system in textile trade as a part of its avowed objective of total import liberalization. Indian Govt with a kneeling down posture have eliminated quantitative restrictions on all imports to India including textiles, for around 1439 items in 2001 itself to please their Washington bosses. On the other hand their bosses in Washington and Europe did just the opposite. As per figures supplied by the Commerce Ministry, the European Union and USA are still continuing with impunity the quota-barrier in their market on majority number of items of textile exports from the developing countries including India. As for example, the European Union has lifted quota restriction from only 54 items out of total 219 textile items till 2001. USA's record of such lifting of quota on import in their country is more dismal. As stated by the officials of Commerce Ministry, it is nothing but "derogation" of WTO rules by the USA and EU (*Financial Express*, 25-04-2003). After all the WTO rules are for the spineless Governments like that of India to oblige and for the USA and EU to flout with impunity.

"The economic reservation about Free Trade Agreements with USA- except in the case of wholly urban countries like Singapore which signed a watershed pact with the US last week - is that the rich nations cling to their substantial farm subsidies while insisting that poorer countries that depend heavily on food exports liberalise their services sector and protect Western patents for medicines and other products." (*Sunanda Dutta Roy, Business Standard*, 17-05-2003). The same "Head I win, tail you lose" formulae indeed !

But the matter does not end there. In the era of imperialist globalisation, the shamelessness does not have any limit for the so called globalisers and their native touts. In the meeting of American Chamber of Commerce in India held at New Delhi on 24th April 2003, the Deputy Chief of the US Embassy Mr. Albert Thibault shamelessly pleaded for even greater access for the US goods in Indian market while lamenting that the 'growth of US export to Indian market is not satisfactory'. (*Business Standard*, 25-04-2003). The Indian Minister for information & Broadcasting, Ravishankar Prasad could not gather enough guts to ask as to why the US has been playing overactive in clipping the Indian access to US market in respect of steel, textile and various other items through different kind of non-tariff barriers in utter violation of WTO rules. He only reiterated his Govt's servile commitment to the so called US sponsored 'Reforms' prescriptions.

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MAY DAY CELEBRATION COUNTRYWIDE

Participation of workers and employees in May Day programme this year was more impressive than previous so many years. Colourful processions, well attended mass meetings and in many centres street drama staged by cultural workers made the programmes significantly different. Strident call for successful strike on 21st May was echoed in all meetings, demonstrations, processions across the length and breadth of the country. West Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka etc witnessed massive joint rallies of workers in the State capitals. In other states also May Day celebrations have been organised with special initiative as a launching pad for the countrywide General Strike on 21st May. We give below some reports received.

Assam: Thousands of women workers in the Tea Plantations in Assam participated with great enthusiasm in the May Day programmes. Despite heavy rain and winds, a large number of tea garden workers in the Rangling Tea Estate in the Dibrugarh District participated in the meeting with their umbrellas. Hemalata, Secretary, CITU and President, All India Plantation Workers' Federation also participated in the meeting. In Biswanath Chariali, around 5 thousand workers marched in a colourful procession and participated in the meeting

organised by the CITU affiliated Tea Garden Workers' Union. In Choibari Tea Estate in Bongaigaon District, 4 thousand tea garden workers took part in a procession and held a meeting under the banner of the Assam Naomi Cha Mazdoor Union, affiliated to CITU. The manager of the Choibari TE refused to provide the premises or supply water for the workers, though vehicles were made available to the INTUC Union to ferry their members to the meeting. Most of the workers in these meetings were women.

Bihar: In Patna Central trade unions, excepting INTUC & BMS, all major federations and state and central govt. employees confederations organised procession with respective flags and banners. The procession had, in its front, the specially painted banner of united May Day Celebration Committee. The processions converged to Railway Station. Arun Kumar Mishra addressed the gathering along with others. He explained the heinous attack on Iraq and the dangerous game of the imperialists led by U.S. giving details of the domestic situation faced by the workers. He appealed to make 21st May strike a grand success.

Chhattisgarh: May Day programme was organised in all the important industrial centres in Chattisgarh. The programmes started with Prabhat Pheri, and

flag hoisting at union offices. Gate meetings, mass meetings, seminars and rallies were organised in Raipur, Dhamtari, Bhilai, Korba, Balco, Chirimiri, Bistrampur, Ambikapur, Charcha, Raigarh, Bilaspur and other places. All the programmes were jointly organised by all central trade unions and federations as well as central and state govt. employees' unions. Others present were notably Anganwadi employees, members of Income Tax, Auditors', Postal, BSNL, Insurance and Medical representatives' unions. S. Kumar, M.K. Nandy, B. Sanyal, D.R. Mahapatra, A.K. Shukla, J.S. Sodhi and others addressed the meetings. 21st May strike and the issues therein were highlighted in all the meetings which called upon all the workers to make it totally successful.

Delhi: Delhi witnessed a big colourful procession starting from Ramlila Maidan behind the big banner of Joint Committee for May Day Celebrations. All but INTUC and BMS unions participated in the rally which was also attended by LIC, Bank, Govt employees' federations. Attendance of a large number of factory workers from places like Ghaziabad, Noida highlighted the occasion. The procession, winding through the crowded thoroughfares of old city reached the Town Hall and a mass meeting was organised. A Dakshi from CITU, Abani Roy from

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UTUC, Y.D. Sharma from AITUC, A.D. Nagpal from HMS and others addressed the gathering. The speakers emphasised the need to make 21st May strike successful in view of the severe attack on the working class in the matters of wage, service conditions, social securities and their living conditions. The imperialist attacks led by US on Iraq was explained and in that background the importance of unity of working class was reminded by the speakers. A call was given to INTUC and BMS to reconsider their decision and join the 21st May strike in the interest of working class of India. A drama 'Ek Mazdoor Ki Maut' was staged by Jana Natya Manch after the mass meeting which attracted a big crowd. In the morning a big mass meeting was held at site-IV Ghaziabad which was addressed by P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU.

Madhya Pradesh: The State Capital Bhopal witnessed a massive rally organised by CITU before the Chief Ministers' residence demanding proper enforcement of labour laws and punishment of the law-violating employers in various sectors. The rally was addressed by CITU state President Promod Pradhan, among other leaders. In the morning itself flag hoisting had taken place at various factory gates and workers moved out in rallies. In the adjoining industrial areas of Mandidwip and Gobindpura, massive processions of workers moved through the entire industrial

areas campaigning for the general strike of 21st May. In the Colliery areas of Madhya Pradesh. May day rallies and meetings have taken place in all the collieries in a big way. In the May day meeting held in Pathakheda, CITU state General Secretary Badal Saroj addressed the workers. Reports of massive workers' processions and rallies were also received from Shahdol, Kotma, Muraina, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Indore, Mandso, Damoh, Nagda and other places. The rally in Jabalpur was addressed by Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU.

Tamilnadu: Mayday was celebrated with usual enthusiasm in various parts of Tamilnadu. There were flag hoistings, rallies and demonstrations in various centres. In Chennai, CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, UTUC (LS) and fraternal organisations of middle class employees organised a massive procession, which culminated in a public meeting which was addressed by N.Sankariah, W.R.Varada Rajan (CITU), S.S.Theagarajan (AITUC) and others.

Similar processions and meetings were held in all the other districts. T.K.Rengarajan attended the Mayday celebrations in Madurai, A.Soundararajan in Kancheepuram district and A.K. Padmanabhan in Vellore. Except in two districts, joint processions and meetings were held and these meetings were addressed by leaders working in Kisan Sabhas, Women organisations and other

mass organisations, fraternal to CITU and AITUC.

Trade union offices and factory gates were decorated and flags hoisted. Thousands of hand bills were distributed. The main theme of the celebrations this year was the anti-war, anti imperialist struggles and the General Strike on 21st May. Meetings in connection with the Mayday celebrations continued along with the preparations for the General Strike.

Uttar Pradesh: Massive rally was held in Kanpur drawing participation of several thousand workers. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU addressed the rally. In Sonbhadra district, meetings and rallies were organised in the NTPC gates at Shaktinagar, Rihand, Anpara project of the UPSEB and also in the colliery areas under NCL. At Anpara, the May-day rally was addressed by Swadesh Devroye, Secretary CITU. Report of May day celebrations was also received from Meerut.

Uttaranchal: As per report received so far, a mass meeting was organised at Hardwar Nagar Palika Ground and was addressed by the leaders of BHEL, Nagar Palika Unions and also the leaders of CITU, AITUC, HMS and various independent unions. Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU addressed the rally at Hardwar.

J.K. Tyre workers: Workers of JK Tyre factory in Rajsamand (Rajasthan) observed May Day with great enthusiasm organised by

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J.K. Tyre Karmachari Ekta Union (CITU). They assembled at the main gate and hoisted the red flag. Murlidhar Mali presided over the function where many leaders

including M.S. Jhala, Hargovind Paliwal, Sukhlal, Vinod Jain, Govind Purohit, Gajendra Chowdhury and Devendra explained the importance of May

Day and the task of the workers in the present crisis arising out of globalisation. They called upon workers to make 21st May strike a great success.

GOVT OWES WORKERS RS. 1750 CRORE, AS PF DUES

The Union Labour Minister informed in parliament on 8th May that in total Rs. 1750.14 Crore is remaining unpaid statutory dues to workers of 65 Central Public Sector Enterprises as on 30.6.2002. A Committee of Ministers (usually known as GOM - Group of Ministers) was to look

into the matter and recommend how to clear the outstanding dues. Many months have passed but the GOM could not sit and finalise their recommendations. The workers are left in the lurch, running from pillar to post for their unpaid statutory dues. They are not Ambanies or Tatas or Mittals,

then why should the govt. care for them. It is not difficult to understand why the private owners are boldly flouting all the statutory responsibilities and payments. Why should they bother to obey the laws when central govt. has no compunction to meet the primary obligation of paying wages, PF and gratuity and so on to their workers.

ANGANWADI: ASSAM STATE CONFERENCE

The Second State Conference of the Assam Rajyik Anganwadi Karmi Aru Sahayika Santha (ARAKASS), affiliated to the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers and CITU, was held on the 10-11 May 2003 at Bongaigaon. The Conference had to squeeze its proceedings because of the State Bandhs on both the days.

On the 10th May the Minorities' Students' Union gave a call for State Bandh against the repeal of the Illegal Migrants (Detection by Tribunal) Act. Many of the bus owners refused to ply the buses from different parts of the State to Bongaigaon and returned the advance. The family members of

many anganwadi employees did not allow them to venture out to participate in the procession and rally scheduled on the 10th May. In spite of this more than two thousand anganwadi workers and helpers from 13 districts participated in the colourful procession that wound through the streets of Bongaigaon. A large number of Bodo women marched along with their non Bodo, Bengali and Assamese sisters, shouting slogans against the anti worker policies of the State and Central Governments. The procession culminated in a rally which was addressed by the General Secretary of AIFAWH, Hemalata, General Secretary of the State

Committee of CITU, Deben Bhattacharya, Working President of the Union, Tapan Sharma, and its General Secretary, Pushpa Lata Das. The President of the Union, Madhuri Devi presided. The enthusiasm of the anganwadi employees was reflected in the fact that a large number from far off places reached Bongaigaon on the 11th as they could not participate in the rally on the 10th and patiently waited outside the gate for a chance to hear the leaders. Another Bandh for 60 hours starting from 6 PM on the 11th May was called for by another organisation against the Bodo Tribal Council. Due to this the Conference which was scheduled

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to end at 7 PM on the 11th had to be concluded by 2 PM.

Hemalata inaugurated the Conference. Tapan Sharma, Madhuri Devi, Mridula Hati Barua, Sumitra Kakoti, Binu Tamoli, Sonasri Brahmo, and Bharati Deka formed the presidium. Pushpa Lata Das presented the report. She criticised the policies of the Congress Government in the State which was following the same anti people policies as the BJP led Government at the Centre. The State PSUs are being privatised, there was a ban on recruitment, attempts were on to drastically reduce the work force, electricity tariff was hiked, and the educational and health facilities hitherto provided by the State were being abolished.

She lamented that the State

Government has not yet paid the enhanced honorarium. On the other hand the CDPOs were already bargaining for their 'share' when the arrears would be paid. A large number of anganwadi employees employed in 2001 do not get their honorarium. Supplementary Nutrition was not supplied for months, attracting the ire of the people. Attempts are on to hand over the centres to the Panchayats. She pointed out that some relief in the form of regular payment in the older projects, extra remuneration for extra work etc. could be obtained due to the struggles launched in the State by the Union. She gave a call to strengthen the Union and get ready for stronger struggles to get the enhanced honorarium and the arrears.

19 delegates from all the districts participated in the discussions and strengthened the observations made by the General Secretary with their own experiences. They said that the CDPOs were forcing them to work in the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, a literacy campaign of the State Government, without any extra remuneration. This work overlapped the working hours of the anganwadi centres and affected the work in the centres. The General Secretary's report was adopted unanimously along with the accounts and future tasks. A 45 member new State Committee was also elected unanimously. Tapan Sharma, Madhuri Devi and Pushpa Lata Das were re-elected as the Working President, President and General Secretary.

CHANDIGARH:

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION OF ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES

Around five thousand Anganwadi workers and helpers from all the districts of Haryana held a massive demonstration at Chandigarh in front of the office of the Director, Women and Child Development, Haryana on the 16th of May 2003. They were demanding the repayment of the money illegally deducted by the State Government from their arrears.

The enhanced honorarium for the anganwadi workers and helpers is being implemented in Haryana.

The arrears have also been paid. But the State Government had deducted with retrospective effect the amount it was paying to them for the extra work they were asked to do by the State Government. This, despite the fact that the Government Order clearly mentions that this enhancement is 'over and above the existing monetary incentive being provided by some State Government/ UT Administrations from their funds'. This is not the first time that the Haryana Government has resorted

to such a reprehensible measure. In 1997 too when the honorarium was last enhanced by the Government of India the State Government deducted the money that was being paid by the State Government. The anganwadi workers and helpers in the State under the banner of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, Haryana, launched a massive struggle and the State Government was forced to retract its steps and pay back the entire money due to them. But this did not prevent the

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State Government from trying to steal the money from the poor women once again.

Pushpa Dalal, President of the Union presided over the meeting. Jagmati Malik, General Secretary of the Union, Satveer Singh,

General Secretary, Haryana State Committee of CITU, Hargobind Kaur, Secretary, AIFAWH, Hemalata, General Secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU

and several other leaders addressed the gathering. Later thousands of anganwadi employees marched to the Assembly near Matka Chowk and submitted a memorandum to the Minister.

ANGANWADI: TRADE UNION CLASSES IN HINDI

The All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers organised a Central Trade Union School for the activists of the Unions in the Hindi speaking States at BTR Bhawan, the Central Headquarters of CITU at

Delhi, on 24- 28 May 2003. More than 50 activists from Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab, participated in the 5 day school. Leaders of the

Federation, CITU and AIDWA - Kanai Bannerjee, Tapan Sen, W.R. Varada Rajan, Hemalata, Indrajeet Singh, A.R. Sindhu and Jagmati Sangwan took classes on different subjects.

WORKSHOP FOR TEA GARDEN WORKERS

"We did not get our wages since the last 4 months. There is no management. Even buses stopped plying because we are not able to pay the fares. So our children cannot go to school. The doctor and the nurses have left the hospital as they were not paid their salaries. There is no end to our sorrows. What can we do...?" Malati Tanti from Katnibari TE, of the Assam Tea Corporation.

'When my child became sick, there was no medicine in the garden hospital. I had no money. Somebody gave me Rs. 50/- and I bought some medicine. But this cannot go on forever. Day and night we pray to God to cure our

gardens first, so that our problems could be solved.' This was Kamlesh Gwala from an Assam Tea Corporation garden from Jorhat district of Assam.

'Everyday one or two people die in the garden. The manger refuses to do anything. He says it is the responsibility of the Committee. The Committee says 'Go to the hospital. We have sent medicines.' Hospital says 'There is no medicine'. Wages are not paid regularly since the last 3 years. We did not receive any wage since the last 3-4 months. This is not only our problem. We must all get united and fight along with the others.' - Dhiren Tanti, Saikata TE (ATC)

'Our problems are common. Go house to house and try to organise under this Union. We have to understand the causes for this state of affairs. We must fight. We have seen the INTUC Union for a long time. Under INTUC our conditions have only deteriorated. We should not support them any longer. Each and every garden should first identify their specific problem and first try to deal with it. No timely salary. Ration is also given late. No bonus. We must raise these issues at the time of elections.' - Rita Sawra, Gobindpur TE.

These were some of the voices of tea garden workers in the

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workshop organised by the Jorhat District Committee of CITU on the 4th May 2003 at Moriani, to discuss the problems of the tea garden workers and the future course of action by the Union. The tea gardens in the district, under the Assam Tea Corporation have become sick. In some gardens the Union takes initiative to organise plucking, sells the leaf to other factories and the workers get some money from the proceeds. The conditions of the workers are pathetic. Workers go to the forests to collect fuel wood, sell it in the nearby town and buy some food. Or they collect wild tubers or some types of leaves, boil them and eat. Some go to the nearby town in search of work. If they are

lucky, they get a day's work. But such occasions are not quite frequent.

100 workers, around half of them women, participated in the workshop. Radha Prasad Sahu, President of the Union, Rameshwar Bhuyian, a tea garden worker and Haren Gogoi acted as the presidium. Madan Pal, Secretary of the Union explained the purpose of the workshop. Paresh Barua, Secretary of the District Committee of CITU told that the fact that 5 workers have died due to diarrhoea in one garden within a span of a few days reflects the pathetic state of affairs in the tea gardens. It was necessary to intensify struggles keeping in view the difficult situation.

Hemalata, President, All India Plantation Workers' Federation told that the policies of the BJP led NDA Government have led to crisis in different sectors. Unemployment and poverty have increased. The big employers were trying to utilise the situation to increase the attacks on the workers and improve their profits. She urged them to strengthen the Union and join the struggles against the anti worker policies of the Government by participating in the All India General Strike on the 21st May 2003.

Prakash Rajkhowa explained about the history of the plantation labour movement in India and the Plantation Labour Act.

VEPZ: WOMAN EMPLOYEE PAID MEDICAL EXPENSES

Nirmala, 22, has been working in the Diamonds Company in the Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone for the last six years. Due to her skill, she was transferred to the job of training the new workers in the Israel Diamond Company, which she has been doing since the last three years. On the 17th of March this year, she had some work at home and took leave after informing the management. The next day, as usual, she went to the Company for work. As soon as she resumed her duty, the MD, Daniel Sacher called her and started shouting at

her. She was shocked and collapsed on the ground. The Personnel Manager kept her in the room for 2 hours, without informing the doctor or giving any first aid. The Security guard saw her shivering and paralysed. When the Personnel Manager was informed about her condition, he called a boy from her village, dropped them up to Kummarapalem, which is the main approach road for VEPZ. The boy had to literally carry Nirmala on his hands to her home, which was around 20 Km. from the junction. The parents of Nirmala immediately took her to

the King George Hospital, where she was admitted. Her right side was completely paralysed and she also lost her speech.

The Personnel Manager visited the hospital once but did not offer any financial assistance. The workers visited her and expressed their sympathies but they did not inform the Union as they feared repression from the management. The Union came to know about the incident only after 10 days. Immediately the Union leaders met the parents of Nirmala, who were outraged at the treatment meted out to their daughter. They

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demanded justice. The Union printed a leaflet and distributed it widely among the general public. A delegation comprising of CITU leaders, members of the district coordination committee of working women and the Mahila Sangham, along with Nirmala and her mother, met the Development Commissioner. The DC discussed with the MD of the Israel Diamond Company and promised that the

Company would meet the medical expenses up to Nirmala's recovery and she would be allowed to join the same work after full recovery. The parents refused to take the money sent by the management through a supervisor, until the MD apologised for his behaviour. After two days the MD called Nirmala's parents, gave them her salary for the month of March, apologised for his behaviour and assured that all

the promises made by the DC would be implemented. He also paid Rs. 10,000 towards the medical expenses up to that day. Nirmala is now recovering slowly and is undergoing physiotherapy. The management had to change its attitude after the intervention of the Union. It has also taken back two other girls who were dismissed from service earlier.

CITU - ILO ACTION PROGRAMME ON CHILD LABOUR: A VISIT TO NFEC CENTRE IN ASSAM

Julius Thidke appeared to be 9-10 years, though he could not say how old he was. For the last four years he has been working in the Disam Tea Estate in Dibrugarh district of Assam. He used to do odd jobs like manual weeding etc. for which he was paid Rs. 10/- per day. His mother is a permanent worker, engaged in plucking. His father is sick and can not move out from the house. He has two sisters and a brother. The wages his mother gets are not enough to feed the entire family of six. His elder sister too works. He attended the NFEC run by the CITU with the

support of the ILO. The secretary of the garden branch of the union was able to convince his parents to send him to the regular school this year, along with the other children in the garden. 25 children, some who had been attending the NFEC and some others of 5-7 years of age were enrolled in the regular schools, with the initiative of the CITU. School bags and water bottles were distributed to these children by K Hemalata, National Project Coordinator, on the 3rd May 2003 in a meeting of the plantation workers, including the parents of the children. School

bags and water bottles were also distributed to the 25 child labourers who were enrolled in regular schools in a meeting held at the Sakhomato Tea Estate in Sonitpur district of Assam on the 6th May 2003, where the CITU had been running another NFEC with the assistance from ILO. In both the meetings Hemalata and other speakers emphasised the importance of sending the children to schools instead of work. They called upon the plantation workers to strengthen their organisation and fight to improve their conditions.

COAL WORKERS FIGHT PRIVATISATION

Employees under the banner of Coal Mines Authority Limited Employees' union organised a

protest demonstration on 25th April, 2003 in front of Eastern Coalfields Head Quarter against

disinvestment of CMPDIL. Union Minister of Coal had agreed with unions in August 2002 that their

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would be no privatisation in Coal industry. This was reiterated in his letter dated 3.4.2003. In spite of

all these commitments, Govt. of India seems to be hellbent to privatise Coal India bit by bit. The

demonstrators warned that such steps would meet stiff resistance leading to strike in Coal industry, if necessary.

CONVENTION OF TUs AND MASS ORGANISATIONS

The State level convention of the trade unions and mass organisations of Gujarat held on 26th April 2003 at Municipal Town Hall at Ahmedabad called for observing "Gujarat Bandh" on 21st May 2003 against the anti-national and anti-people policies of both the central and the state govts. Twenty three organisations jointly organised the convention. Notable were the Central Trade Unions viz., CITU, AITUC, HMS, AICCTU, GMP, HMKP, major industry level trade unions like Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Union (INTUC), Gujarat Vidyut Kamdar

Sangh and Electricity Mazdoor Panchayat, Gujarat Chemical Mazdoor Panchayat, all the unions and the associations of State Govt Employees, All India Bank Employees Association, All India Insurance Employees Association, various organisations of the Central Govt Employees in the State, besides the Gujarat Kisan Sabha, organisations of students, youth, women and journalists and a host of NGOs.

635 delegates from all the sponsoring organisations from various walks of life attended the convention and 35 delegates took

part in the deliberation. Subodh Mehta, President of Gujarat State CITU moved the resolution calling for a massive Strike action on 21st May 2003 in response to the call of a countrywide General Strike against the anti-national and anti-people policies of the Govt of India and for observance of a massive "Gujarat Bandh" on that day. The leaders of the sponsoring organisations spoke in the convention and the resolution for "Gujarat Bandh" on 21st May has been carried unanimously with thunderous applause.

CHHATTISGARH STATE CONVENTION OF TUs

A joint state level convention of trade unions, held at Raipur on May 12 called upon the working class in the state to make the call for countrywide General Strike on 21st May a massive success in the state. Around 250 delegates from various central trade unions and independent employees organisations took part in the convention. The convention was presided over by a presidium consisting of A K Shukla(STUC), S. C Bhattacharya (BSNL Employees Union), J Mahaptra

(Lipik Bargiya Karmachari Sangh). M K Nandy, General Secretary, Chhattisgarh State CITU moved the resolution calling for all in unity of the working people in the state for the success of the call for General Strike on 21st May against the anti-national and anti-people policies of the Govt of India which is aimed at deindustrialisation of the country's economy and convert the same into a market place for the multinational companies.

Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU was

the main speaker in the convention. Sen stressed upon the urgent need to further broaden the unity of the working class through grass root level joint action against the policies of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation being followed by the Vajpayee Govt at the centre which has left ruinous impact on the country's economy as a whole. In this background, the design of slavery is being sought to be imposed on the working class through pro-employer change in labour laws which must be resisted

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by the working class through united struggle, Sen asserted. He also stressed upon the need for exposing the dirty game of the RSS led Govt at the centre to disrupt

the unity of the people through their communal ploy.

Others who spoke in the convention were Ashok Miri, State Secretary of AICCTU and B

Sanyal, General Secretary, CZIEA and R N Chowdhury, General Secretary, All India Postal Employees Federation(class-III).

HUGE STRIKE BY PUBLIC WORKERS PARALYSES FRANCE

Today, workers throughout the public sector responded magnificently to the unions' call to walk off the job to protest the center-right government's plan to overhaul the country's generous pension system.

The strikes halted planes, trains, subways and buses across the country, paralysed a vast majority of classes in schools and universities, cut services at hospitals and prevented most newspaper distribution and mail delivery.

Aviation officials estimated that 80 percent of flights were grounded, while the state railway company canceled two-thirds of its mainline services. Workers at the state-owned Électricité de France joined the walkout, leading to a 10 percent reduction in electricity output. Labeled Black Tuesday by the

news media here, the daylong shutdown, together with demonstrations in about 100 cities and towns across France, was described in an editorial in *Le Monde* as the biggest labor rebellion since three-week strikes over pension reform in 1995. About 850,000 people marched against the pension reform plan across the country today, the Ministry of the Interior said. Union officials put the figure at more than one million.

"All the ingredients are there for a general strike," Didier Le Reste, national secretary for railroad workers at the Confédération Générale du Travail, France's second largest union, told Europe 1 radio. "If the government sticks to its current plans, we can expect more strikes that will spill over from one-day actions."

The strike today was crippling. For example, more than 80 percent of teachers at elementary schools and more than 70 percent of high school teachers stayed off the job. Huge crowds gathered at major Métro stations, only to find that the metal entry gates had been locked. Only one in three buses in Paris was running and taxis were scarce. Highway travel throughout France, meanwhile, was free, because there were no workers to collect tolls. Parts of Paris seemed shut down.

In anticipation of the strike, Mr. Raffarin said on television last week that Parliament, not the street, would rule on the plan's fate. "The street should express itself, but it's not the street that governs," he said. One banner in the demonstration today read "So isn't it the street that governs?"

AUSTRIA: PENSION REFORM TRIGGERS STRIKE

Austria went on its first general strike on this 13th of May 2003 in more than 50 years, a protest against pension reforms sought by the ruling conservative-

far-right coalition that would raise the retirement age and decrease pay-outs.

The powerful National Federation of Austrian Unions (OeGB), which

is close to the opposition Social Democrats, has said that 1 million of its 1.4 million members — a quarter of the country's total workforce - has responded to the

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strike call.

A stoppage that began early morning of 13th in Vienna left the capital and the key cities of Graz, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Linz without trains, buses or trams, witnesses and public radio reported. The halt caused large traffic jams around Vienna.

Strikers set up road blocks on the country's main roads and shut three border crossings with Hungary, at Nickelsdorf, Klingenbach and Deutschkreuz,

APA news agency reported.

Newspapers were absent from newsstands, as they had been yesterday.

The strike has later paralysed air transport, postal services, banks, hotels, industry and commerce — both private and public — in a big way. Only electricity, gas, telephone, Internet and emergency hospital services were expected to remain uninterrupted, as were final school exams.

The move of the Conservative Govt

of Austria to drastically cut its pension-obligation by way of raising retirement age, heftily increasing workers' contributions and changing the mode of calculation of pension benefit aimed at drastically slashing down the pay-outs to the pensioners has triggered the unprecedented response to call of General Strike throughout Austria given by OeGB, which is determined to resist the move.

BANGLADESH:

PETROLEUM WORKERS STALL PRIVATISATION MOVE

The Bangladesh Govt has been forced to retreat from its move of privatisation of oil and gas companies through all-in united struggle by the workers. All the trade unions of the oil and gas sector in Bangladesh formed a national confederation and gave a call for 48 hours strike in the oil sector all over the country on 24th and 25th May 2003. The united preparatory campaign for the two-day strike created tremendous tempo among the workers. In the background of such a charged situation, the Bangladesh Govt had to convene a meeting with the Steering Committee of the Oil workers confederation 21st May. A prolonged negotiations with the Petroleum Minister, in the

background of intense strike preparation has led to a settlement which inter-alia., contains: 1) No new PSC (production sharing contracts) will be signed with any Multinational Company for exploration of gas and all previous PSCs will be terminated if there is no legal impediment. 2) New block for exploration will be allotted to BAPEX (A national gas exploration company) and the Govt will take steps for modernization of the said company. 3) The initiative taken by the Govt to divide the two big gas companies namely Titas and Bakarabad will be abandoned. 4) Terminal for tank lorry and trucks carrying petroleum products will be built up soon. 5) Govt will not take any quick

initiative for privatization of oil and gas companies and before taking such decisions the Govt will have discussion with the trade unions. Following above settlement, the two-day strike programme has been kept in abeyance. While announcing the above decision, the spokesman of Confederation stated that above settlement signifies a retreat on the part of Govt in the matter of privatization, although temporarily. The trade unions must consolidate the unity achieved through struggle and must prepare for a bigger struggle in the days to come in the event of renewed privatisation move.

(Report on e-mail from Md. Jane Alam, President, Bangladesh Oil & Gas Workers Union)

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

State	Sr. Centre		Month		State	Sr. Centre		Month	
			Feb.' 03	Mar.' 03				Feb.' 03	Mar.' 03
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	464	466	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	574	578
	2	Guntur	495	499		39	Nagpur	492	495
	3	Hyderabad	481	487		40	Nasik	516	524
	4	Visakhapatnam	475	475		41	Pune	539	541
	5	Warangal	523	525		42	Solapur	494	494
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	410	410	Orissa	43	Barbil	419	420
	7	Guwahati	487	485		44	Rourkela	418	421
	8	Labac-Silchar	372	376	Punjab	45	Amritsar	421	425
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	426	427		46	Ludhiana	429	437
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	419	417	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	477	483
Bihar	11	Monghyr	445	455		48	Jaipur	447	450
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	425	428	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	523	525
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	480	485		50	Coimbatore	490	491
	14	Bhavnagar	492	497		51	Coonoor	489	492
	15	Rajkot	446	444		52	Madurai	470	472
	16	Surat	487	488		53	Salem	465	469
	17	Vadodra	464	463		54	Tiruchirapally	556	541
Haryana	18	Faridabad	486	493	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	448	451
	19	Yamunanagar	452	454		56	Ghaziabad	484	488
J & K	20	Srinagar	563	567		57	Kanpur	458	464
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	445	447		58	Saharanpur	444	446
	22	Jharia	373	373		59	Varanasi	491	502
	23	Kodarma	389	392	West Bengal	60	Asansol	453	455
	24	Noamundi	429	433		61	Darjeeling	403	404
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	427	428		62	Durgapur	551	561
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	465	469		63	Haldia	575	581
	27	Belgaum	523	524		64	Howrah	538	541
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	487	486		65	Jalpaiguri	409	410
	29	Mercara	460	460		66	Kolkata	527	533
Kerala	30	Alwaye	486	479		67	Raniganj	406	410
	31	Mundakayam	479	476	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	514	516
	32	Quilon	509	518	Delhi	69	Delhi	558	564
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	556	553	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	536	533
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	427	428					
	35	Bhopal	509	515					
	36	Indore	492	506					
	37	Jabalpur	468	473					
								ALL-INDIA	484 487

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	February 2003	March 2003
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	491	507
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	455	457
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	487	488
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	437	433
Tripura	5	Tripura	423	420
Goa	6	Goa	589	589

BALCO - GOING DOWN THE DRAIN

Remember BALCO? The NDA Govt. struck a dark, underhand, dirty deal with a notorious business house to destroy a strong pillar of Indian economy, in the name of privatisation. The workers there bravely fought against BALCO going on 67-day united strike. will be written in golden letters in the annals of trade union movement in India. BALCO will also be remembered for the deals the People like Arun Shourie and Bajaj had hailed privatisation of Balco as a success story. What else can they say when everybody can guess how much of sleaze money might have changed hands during the sell-off.

Arun Shourie and company stated that there would be new investment and modernisation in BALCO under Sterlite. All are blatant lies. After more than two years there is no modernization no technological upgradation, even no effort to keep the plant running to full capacity. At first the profitable profile and Tube plant was shut down. One can imagine an explanation to this strange action is that Sterlite has other aluminum factories and to ensure higher profits there, BALCO was sacrificed, where govt. still holds 49% share.

TARGETING WORKERS ...

Then the Sterlite management extracted more work from the sophisticated 'property' coiling machines. Those machines have broken down because of forced work beyond capacity, and also the unscientific and reckless style of working. Elaborate safety and effluent treatment and disposal systems have been done away with endangering lives of workers as well as people. Workers have been made targets of all attacks. In the name of VRS actually compulsory retirement is being forced down. Multi-skilling means, to Sterlite, that workers should do all jobs including lower type of jobs. All facilities enjoyed through decades are being withdrawn. Medical facilities have practically been stopped. A newly built canteen hall has been converted to office. Sterlite feels such a canteen for workers is a luxury. Even the contract workers are under severe attack. The "high paid" contract workers are being replaced by new set of such workers who do not

get even the minimum wage. The retrenched contract workers were promised Rs. 30,000/- as one time compensation but many of them have not received the amount even after one year. All these are affecting not only the lives of workers but also life and living of lakhs of people in the society.

It is a common saying that private companies have three types of people. A) Malik (Owner), b) Chamcha (Coterie) and c) Gulam (slaves). The once respectable worker in PSU BALCO are now working like slaves, and, in the usual way, Sterlite owners have purchased some union leaders who are too happy to work as Chamchas. With their help the owners are running the plant at their own whims. All agreements, conventions and time-tested systems have been thrown to winds.

CAT IS OUT

Newspaper reports say that Sterlite Group has decided to merge BALCO and Hindustan Zinc Limited (also privatised by Arun Shourie at a very cheap price and to the same person heading Sterlite Group) and go for a foreign loan or a foreign partner. It is being feared that BALCO will soon go to foreign hands. The Sterlite management have the audacity to tell other share holders (and by the way, to Govt. of India) to sell their shares at Rs. 175/- per share to Sterlite, which is much less than actual value of BALCO's share. It is another scandal and smells another round of huge bribing to NDA Ministers and BJP leaders. Finally the country's pride, BALCO will become a foreign company engineered by a party who swear in the name of Swadeshi.

So the struggle continues. BALCO Aluminium Employees Union (CITU) was in the forefront in the 67 day strike. They did not sign the so-called agreement before resuming the work. They are carrying forward the struggle on all fronts. They are determined to fight the plunderers of this great national asset. Now the people have to understand the machinations and support the CITU union to help them win the big battle. Otherwise this will become the model and all other public sector units will go to foreign hands.

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

General Council Meeting

24 - 27 July, 2003

CUTTACK, ORISSA

NOTICE

24 May, 2003

A meeting of the General Council of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions will be held on 24 - 27 July, 2003, at Cuttack, Orissa to consider the following agenda:

1. Condolence Resolution
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting of the General Council held at Siliguri, on 22-25 April, 2002
3. Presidential Address
4. Report of the General secretary
5. Preparations for the 11th Conference of CITU, to be held at Chennai, TamilNadu from the 9th to 13th December, 2003.
6. Special discussion on 'Combating the offensive of communalism'
7. Audited Statement of Accounts for the year 2002
8. Resolutions
9. Any other subject with the permission of the Chair.

The meeting will be held at the Barabati Stadium.

The meeting of the General Council will commence at 11.30 a.m. on 24th July, 2003.

The mass rally will be held in the afternoon of 27th July, 2003.

Members are requested to arrange return journey reservations at their own end.

All members will have to pay Rs. 500 towards local expenses.

Arrival particulars may be intimated to;

The General Secretary
Centre of Indian Trade Unions,
Orissa State Committee,
Plot No. 251,
Kharavela Nagar, Unit-3,
Bhubaneswar 751 001.

Orissa

Phone : 0674-240 54 10 Fax : 0674-241 32 99, 0674 2405410

E-mail: cituorissa@rediffmail.com

With greetings,

Yours comradely,
M.K.PANDHE
General Secretary

NOTE: The Working Committee will meet at 10 a.m. on 24th July, 2003