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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Chaos reigns at airports, may worsen

Delhi



VIRENDRA SINGH/HT

FLIGHTS: The ones from Mumbai reached late. Flights to Kolkata cancelled

REST: Canopy and city lights switched off at airport. No aerobridges functioned. Stepladders were used

Mumbai



PTI

FLIGHTS: About 40 were either delayed or cancelled; flights to Kolkata cancelled

REST: 7-minute power blackout. Among services affected: Water supply, aerobridges, housekeeping

Kolkata



AFP

FLIGHTS: Air traffic paralysed for five hours. Normal flights resumed in the evening after the CM intervened

REST: All necessary services—aerobridges, conveyer belts, airconditioning, fire-fighting deptt—affected



STUCK IN A STRIKE



Workers Resist Privatization

GEORGE BUSH GO BACK!

The Committee against Bush Visit, consisting of several political parties, constituents of the National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) including the Central Trade Unions, organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, women, youth and students, and federations and associations of professionals and other sections, as well as concerned groups and individuals, has decided to organize a huge People's Protest March against US President George W Bush. The Protest March in New Delhi will be on 2 March 2006, the first day of his official visit.

Anti imperialist protest demonstrations will be held all over the country during his visit. Join the demonstrations in large numbers!

Observe International Working Women's Day

The CITU has been observing International Working Women's Day on March 8 by highlighting the issues of working women and popularizing them among both working men and women. The CITU centre has issued a circular to the state committees directing them to observe International Women's Day this year focusing on the demands of immediate enactment of a comprehensive law for unorganised sector workers where the majority of women work, and for a law against sexual harassment.

Accordingly, all the state committees of CITU and all the affiliated Federations, particularly in industries with a large number of women, are requested to observe International Women's Day by distributing leaflets, posters and holding lunch hour meetings/gate meetings etc. The members of the Working Women's Coordination Committees and the working women's sub committees at different levels of the unions should be involved in the planning and implementation of this programme.

The Convenors of the Working Women's Coordination Committees are to take the initiative in this matter.

Reports of the observance of the programme should be sent to the CITU centre immediately.

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MARCH 2006



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EDITORIAL

GOVERNANCE, THE UPA STYLE!

The UPA government is progressing towards completing its second year in office and presently going through the motions of the budget session in the Parliament. The obstructionist attitude of the main opposition party, the BJP, notwithstanding, the issues that have come to dominate informed political debate both inside and outside the Parliament go only to reveal that governance has taken a beating under the UPA regime.

The Left parties, which have been extending outside support for the UPA regime on condition that it sincerely implements the National Common Minimum Programme, have openly expressed their total displeasure over the way the UPA governance had been drifting. They have conveyed to the government, 'in the popular perception, the image of the government is getting affected'. In particular, they have taken exception to certain important policy decisions the government has taken in the recent period. They include: voting with the USA on the Iran nuclear issue in the International Atomic Energy association; the unseemly hurry in handing over the profit making airports of Mumbai and Delhi to chosen private parties, brazenly vitiating the established norms of the bidding process even; opening up the retail trade sector, albeit for single brand category, to the Foreign Direct Investment up to 51 per cent etc. The Left parties have come out openly that in spite of their submitting, in all, nineteen notes on different policy issues in the UPA Left coordination committee, the government went ahead with its own unilateral decisions on many of them.

The working class has many things to despair. The UPA government has not acted on any of the promises they held out to the working masses in the NCMP. Rather, the steps so far taken have been adverse to the interest of the working people. The reduction of interest rate on the EPF from 9.5 per cent under the NDA regime to 8.5 per cent for the current year, the move towards making labour markets flexible – an euphemism for hire and fire, reneging on a solemn assurance on the floor of the Parliament to rescind the notification introducing a new category of 'fixed term workman, the proposed changes in the Employees' Pension Scheme intended to lower even the meagre benefits presently available, the callousness over bringing the legislations for the benefit of agricultural workers and those in the unorganised sector et al are revealing that the character of the UPA regime is evidently anti-labour.

The recent united struggle of the Airport employees and the call for an indefinite strike by the central government employees, which clinched their demand for Pay Commission, are indicators of the harsh truth – relentless struggle is the only way forward to apply a break on this government's drift towards disaster.

BUSH THE IMPERIALIST BARBARIAN : GO BACK

Blatant Aggression

■ President Bush's visit to India comes at a time when the US war on Iraq and its occupation have been exposed to the entire world as a blatant aggression and an illegal and criminal act. Bush's own government has announced that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Neither have they been found any proof of Iraq's support to terrorism.

■ Bush invaded Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and his government and take control of the oil resources. Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world.

Occupation of Iraq

■ It is three years since the United States occupied Iraq. The war and the blatant occupation have cost the lives of over 100,000 (one lakh) Iraqi civilians and soldiers. The infrastructure of the Iraqi State has collapsed and basic services are not being provided to the people. The unemployment rate is close to 50 per cent.

■ During the war and enforcing the occupation, over 2,250 US soldiers have died. Bush's popularity ratings in his own country is at the lowest ever. US corporations have been awarded big contracts for reconstruction. The oil revenues of Iraq are being plundered.

■ This is the freedom and democracy Bush has promised for Iraq.

The Indian people demand that Bush get out of Iraq forthwith. Withdraw all US-British troops and allow the Iraqi people to determine their future.

Targetting Iran and North Korea

■ Bush had declared "war against terrorism" and condemned what he calls the "axis of evil" – Iraq, Iran and North Korea. After occupying Iraq, Bush has targeted Iran and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. Bush is using the nuclear issue as a weapon against both these countries. This is absolute hypocrisy.

■ The United States currently has over 10,000 deployed nuclear warheads, almost all the battle ready such weapons on the planet. The US government opposes all major nuclear treaties that ask it to reduce its stockpile.

■ The United States also has known stockpiles of chemical weapons. It also has the largest defence force in the world. Bush has proclaimed the concept of "pre-emptive war" to justify military intervention against countries which refuse to heed its diktat.

■ Bush is working for a repeat of the Iraq route for Iran. The US and its European allies want to refer Iran to the Security Council of the United Nations on the pretext of Iran violating laws and safeguards. The United States and Israel are threatening Iraq with military strikes.

Bush Supports Israel Against Palestine

■ The Bush administration protects Israel which has 200 nuclear weapons. The Bush is backing Israel fully in its military aggression against the Palestinian people. Bush has approved the Israeli plans to annex most of the West Bank in violation of UN resolutions. Israel's occupation of Arab lands continues with the military aid and financial support of the United States.

The Indian people want Palestinians to have an independent state. The Israelis must vacate the Arab lands occupied by them.

Hands Off Cuba

■ The United States has imposed an economic blockade against Cuba for 45 years. The only crime of this small country, 90 miles from the coast of US, is that it has chosen to adopt socialism. The US refuses to heed world public opinion in the last UN General Assembly session. A resolution calling for an end to the embargo against Cuba got the support of 187 countries. Only the United States and three other countries voted against.

■ Since Bush became president, he has stepped up hostile measures against Cuba – funding of opposition activities, radio and television broadcasts and sheltering terrorist and criminal elements among the Cuban émigrés in the United States.

■ The Bush administration is sheltering a known terrorist, Posada Carriles, who was

responsible for the blowing up of a Cuban airliner which claimed the lives of 73 people. The US has refused to extradite him to Venezuela to stand trial. The US has imprisoned five young Cubans on false charges of espionage and refuses to release them even after an appeals court has squashed their trial.

The people of India demand of Bush – "Hands Off Cuba"

Venezuela and Latin America

■ The people of Venezuela have decided to assert their independence and sovereignty under the leadership of Hugo Chavez. In 2002, the US instigated a military coup against President Chavez which failed because of the mass mobilisation and the army ranks refusing to act against the elected president. The US is pouring funds to support the rightwing opposition against Chavez. The US is conspiring to undermine the Bolivarian revolution and the democratically elected government in Venezuela.

■ The US spends billions of dollars on Plan Colombia to support the rightwing government in Colombia and to suppress the revolutionary movement there.

■ All over Latin America, US imperialism is being rebuffed. The Free Trade Area of Americas, a tool for America's US economic hegemony has been rejected. Leftwing governments are coming to power in South and Central America.

We express solidarity with the people of Latin America and demand that Bush stop interfering in their affairs.

Economic Hegemony

■ Behind America's push for global hegemony is the aim of spreading the "free market" and "privatisation". Under cover of words like "liberty" and "freedom", the free market is propagated to suck all resources and profits into its coffers. The IMF, World Bank and WTO are used to impose the neo-liberal model on the third world. Any country which opposes imperialist globalisation, or, the US free market model becomes the target for economic warfare and the ultimate option of military intervention.

Bush Unwelcome in India

■ The Bush administration is brazenly pressurising India to fall in line with its global strategy. It wants India to be part of its strategy in Asia. The US has entered into a "strategic partnership" with the Indian government and made a ten-year defence framework agreement. The United States is using the bait of nuclear cooperation to compel India to line up with it – whether it be on Iran and on other issues too. The arrogant demand of the US Ambassador in India that India should vote with the US against Iran if it wants the US Congress to approve the nuclear cooperation deal is a sign of the things to come. The Bush administration has pressurised India to allow FDI in retail trade. The US Ambassador has attacked the Left parties for opposing this demand.

■ So Bush is coming to India to promote Walmart, the biggest retail company in the world, and to push for American capital to have a free run in insurance, banking, agriculture and all other sectors. Bush will expect the Indian government to give in on the US demand on how to separate civilian and military nuclear facilities. Bush is coming to put the final seal of approval on India becoming USA's strategic ally.

■ The Indian people do not want to be a "junior partner" of the United States.

■ The Indian people will decide for themselves what is good for the country. India's economic sovereignty is not for sale.

■ Neither do we want to become a military ally of the world's most aggressive superpower.

The Indian people want Bush to be tried for war crimes in Iraq.

BUSH IS UNWELCOME IN INDIA
GO BACK BUSH

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AIRPORTS: INSANE, SATANIC CRAZE FOR PRIVATISATION

Dipankar Mukherjee

The sadistic response of the media to the recent struggle of the employees of Airports Authority of India makes it clear that there can be no role for truth, transparency and integrity in the single-track exercise by the Govt 'for privatisation of airports at any cost and by any means.'

Media raised a hue and cry that the cease-work by the airport employees is against 'modernisation of airports'. The fact is just otherwise. The Airport Employees themselves had long been pursuing for modernisation of the airports of the country. The specific proposal submitted by the Board of management of Airports Authority of India in June 2003 to Civil Aviation Ministry for modernisation of Delhi and Mumbai Airports had been an event in that process. On the other hand, all chattering by the ministers of both NDA and UPA variety on the "urgency of modernisation", have been a dubious ploy for privatisation. That explains why the then NDA Govt. ignored the proposal for modernisation cleared by the Board of AAI. As a matter of fact the exercise for privatisation of airports on the plea of their modernisation started during the NDA regime itself, which appointed the consultants for the bidding criteria etc.

After UPA's coming to power and in view of the stipulation in the NCMP that the 'profit- making PSUs will not be privatised, the AAI Employees Joint Forum submitted in June 2004 the alternative proposal to the Govt. for modernisation of Delhi and Mumbai Airports by the AAI. The UPA Ministry ignored it in the same manner as their NDA counterpart did to AAI's own proposal, and went ahead in inviting bids from the private players. But owing to consistent pressure by the trade union movement and intervention by the Left Parties, the Civil Aviation Ministry had to constitute an Alternate Plan Review Committee headed by the Member (Finance), AAI as Chairman and other professional experts to go into the alternate proposal and submit its recommendation at the earliest. The ministry wasted more than a year in between making effort to shelve the alternate proposal and any "urgency" did not bother them at that time.

The Alternate Plan Review Committee submitted its Report on 1st December 2005. The Report upheld the alternate proposal 'for modernisation of airports by the Airports Authority' in principle and strongly opined about the competence and capability of AAI to make adequate funding arrangement for modernisation. The Review Committee Report mentioned in particular that, "Concepts and details of works proposed in Alternate Plan for modernization of Delhi and Mumbai airports submitted by Joint Forum are similar to what were decided earlier by AAI and hence, are acceptable. However, the proposals are to be further updated by working out current cost estimates... It will be possible to fund the development expenditure of Rs 12,300 crores for Delhi and Mumbai projects and Rs 5500 crores for non-metro projects in addition to year-to-year normal Capital Expenditure. A borrowing of Rs 9500 crores will require to be made... The feasibility of raising a sum of Rs 9500/- crores through borrowings was also informally discussed with our Financial advisor cum Lead arranger retained for non-metro projects. They are of the view that given the financial strengths of AAI with almost zero debt status, raising of funds of this magnitude will not be a problem..."

The findings of the Report of the Review Committee is enough to conclude that there is no justification of going in for private bidders for airports modernization. The Airports Authority is having competence both technically and financially to modernise not only the airports at Delhi and Mumbai but also other non-metro airports by themselves. When one is having capacity to renovate one's own house, why should he sell his house to stay their as a tenant? Doing so is exposes either insanity or satanity, nothing else. In their anxiety of handing over the Delhi and Mumbai airports

to private hands, the Govt trampled all basic tendering norms underfoot in such haste, as had never happened in the past ; technical qualification criteria were diluted and modified just two hours before opening the financial bids to bring even the technically unqualified bids into consideration and such modification was done by the 'Empowered Group of Ministers (EgoM)' which as per its terms of reference is not having power to do so. Entire bid evaluation process and mode of decisions taken suffer from gross impropriety and arbitrariness but still the Union Cabinet meeting called with half a day's notice endorsed the same. All, from top to bottom in the governance are in great haste to hand over the two major airports to two chosen players, GMR and GVK. The Minister of Civil Aviation argued that the AAI, having Rs 3000 crore as surplus reserve and earning a profit of Rs 350 crore annually, is not financially sound enough to undertake modernize Delhi and Mumbai Airport but he did not hesitate to award the job to two private players both of whose surplus reserve and annual profit put together are much less than half of AAI. Employees raised their voice against such corrupt deals of changing the ownership of two airports and they did that quite justly.

This Govt just ignored the Report of the Review Committee constituted by themselves, because it recommended modernization by AAI and not by chosen private players. On being asked as to in which forum of the Govt, the Review Report has been considered before rejection, the Govt resorted to lies. On 30th January 2006, in the meeting held between the AAI Employees Joint Forum and the Civil Aviation Minister, the minister stated that the Inter Ministerial Group has gone into depth of the Review Committee Report and rejected that. This a flat lie as the IMG comprised of the Member (Finance), (who authored the Report) and Chairman AAI (who forwarded the Report to the Ministry for a decision). On 3rd February 2006, in the meeting between the Joint Forum and Prime Minister, it was stated by the same Minister that the Civil Aviation Ministry studied the Report and rejected the same. The media did not bother to go into these gross irregularities although all records are available to them. They made a common cause with the Govt to facilitate privatisation at any cost. And lies can be the only instrument to serve, as the common cause lacks propriety. Media made much noise over the inconvenience caused to the passengers owing to cease work by the airport employees. No doubt, the cease work has caused inconvenience. But going in for cease-work had not been a pleasure for the employees and they patiently pursued for long three years to keep the Govt in track. The responsibility for the passengers' inconvenience falls entirely on Govt.

Media also shed crocodile tears for the employees as well. They maligned the united struggle of the employees unjustly terming the same as "anti-modernisation" and at the same time spat venom on the leadership for calling off the agitation "without achieving anything ".

The agitation was not on any demands of the employees. It had been basically a struggle against privatisation of country's airports, against the dubious ploy to dismantle the Airports Authority and to hand over public property to chosen private hands. The agitation has been called off on 4th February on the basis of a written assurance from the Civil Aviation Minister to constitute a tripartite committee to deal with the entire aspect of 'airports modernisation' and not just job security of the employees. The letter reads inter alia, "The Government will set up a tripartite committee comprising of representatives of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India and Joint Forum. The Committee will look into the issues and proposals of modernising airports by the AAI and employee related issues including their job security." It may be noted, the letter does not exclude Delhi and Mumbai Airports, which could be brought back for discussion in the tripartite committee. This is no mean achievement.

Through united struggle, the airport employees could extract the recognition of their united Joint Forum to have a say on the future of the institution they work for. The adversaries, may undermine this achievement, but the struggle against privatisation will continue as an integral part of that.

[The 3rd All India Conference of BSNL Employees Union was held on 26-30 January 2006 at Guwahati. 745 delegates from the BSNL units all over the country participated in the conference. 120 delegates took part in the deliberation on the General Secretary's report presented by V A N Namboodiri. A presidium headed by J N Mishra, President BSNLEU conducted the conference. The conference elected a 24 member office bearers with J N Mishra as President, V A N Namboodiri as General Secretary, P Abhimanyu as Deputy General Secretary and Nafe Singh as Treasurer. Along with the conference, a women workers' convention and a seminar were also held. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU delivered the inaugural address to the conference. Reproduced below are excerpts from his inaugural speech - Editor]

RALLY THE PEOPLE AGAINST ANTI-PEOPLE POLICIES

Chittabrata Majumdar

The working class is being attacked not only in respect of their economic rights but attack is being launched on their democratic rights and on ideological front also. Attack is coming on secularism and communal harmony to disrupt the unity of the people and the working class and weaken the movement. The working class is being focused as enemies of the people and the nation; it is being propagated that trade union movement is obstructing the development of the country. It is being campaigned that trade unions are sectarian and selfish and they fight only for themselves. Media is being utilized in this campaign to sow intolerance against trade union in the society. Such attack is being launched because the trade union movement is in the forefront in the struggle against the anti-people economic policies and for defence of national wealth and sovereignty.

The trade union movement, along with their struggles, shall have to counter such attacks of the ruling polity. We have to widen our horizon of struggle and rally mas of the people in the same. We have to expose the evil design behind the anti-trade union tirade by the media and ruling class.

When trade unions oppose privatization and demands strengthening of PSUs in national interests, the Govt says they should not worry about PSUs and policies and remain limited to workers' issues. And then the Govt moves ahead towards privatization either directly or through phased disinvestments. Through privatization, Govt seeks to transfer huge public wealth to chosen individuals, both domestic and foreign. And while doing that the Govt makes a plea that they require resources for development. PSUs are the foundation of the country's economic self reliance. They must be strengthened and the trade unions are fighting for that. It is through the struggle of working people, the UPA Govt could be compelled to commit that profit making PSUs would not be privatized and through united struggle we have to ensure the same. This is no selfish struggle.

For every move of privatization, the Govt is making plea for resource mobilization for development and welfare of common people. On the same plea of garnering resources, attack is being launched on the rights of the workers, their pension fund, EPF interest rate, minimum wages and other social security measures etc.

The trade unions say that resource mobilization cannot be done by targeting the rights and livelihoods of the workers and common people. There are ways and means of resource mobilization and the Govt must have the political will to resort to them. The huge tax default by the big corporates, huge unpaid bank loans by the same class and the enormous black money generated by them only must be recovered with strong hand to mobilize resources. Further, the tax-GDP ratio in our country is quite low and the tax net should be widened upwards to garner more resources from the rich and moneyed class who do not give their dues to the society. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance comprising MPs from all the political parties has

unanimously recommended to increase the tax on high-end tax payers.

On the other hand the Govt must correct its biased tax and trade policies to arrest resource outflow and domestic industrial crisis. For example, sharp reduction in import tax on crude Vanaspati led to loss of revenue and at the same time crisis and closure of domestic Vanaspati units and huge loss in employment. Another example—although we are heavily dependent on petroleum import, the Govt is allowing petroleum export through Reliance etc that too with huge concessions and incentive. As a result country lost much more resources than little gain from such export. In the name of development, what is being done by the Govt is going against real interest of the country's economy and also against the interests of the people. The Govt's policy regarding the telecom sector is also a testimony to that.

The trade union movement have to go to people and tell them what is happening in the name of development. At the same time, trade unions have to continue to fight on all peoples' issues and rally them in countrywide united struggle. The organized trade union movement must also take up with all seriousness to organize the workers of unorganized sector. We must foil all designs of the ruling polity to divide the working class and let one section of workers against the other in order to weaken the struggle against the anti-people policies.

YET ANOTHER JUDICIAL INFRIGMENT OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

The Supreme Court issued a directive on February 13, 2006, banning demonstrations, dharnas, and rallies, publications of articles, etc during the pendancy of any trial in the court. Such acts, in the opinion of the learned judges, would constitute contempt of court! The apex court was dealing with the issue of entry of French warship Clemenceau containing highly toxic material into Indian waters for ship-breaking, which involved serious health hazards for the Indian workers besides environmental pollution.

The SC expressed strong disapproval to the protest demonstrations and other actions by various organisations and also the response and comments published in the media on the same issue, branding them contemptuous to judicial process. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) expressed grave concern at the uncalled for observations made by the Supreme Court. This directive is an affront on the rights of the mass organisations and trade unions to protest against the government policies, offending employers and authorities/agencies and cannot be accepted by the democratic movement, CITU observed.

The CITU statement further states, "This is yet another infringement of basic labour and democratic rights earned by the working class and popular movements through their struggles, coming after the Supreme Court observations against right to strike of the workers and several other similar judgments. This SC directive will also hit hard the freedom of the press to express views on current topics particularly those having serious impact and implication on the rights and livelihood of the people."

The CITU urged the government to seriously review the very concept of 'contempt of court' proceedings and initiate appropriate legislative action to negate its adverse impact, so that it does not infringe upon the peoples' democratic rights and civil liberties.

Recent Struggles in Toyota in Bangalore

VJK Nair

The Japanese Toyota Company wedded to the failed Indian monopoly, the Kirloskars, is the worst type of management that the CITU is facing in Bangalore. They do not care for national laws and heap false allegations of violence against the trade union. The double standard they adopt is clear even to the naked eye.

They demand compliance by the workers in matters of discipline, standing orders, safety rules etc., and even force the workers to sign individual undertaking against the provisions of law, but they themselves do not follow the standing orders and violate it. They ought to have supplied the recently suspended 27 workers the statement containing the reasons in detail within one week from the date of suspension, if the worker desire so, but played a 'dirty trick' trying to avoid the requirement by saying that the employee's request is submitted after one week (which is not actually correct).

They want discipline and obedience of the workmen and pretend that they want peaceful solutions but do not care to respect the jurisdiction of the Additional Industrial Tribunal where the justification of the union's demand for recalling the fifteen suspended workers is pending. The management ought to have obtained express permission of the court before dismissing the 'three' and the current dispute would not have even arisen.

Theirs is a classic case of depending on the police machinery rather than on the labour machinery for resolution of industrial dispute. They employed over a 500 policemen at Bidadi on 6th to 8th January 2006 in an attempt to resort to state violence on the workers. The workmen could prevent this only by occupying the LPG Bullets, and threatening that they would blow it up if the police attacked them. But later, after they came out, the police used force when the workers staged a dharna in front of the labour secretary's office, arrested 800 workers and removed their tent. The union was forced to postpone the hunger strike and started organising area wise meetings.

The Management of Toyota Kirloskar Motors went ahead and passed orders proposing to dismiss the 27 recently suspended workers even before they were issued charge sheets and filed 33(1)(b) Approval applications before the Additional Labour Court, Bangalore thus posing a great challenge to all those who are interested in the rule of law to answer the piquant question. It may be noted that it is the very same management who initiated the present phase of the dispute on this very interesting question of law. They refused to comply with the requirement of adhering to Sec.33 (1)(b) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 and triggered the whole dispute, which led to the strike in the plant from 6th to 8th Jan 2006. Instead of resorting to the possible peaceful solution, they dismissed the three workmen. They refused to heed to the suggestions of the CITU Union and to the official suggestions of the 'conciliation officer' to 'keep aside the three dismissals' and to seek express permission under section 33(1)(b) before the Additional Industrial Tribunal.

This new situation is qualitatively different from the earlier one. The Government by their order dated 21-1-2006 referred an alleged dispute on the justifiability of the 'lockout' in view of the violence allegedly to have been created by the workmen in the plant. Then instead of 'prohibiting' the 'lockout', which was really in existence, they surreptitiously made the management to announce the 'lifting of the lockout and then prohibited the non existent strike of the workmen. It may be noted that there was no strike in existence as on that date. Yet, the union, in order not to be found on the wrong side of the law, decided to 'call off the non-existent strike', and reported for duty on the 24th January. The Management wanted to create evidence by forcing the workmen to sign on an undertaking wherein the workmen had to 'agree' to the management's allegations of violence as a reason for their declaring the lockout. The union resisted

this move and wanted the Government to treat this demand for individual undertaking and 'creation of false evident' as continuation of lockout. The union/CITU demanded immediate prohibition of the lock-out, and pressed for passing orders under Section 10B to direct the management to commence/restore production in the 'so claimed' public utility service resorting status quo ante 6th January 2006.

Though the workmen were not willing to 'sign' any undertaking, CITU decided to get the objectionable portions removed and to make the workmen sign the rest of the undertaking to follow the requirements relating to production norms, discipline, adherence to standing orders and safety norms. They management kept the CITU leaders away and made the workers unapproachable to them even to sort out these difficult problems, by using police force and 'hired goondas'. They declared that CITU leaders would not be allowed to enter 'Bidadi'. That is the 'isolationist' little 'island' in the vastness of Karnataka sought to be made as a New Japan by the Toyota Management.

However, the CITU leaders literally 'forced' the workmen to report for duty that day. The workers were not really worried about the legal implications, but they were really concerned about the fresh suspensions of the 27 workmen. The union and CITU leaders had to do quite a lot of exercises to erase the grouse the workmen entertained after this 'undemocratic' decision of the leaders, as there was no opportunity to take the decisions in a duly held general body meeting. How, rule of law and adherence to democratic practices is subverted in the name of perceived 'law and order' situation by the state machinery, is very clearly visible in this case. It also clearly exposes the damage done by 'interference of the civil courts' in industrial disputes, disregarding the express provision of 'Bar of civil suits for matters connected with 'trade dispute' as expressly provided in the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.

Having secured the workforce inside, the management resorted to the present coup. The very same management who refused stubbornly to adhere to the section 33(1)(b) of the Industrial Disputes Act and triggered the whole dispute, strike, so called violence, lockout and 'forced' undertaking etc., have now resorted to filing applications under Section 33(1)(b) seeking express permission from the Third Additional Labour Court, Bangalore to dismiss the 27 suspended workmen. A very interesting aspect of the present seeking of justice is the 'hidden' justice, of not even charge sheeting the workers who are subjected to this 'guillotine' of dismissal.

The workers who received the 'suspension orders only on or after 24th January 2007, wrote on 27th demanding the 'reasons for suspension to be given in writing'. The management instead of giving the reasons wrote back saying that the request was made after one week from the date of 'suspension' and refused to give them the reasons for 'suspension'. Thus the very process of natural justice is under stake. And they have proposed to dismiss the 27 for alleged violence purported to have been related pending before the 3rd Additional Labour Court in Bangalore. This has definitely posed a challenge to all those who are interested in Rule of Law, good governance and resolution of disputes in a peaceful manner. In an article in the Business World titled 'Who will blink first?', an official of the company is stated to have provided the 'Japanese' perception of the whole dispute. He stated that if the three dismissals were to be reversed, it would send a bad signal to their country; that the management's right to 'hire' labour and to 'fire' even bad elements was being questioned in this country. A country, which 'seeks' foreign direct investment, and actually allows FDI, should allow the managements to fire 'bad' elements.

Whatever the Japanese official's perception, the democratic and legal system in the country should have the right to examine whether the element is really bad as sought to be made by the Japanese. Actually the three dismissed workers have not even had any charge of 'violence' or discipline except the allegation of not reporting for KYT exercises per the call of the union against the series of victimizations.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

CARRY FORWARD THE STRUGGLE OF WORKING WOMEN

K Hemalata

Shakuntala Varma. She is an ICDS supervisor in a village near Indore in Madhya Pradesh. Both her hands were chopped off by miscreants last year, when she went to stop a child marriage. Vandana is a 14 year schoolgirl from UP; She is recuperating from the 17 stab injuries she suffered while bravely fighting to foil an attempt to rape and murder.

Shahiba Khatoon is an elected panchayat ward member of Saraiyya Chenapatti village in East Champaran district of Bihar. Four persons belonging to the upper caste from the same village abducted her from her home, assaulted her and smeared black paint on her face. They have also reportedly disrobed her and paraded her naked in the village alleging that she was responsible for the breaking up of a marriage negotiation.

An anganwadi worker in Rajasthan was, just a few months back gang raped by the supervisors in the same department. This again reminds one of the gang rape of Bhanwari Devi, a social worker in the same state around a decade ago.

If we think these assaults, gang rape, attempts to murder and other such attacks are confined to the poor women, or to those in the backward Hindi speaking states, the ghastly rape and murder of Pratibha, the highly educated Call Centre employee of Hewlett Packard, a multinational company in Bangalore reminds us that that we are mistaken.

These are only a few examples, which provide a glimpse of the vulnerable conditions under which women in our country work and live today. But this is not all.

Add to these the estimated 10 million girls who were not allowed to be born at all for the simple reason that they were girls; the millions of girls denied education, denied health care and denied even a square meal a day because, as the government withdraws from the responsibility of providing these basic services to all its citizens, their parents were pushed to a situation where they had to choose between the son and the daughter; and given the predominantly feudal influence, choose the son.

Also add the hundreds of thousands of women who do not have any access to the basic sanitation facilities that they have to depend on the mercy of the landlords in the villages to ease themselves; that attending to a biological need becomes a nightmare and exposes them to the risk of rape, assault and humiliation; a Chief Minister who, in stead of feeling ashamed of not having provided such minimum facilities to the women in his state, thinks it fit to use religion even in such matters to insult and humiliate them; the Dalit women who, despite being elected to represent the people, are not allowed to discharge their duties by the landlords and the upper caste vested interests; who are not treated as human beings except to work on the fields and satisfy of the lust of the rural rich and who are killed every day in the name of witches.

Think of the thousands of women being harassed, battered and burnt and killed for dowry, the demand for which has only increased and spread with the vulgar display of wealth and consumerism that are blatantly encouraged by the media and the corporates, in the era of globalisation. Visualise the millions of women who are illiterate, malnourished, anaemic, and die giving birth and who are converted into statistics in the various Human Development and other Indices.

Add the millions of women workers burning themselves out by working day and night for a pittance so their families can at least have one meal, never mind themselves half starving;

ignorant or unmindful or powerless to the fact that whether their loved ones get another morsel of food, their employers sure add another layer to their kitties; those tribal women who walk up and down the hills and across the forests barefoot to earn whatever they can just to be alive. And now you have more or less a complete and true picture of women in our country, on the eve of International Women's Day.

Of course we also have women like Kalpana Sharma who ventured into the skies to explore the universe, our Bulu Chowdhary who swam across the seas and —, who climbed the heights of the Everest. International Women's Day is to be sure an occasion to celebrate the endurance and great achievements of these and many such women. But no less amazing is the endurance of the millions of seemingly ordinary and poor women for whom every day is a day of struggle for survival, a struggle to feed their families and a struggle to live with dignity and honour. International Women's Day is also an occasion to pay tributes to these millions of faceless women.

It is also an occasion to renew our determination to fight for the rights of the workingwomen and the peasant women. It is an occasion to rededicate ourselves to the struggle to achieve the emancipation of women and the emancipation of society as well from all kinds of exploitation.

It is an occasion to take the pledge to carry forward the struggle started nearly one hundred and fifty years ago by the women workers in North America when on 8th March 1857, the garments workers in New York marched and picketed demanding a ten hour working day, equal rights for women and improved working conditions and had to face police attacks; the struggle, which was picked up on 8th March 1908, when the women needle workers in New York marched again demanding the right to vote and an end to sweatshops and child labour and they too had to face police attacks.

This struggle was sought to be internationalised by the German Communist Clara Zetkin when she raised the issue in the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in 1910 and proposed the observation of an International Working Women's Day. The Conference decided that every year in every country, they should observe on the same day a 'Women's Day' under the slogan 'The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism'. 8th March has also become a historic and memorable day not only for women but also for the working class all over the world, because it was on this day in 1917 that the February revolution in Russia broke out, when the women textile workers in Petersburg decided to raise their banner of opposition to the Tsar and went on a strike.

On this International Women's Day, let us decide to spread and strengthen the struggle against the ever mounting attacks on the working class, the ever mounting attacks on the workingwomen; to effectively face the challenges posed by imperialist globalisation which has imposed disproportionately heavier burdens on the workingwomen. Let us march shoulder to shoulder with our brothers in the historic task of ending all exploitation, which alone can end women's oppression.

Workingwomen do not want only to survive; they want a decent life, as expressed in the famous song "Bread and Roses" by James Oppenheim:

"As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts grey
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses
For the people hear us singing,
Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses
As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days
The rising of the women means the rising of the race
No more the drudge and idler that toil where one reposes
But a sharing of life's glories,
Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses"

ECONOMY: REALITY CHECK

AN OVERVIEW OF UN-RECOVERED TAX ARREARS

In response to a question on unrecovered amount of taxes in the Rajya Sabha on 25 July 2000, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance had replied that the total amount of tax outstanding on account of income tax, corporation tax, custom duty and central excise duty were:

March, 1998	Rs. 47888 crore
March 1999	Rs. 52617 crore
March, 2000	Rs. 62392 crore

On 26 November 2002, in response to a similar question by the undersigned, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance provided the following figures for the total amount of outstanding taxes and duties:

March 2000	Rs. 62459 crore
March 2001	Rs. 67039 crore
March 2002	Rs 86342 crore

t was also stated that "No time-bound year-wise target for liquidating the outstanding amount of unrecovered taxes can be fixed. In respect of cases which are under dispute, the assesses generally do not pay up the confirmed demands of taxes considered due by the Department, until they exhaust all the available legal remedies. This is an on-going process under which old demands get reduced or collected and fresh demands are added each year. Persuasive and coercive action, as prescribed under the relevant laws, is being taken."

In response to the same question asked by Dipankar Mukherjee, which was to be answered on 23 December 2003, the Government said that information was being collected. The response finally came from the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance on 25 March 2004 where the following information was conveyed: "The Income Tax Department does not maintain separate details of amount recoverable on account of corporate tax and income tax." The following figures were also given:

Recoverable Taxes (in Rs. Crore)

Year	Direct Taxes	Indirect Taxes	
		Central Excise	Customs
2000-01	59452.97	8537.90	1849.30
2001-02	72670.96	11399.00	1325.56
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2000-01	4970.27	470.01	179.68
2001-02	3929.57	326.70	459.54
2002-03	5469.98	245.36	804.93

The reply also stated, " So far as direct taxes are concerned, targets for recovery are fixed as per the Annual Action Plan. However, no target is fixed in respect of indirect taxes, as recovery of arrears is a continuous process." A list of top 100 defaulters and their outstanding dues as on 31 March 2003 was also provided.

To a query by Dipankar Mukherjee in the Question Hour on 29 November 2005 whether tax arrears have come down during the last one and a half years, the Finance Minister replied:

"Arrear is a function of many factors. Arrears is a function of how much current demand you raise in the current assessment year. But the moment a current demand is raised, it becomes an arrear, if it is not paid. Secondly, arrear is also a function of the amount of litigation. If a matter goes up in appeal to the High Court or the Supreme Court and there is an interim order of the stay, then, the amount not collected becomes arrears. So, you cannot put your finger and say that arrears gone up because of this, or arrears have gone down because of this. Thirdly, if the total estimated income from a particular tax increases, say, by about 20-25% a year, as shown in the Budget,

then, it is fair to expect that the arrears also will increase because to that extent demand has been raised for that tax. So, I do not think these are amenable to very easy categorizations and easy answers. All I can tell you is, in the period April-October, 2005, I believe, we have collected about Rs. 3660 crores of arrears. And I am hopeful that we will collect as much this year as we did last year which, as you know, was a record collection year for arrears."

As per information available, the total tax arrear (direct plus indirect) as on date has crossed Rs. 11 lakh crore. This is an alarming situation. The Central Trade Unions have asked the Finance Minister to ensure that taxes are paid in advance and disputes are settled after payment only.

UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL JOB CRISIS

The World is facing "an unprecedented global job crisis of mammoth proportions", the Director General of International Labour Organisation (ILO) said today on 25TH January 2006 in a statement issued for annual World Economic Forum (WEF) being held at Davos, Switzerland..... "This crisis is not going unnoticed on the streets of rich and poor countries alike" Mr Juan Somavia said.

ILO director General said that the global job crisis was illustrated by a number of factors:

- Half of the workers in the world—some 1.4 billion working poor—currently live in families that survive on less than US$ 2 a day per person. They work in vast informal sector—from farms to fishing, from agriculture to urban alleyways—without benefits, social security or health care.

- Unemployment in terms of actual people out of work is at its highest point ever and continues to rise. In the last ten years, official unemployment has grown by more than 25 per cent and now stands at nearly 192 million worldwide, or about 6 per cent of the global workforce.

- Of these unemployed, the ILO estimates that 86 million or about half of the global total, are young people aged 15 to 24 year.

- When people cannot find work at home in their communities and societies, they look elsewhere. In the present environment, labour migration easily becomes a source of tension, not to speak of trafficking and other similar activities.

"One might ask whether the recent global economic growth is sufficient to offset the job crisis. But the straight answer is no. Despite robust economic growth of 4.3 per cent in 2005, the global economy is failing to deliver new jobs for those entering the job markets.".....

The global job crisis is one of biggest security risks we face today. If we choose to continue along the present path, the world risks becoming more fragmented, protectionist and confrontational. A continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments and under-consumption lead to an erosion of basic social contract underlying democratic societies: that all must share in progress. Many people interpret the lack of decent work opportunities as the absence of an ethical compass in policy making."....

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(ILO Press Release dated 25th January 2006)

ILO ON RIGHT TO STRIKE:

MORAL VICTORY FOR EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLE

Sukomal Sen

With a damningly critical observation on the government of India's attitude towards the Right to Strike for government employees, the Freedom of Association Committee of ILO in its November 2005 report unequivocally recommended the government employees' right to strike and asked the government to amend the Conduct Rules for government servants and the ESMA.

One notes that about 1.2 million employees and teachers of Tamilnadu took part in a heroic strike from July 2, 2003 against the curtailment of their economic and pension benefits. But the Jayalalitha government in the state let loose barbaric repression, leading to arbitrary dismissal of about 2 lakh employees. In relation to it, the Supreme Court of India commented on August 6, 2003 that government employees have no fundamental, legal, moral or equitable right to strike. To defend this right and mobilise public opinion, the All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) and its affiliates organised several programmes including national and state level conventions, letters to the prime minister and members of parliament, publication of a booklet, March to Parliament on February 26 and December 7, 2004 for submitting a mass petition to parliament with 40 million signatures demanding the right to strike, and two nationwide strikes on February 24, 2004 and September 29, 2005. Though India is a founder member of the International Labour Organisation since 1919, it is among the very few member nations who have not yet ratified the ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention 1948), Convention 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention 1949) and Convention 151 (Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention 1978).

In this regard, the union labour minister has stated that right to strike is not applicable for government employees in India and categorically ruled out the ratification of relevant ILO conventions.

In this regard, the Trade Unions International of Public and Allied Employees (of which AISGEF is a prime affiliate), and Public Services International made complaints to the International Labour Organisation against the government of India. The complaints concerned denial of the right to negotiate terms and conditions of services for government employees and teachers, and violation of their right to strike. The International Labour Organisation's Committee on Freedom of Associations, in its 338th report in November 2005, took note of it and regretted that the government of India has not bothered to reply to any of the complaints. Along with making several pro-employee recommendations, the committee categorically urged the government "to take the necessary measures to amend the Tamilnadu Government Servants Conduct Rules and the Tamilnadu Essential Services Maintenance Act so as to ensure that public servants, with the only possible exception of those exercising authority in the name of the state, and teachers may exercise the right to strike." In defence of the striking employees, "The committee requests the government to give necessary instructions so as to ensure in the future that any police intervention is wholly proportionate to the threat to public order that may have been created by a strike action."

The Trade Unions International of Allied Employees and All India State Government Employees' Federation have urged both the union government and the Tamilnadu state government to take heed of the ILO recommendations and accord full trade union rights including the right to strike to government

employees and teachers.

DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The complainants allege denial of the right to negotiate terms and conditions of services for government employees and teachers and violation of their right to strike. They further allege that the government withdrew the recognition of almost all government employees' and teachers' associations and sealed the office of the complainant organisation.

In the light of its foregoing conclusions, the committee invites the governing body to approve the following recommendations:

(a) The committee deeply regrets that, despite the time that has elapsed since the complaint was first presented, the government has not replied to any of the complainants' allegations. The committee strongly urges the government to be more cooperative in the future.

(b) The committee recalls that public servants, other than those engaged in the administration of the State, should enjoy collective bargaining rights, and priority should be given to collective bargaining as the means to settle disputes arising in connection with the determination of terms and conditions of employment of public service. The Committee therefore requests the Government to take the necessary measures in order to ensure the application of this principle in Tamilnadu.

(c) The committee requests the government to take the necessary measures to amend the Tamilnadu Government Servants Conduct Rules and the Tamilnadu Essential Services Maintenance Act so as to ensure that public servants, with the only possible exception of those exercising authority in the name of the State, and teachers may exercise the right to strike.

(d) The committee requests the government to give necessary instructions so as to ensure in the future that any police intervention is wholly proportionate to the threat to public order that may have been created by a strike action.

(e) The committee requests the government to give appropriate instructions to the police and the other competent authorities so as to obviate the dangers to freedom of association that such massive arrests and dismissals involve.

(f) The committee requests the government to review the matter of lost wages following the termination of the strike action, in consultation with the trade unions concerned, with a view to compensating the employees concerned for any damages suffered solely for the exercise of legitimate trade union activities and to keep it informed in this respect.

(g) The committee urges the government to take immediately the necessary measures so as to ensure the recognition of all associations of government employees and teachers, whose recognition was withdrawn as a sanction for their participation in the strike and to keep it informed of developments in this respect.

(h) The committee urges the government immediately to return the office building to the Tamilnadu Secretariat Association and keep it informed in this respect.

(i) The committee request the government to provide its comments on the complainant's request concerning monetary compensation to the families of the 42 employees who had lost their lives.

(j) In order to ensure a sound and lasting labour relations environment, the committee requests the government to begin thorough consultations on the unsettled issues related to the terms and conditions of employment of government employees and teachers with the trade unions in this sector. The committee requests the government to keep it informed in this respect.

In the face of the Supreme Court ruling against strike by government employees and the government's denial to grant this right, the strong recommendations of the ILO has come as a moral victory for the government employees movement of the country.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLE AGAINST PRIVATISATION

22000 employees of airports Authority of India working in 126 airports spread all over the country went on indefinite cease-work from 1st February 2006 against the Govt.'s decision to privatise the Delhi and Mumbai airports on the plea of modernisation.

Airports Authority of India Employees Joint Forum gave the call for struggle. The AAI Joint Forum demanded that the modernisation of these two airports should be undertaken by the Airports Authority of India itself as recommended by the Alternative Plan Review Committee appointed by the Civil Aviation Ministry and headed by the Member (Finance) of Airports Authority of India. The Committee evaluated the alternative plan for modernization of the airports submitted by the AAI Employees Joint Forum and placed its report in December 2005 which okayed the plan submitted by the AAI Employees Joint Forum and also asserted that the Airports Authority is capable of undertaking the modernization of Mumbai and Delhi Airports along with 35 other non-metro airports and can mobilise resources for the same. The Govt. of India did not even look into above recommendation given by the Committee appointed by the Govt itself and hastily decided to privatise the two major airports, which clearly exposed that the motive of the Govt. was privatisation and not modernization in real sense.

The cease-work continued for four days severely affecting airports services in all the airports of the country. The employees had to brave police atrocities while carrying on their struggle. In Mumbai airport, police brutally lathi charged on the peaceful dharna of the employees, which injured 25 employees including seven women employees. Five employees got severe head injury and had been lying in the hospital in serious condition. In other airports of the country also police applied force to disperse the dharna by the employees on cease-work. On 3rd February, Delhi High Court issued order banning mobilization within 500 meter of the airports. Despite all these, nothing could deter the airports employees in carrying on demonstration before all the airports.

The struggle of the airports employees has drawn widespread solidarity action throughout the country. All the Central Trade Unions in the country including INTUC and BMS, in a statement issued on 31st January 2006, called upon the working class to observe solidarity demonstrations throughout the country in support of the struggling airports employees on 2nd February. On 2nd February, all the industrial centers of the country and the airports witnessed massive demonstration by the workers of other industries and occupations. In Mumbai, unions of 32 public sector units along with others staged huge demonstration, which was addressed by the leaders of all the central trade unions. In Calcutta, and other industrial centers in the state, demonstrations were organised and the workers in and around the airport area organized massive mobilisation before the airports. Other mass organisations of women, students and youth also came out on the street in support of the airports employees. In Delhi, workers from different industries irrespective of affiliations assembled in the Delhi airport to express their solidarity. Reports of solidarity demonstrations were also received from Chennai, Gujarat, Nagpur, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Thiruvanantapuram, Kochi, Agartala, Ranchi, Bhopal and other places. CITU leadership throughout the country were continuously associated with the struggling employees staging dhrana in respective airports. In Delhi, the airports employees' dharna was addressed by M K Pandhe, Dipankar Mukherjee, Jibon Roy, Brinda Karat, Sitaram Yechury etc in all the four days, besides leaders of other trade unions.

The Left parties also extended support to the employees struggle

and demanded upon the Govt to consider the just demands of the employees.

The Joint Forum met the Prime Minister on 3rd February 2006 and pressed for their demands. On 4th February 2006, again meeting was held between the Civil Aviation Minister, Sri Praful Patel and the representative of the Joint Forum along with M K Pandhe, President CITU and Gurudas Dasgupta MP, General Secretary AITUC and in the process the Minister has given a letter of assurance. The letter given by the Minister mentions:

"The Government will set up a tripartite committee comprising of representatives of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India and Joint Forum. The Committee will look into the issues and proposals of modernising airports by the AAI and employee related issues including their job security. In addition, it is also made clear that there will be no victimization on account of their participation in the agitation." (Emphasis ours)

Based on above assurance, the Joint Forum has decided to call off the agitation on 4th February afternoon. While addressing the struggling employees at Delhi Airport after the meeting with the Minister, M K Pandhe, President CITU congratulated the employees for their heroic struggle and also called upon them to prepare for and join the struggle against privatisation policy of the Govt.

CENTRAL GOVT. EMPLOYEES' STRIKE DEFERRED

The Standing Committee of the National Council JCM met on February15, 2006 to discuss the 20-point charter of demands. The meeting was presided over by Prituish Sinha Secretary, Personnel. The meeting lasted for about three hours. All issues in the charter were subjected to discussion. The outcome of the discussions, as incorporated in the statement finalized at the meeting, inter-alia, included:

"Constitute VI CPC and Grant Interim Relief:

The Government has agreed to set up the VI CPC very soon. The Terms of Reference will be discussed with the Staff Side. The demand for Interim Relief in cash on the basis of the V CPC formulation for fixation of minimum wages on the basis of increase in per capita Net National Product (NPP) would be referred to the Government for a decision."

Subsequently the Joint Council of Action (JCA) of the Central Government Employees Organisations adopted the following resolution, which is self-explanatory:

"The joint Council of Action of the Central Government Employees Organisations congratulates Central Government employees working in the Railways, Defence(Civilian)Income Tax, Postal Employees, Audit & Accounts, Central Secretariat and other affiliates of the Confederation of the Central Government Employees for showing massive unity in the course of sustained struggle and also while serving the strike notice on 7th February, 2006.

The JCA expresses its satisfaction on the Government's decision to appoint the VI CPC and also for agreeing to consult the Staff Side on the Terms of Reference of the commission.

The JCA also notes that the Official Side has agreed to refer the demand for the payment of Interim Relief in cash to the Government and the quantum of Relief being computed on the formula adopted by the V CPC for wage fixation of the Central Government employees.

All the 20 demands were discussed and the conclusions reached thereon are in the enclosed statement.

The Official Side also referred the decision taken by the Ministry of Railways to appoint a Commission under the Chairmanship of a High Court Judge to review working hours of the Running staff and also

appointment of a Committee under the Chairmanship of a retired General Manger to improve promotional prospects of Group 'D' staff on the Indian Railways. The Official Side agreed that on receipt of information from the Railway Ministry, they would examine the issue for further instructions to other ministries for similar action.

Keeping in view the response of the Government and also taking into account the agreements reached on various issues including discussion on the implementation of pending arbitration awards with the Staff Side, it was decided that it would be appropriate to defer the strike scheduled to commence from 6.00 a.m. of 1st March, 2006 to give more time to the Government to take a final decision on the pending demands

The JCA also decides to meet after two months to review the progress to take appropriate action in the matter for the settlement of pending demands".

The JCA has demanded an interim relief not less than Rs. 1000/- on the basis of the computation made taking into account the percentage increase over the per capita Net National Product over the 10-year period. It also computed the wage differential of the minimum wage in the insurance sector and that of the Central Govt. Employees. The per capita NNP calculation comes about Rs. 2190 and the wage differential at Rs. 2435. Normally the Interim Relief is 50% of any of the above figures. It works out to Rs. 1095 and 1217 respectively. It is on this basis the JAC has demanded payment of Interim Relief at Rs. 1000/.

(Source: Circular issued by S.K.Vyas, Secretary General, Confederaion of Central Government Emplyees and Workers)

JANUARY 31:

PROTEST DAY AGAINST ATTACK ON LABOUR RIGHTS

Punjab

A ten thousand strong rally was held at Goshala Maidan of Ludhiana, Punjab in protest against widespread violation of labour laws and attack on trade union rights in the state with active patronage of the state govt. The rally was held in culmination to a week-long statewide campaign on the matter. The meeting passed a resolution denouncing the anti-worker policy of the state and the central govts and arrogant violation of basic labour laws pertaining to minimum wages, working hours, registration of trade unions etc by the employers with active support of the law-enforcement machinery. The rally also condemned the govt's inaction on the illegal lock-out declared in the Highway Cycle and Rockman Cycle owned by the Hero-group of industry on the very day the workers got their trade union registered after a long wait for two years. The workers are being made to work for twelve hours a day without any compensation for the additional hours, and the social security legislations are being trampled underfoot. The workers of the factories under lock-out are not getting their wages since October 2005. Call was given from the rally to heighten the pitch of the struggle in the adys to come including state-wide strike action to compel the state govt to implement the labour laws. The rally was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, Vijay Mishra and Raghunath Singh, Working President and General Secretary of Punjab State CITU, besides others.

Uttaranchal

Mass demonstration was held on Tehri, Kotdwara, Chamoli, Haldwani and Dehradun during 25-31 January against violation of labour laws and attack on labour rights. Joint demonstration was held along with other trade unions at Haridwar on 29th January.

On 31st January, around 3000 workers staged dharna before the district headquarters at Dehradun and a memorandum was submitted to Chief Secretary of the State through the District Magistrate. The rally was addressed by Birendra Bhandari, General

Secretary, Uttaranchal State CITU, and other CITU leaders viz., Pitambar Singh Lohani, Mahabir Sharma, Krishna Guniyal, Sarbeswari, Sunita Devi etc.

Orissa

Demonstration and dharna was held in front of the Governor's house at Bhubaneswar on 31st January 2006. The rally was addressed by Sivaji Patnaik, Lambodar Nayak, Nava Mahanty, Dushmanta Das Sridhar Mishra and other CITU leaders. From the rally a delegation led by Sivaji Patnaik met the Governor and submitted a memorandum.

RAILWAY WORKERS CONVENTION

The convention of various categories of railway workers in the South Western Railways was held on 24th January 2006 at Bangalore. The convention was jointly sponsored by All India Loco Running Staff Association All India Station Masters' Association, All India Guards Council and Technical Employees Association of Railways. The Convention was inaugurated by Basudev Acharia, MP and Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee ob Railways. In his inaugural speech, Acharia denounced the anti-worker and anti-people policy of the Govt affecting both the common people and the railway workers. He pointed out in particular the prolonged working hours of 14 to 18 hours a day, the loco running staff are being subjected to.

The convention was addressed by leaders of various trade union centers and railway unions. VJK Nair, General Secretary, Karnataka CITU, Krishna Chakravorty, President, UTUC-LS, S Prasanna Kumar, Secretary, Karnataka State CITU, L Mony, President, AILRSA, M Ramani, Secretary General, All India Station Masters Association, D N S Srinibas Rao, General Secretary, AIGC, Thaya Das, Zonal President, Technical Employees Association of Railways and others.

The Convention upheld unanimously the decision of proposed strike by the Central Govt Employees and Railway-men from 1st March onward and adopted resolution on the following demands: 1) Constitute the VI Pay Commission immediately, 2) Scrap the new pension scheme, 3) Fill up all vacancies, 4) implement secret ballot system to recognize railway trade union-it should be one union one industry based, 5) Channel of promotion for technical grades to be on par with non-technical cadre (i.e., in six steps), 6) Declare every in-charge station master as supervisory in conformity with GRS and workload, 7) Scrap retrograde recommendation of RAC 2002 etc.

AIFAWH WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING

The Working Committee of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers met at Shramik Bhawan, Kolkata on 18-19 January 2006. 33 members and invitees from 14 states attended the meeting. A meeting of the Office Bearers on the 17th of January preceded the Working Committee meeting. Neelima Maitra, President of AIFAWH chaired both the meetings, in which Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU participated.

The working committee reviewed the 5th Conference of AIFAWH, which was held from 8-11 November 2005 in Bangalore and came to the unanimous conclusion that it was at a qualitatively higher level compared to all the previous Conferences. It congratulated the Karnataka state committee of the

union for the impressive rally and the arrangements for the Conference.

The Committee decided to actively participate in the observation of 'Anti Imperialist Day' on 24th January and in the Protest Week Against Attacks on Trade Union Rights on 25 - 31 January 06 as per the decision of the Bhopal Working Committee of CITU.

It was decided to hold massive rallies and demonstrations in all the state capitals in the country on 18th April focussing on the demands of Institutionalisation of ICDS, regularisation of the anganwadi workers and helpers and enhancement of honorarium, pending regularisation. The state level rallies would be preceded by an extensive campaign with the aim of approaching all the anganwadi employees and mobilising them in project and district level demonstrations.

The AIFAWH working committee also decided to organise a continuous day and night mass relay hunger strike for 10 days near the HRD Ministry, starting from the second day of the monsoon session of the Parliament. It was decided to mobilise not less than 500 anganwadi employees on each day to participate in the hunger strike. A massive campaign with distribution of leaflets, group meetings etc will be organised in all the states .

The working committee reiterated the demand to universalise and strengthen the Integrated Child Development Services. It decided to widen the campaign on the demand by involving the organisations of the beneficiaries like the All India Democratic Women's Association, All India Agricultural Workers' Union and the All India Kisan Sabha. It called upon its state committees to explore the possibilities of organising state level conventions with these organisations on the issue. To start with it was decided to hold such conventions in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. It was felt that these conventions should be completed preferably by the end of May this year. (The State Committees of West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu & Assam will decide as per their convenience).

A trade union class will be held for the activists in the Hindi speaking states on 24-28 April 2006 at Chandigarh. Around 150 activists are expected to participate in these classes. It was also decided to organise a national workshop on 'Organisation' at Pune on 3-4 June 2006, which would be preceded by a meeting of the Office Bearers and followed by a meeting of the Working Committee.

The working committee decided to increase the membership of AIFAWH to more than 3, 44,000 in the year 2006. The job distribution of the office bearers was also finalised.

Concretising the direction of the 5th Conference, the Working Committee gave the slogans to focus on 3S's - 'Sangharsh, Shiksha and Sangathan' and develop 4C's 'Conscious, Committed and Capable Cadres'.

Massive Rallies of Working Women in Tamil Nadu

As per the decision of the Tamil Nadu state committee of CITU and the Tamil Nadu state coordination committee of workingwomen massive rallies of working women were held in five centres in the state - Chennai, Madurai, Thiruchy, Tiruppur and Nagercoil. Workingwomen from the neighbouring 3-4 districts were mobilised in each of these centres. Around 12,000 women workers and employees participated in these rallies, which focused on a 13 - point charter of demands, prepared by the state coordination committee of workingwomen.

It was significant that women employees working in insurance, banks, electricity board, state government departments etc marched along with the women construction workers, handloom workers, fisheries workers, and other home based workers like those engaged in tailoring, pappad making, agarbatti rolling etc. This was the first time in the history of the state committee of CITU that rallies to highlight the specific

problems of working women were held in the state in such a massive scale and the women workers responded with great enthusiasm. The decision of the state CCWW to conduct 'working women rallies' was discussed in the CITU state secretariat meeting and later endorsed by the CITU state committee. Centralised meetings involving CITU District secretaries, and representatives from middle class and other mass front organisations were conducted in all the five centres. Similar meetings were also conducted at the district level. Members of the CCWW and women activists of CITU have actively participated in the campaign and conducted general body meetings, street corner meetings, gate meetings etc to make all the rallies successful. The district committees of CITU too actively involved themselves in the preparatory activities.

The efforts of the CITU state committee and the state CCWW were supplemented by several fraternal organisations like the South Zone Insurance Employees' Association, Bank Employees' Federation of India, Telecom Employees' Union and State Government Employees' Association etc.

Scores of lunch hour meetings and group meetings were held in various offices and were addressed by the members of the state coordination committee of working women. Thousands of leaflets, handbills and posters were published by the CITU and distributed throughout the state.

In Chennai more than four thousand women, mainly from the unorganised sector, but also from various middle class organisations and factory workers marched through the busy streets and assembled in front of the government guesthouse. The procession was led by Malati Chittibabu, convenor of the state coordination committee of working women and others. A Soundararajan, General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu state committee of CITU and other leaders addressed the rally.

In Madurai, around two thousand women, a large number of them women insurance employees, construction workers and fisheries workers, marched under the banners of their respective unions. Hemalata, Secretary, CITU and All India Coordination Committee of Working Women and other leaders addressed the meeting, which was presided by Mercy Soundaram, convenor of the district coordination committee of workingwomen.

More than 3,500 workingwomen participated in the rally in Nagercoil. Here too women employees from insurance, banks, anganwadi employees marched in a militant procession shouting slogans against the anti worker and anti women policies of the Jayalalithaa government. The procession, which was led by Indira joint convenor of the state coordination committee of workingwomen, was inaugurated by AK Padmanabhan, Secretary, CITU. J Hemachandran, president of the state committee of CITU addressed the gathering.

The procession in Tiruppur, in which more than 2,000 women workers participated, was led by Raji, joint convenor of the state coordination committee of workingwomen. Vellangiri and Kamaraj, both vice presidents of the CITU state committee and other leaders addressed the public meeting.

Lalitha from the Tamil Nadu Government Employees' Association and others led the around 1,000 women workers who participated in the demonstrations in Trichy. R Singaravelu, Assistant General Secretary of the state committee of CITU addressed the gathering.

The policies of globalisation and liberalisation and the attacks on their job security, working and living conditions have increased the burdens on workingwomen and made their lives precarious. This massive response to the call by the Tamil Nadu state coordination committee of workingwomen (CITU) clearly indicates the seriousness of the problems facing the women workers and employees. It also demonstrates their desire to join the struggles to resist the attacks on their working and living conditions. This is a clear message that this movement needs to be further strengthened.

(Report from Malati Chittibabu)

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month Nov.'05	Dec.'05
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	525	515
	2	Guntur	554	549
	3	Hyderabad	548	548
	4	Visakhapatnam	541	530
	5	Warangal	579	572
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	466	461
	7	Guwahati	541	541
	8	Labac-Silchar	431	439
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	464	461
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	460	456
Bihar	11	Monghyr	541	530
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	496	493
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	529	528
	14	Bhavnagar	540	534
	15	Rajkot	507	500
	16	Surat	534	525
	17	Vadodra	511	508
Haryana	18	Faridabad	560	557
	19	Yamunanagar	543	538
J & K	20	Srinagar	644	647
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	525	520
	22	Jharia	465	457
	23	Kodarma	498	494
	24	Noamundi	493	492
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	517	511
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	553	555
	27	Belgaum	605	608
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	561	561
	29	Mercara	505	500
Kerala	30	Alwaye	551	555
	31	Mundakayam	522	535
	32	Quilon	549	561
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	613	621
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	497	492
	35	Bhopal	575	576
	36	Indore	552	546
	37	Jabalpur	552	554
Maharastra	38	Mumbai	619	619
	39	Nagpur	564	563
	40	Nasik	589	586
	41	Pune	602	597
	42	Solapur	555	548
Orissa	43	Barbil	498	496
	44	Rourkela	487	479
Punjab	45	Amritsar	507	503
	46	Ludhiana	520	511
Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	546	546
	48	Jaipur	511	510
Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	584	578
	50	Coimbatore	524	522
	51	Coonoor	528	527
	52	Madurai	537	536
	53	Salem	499	500
	54	Tiruchirapall	609	608
Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	535	533
	56	Ghaziabad	567	568
	57	Kanpur	541	537
	58	Saharanpur	521	519
	59	Varanasi	590	583
West Bengal	60	Asansol	526	521
	61	Darjeeling	459	455
	62	Durgapur	609	601
	63	Haldia	650	631
	64	Howrah	659	639
	65	Jalpaiguri	473	469
	66	Kolkata	621	608
	67	Raniganj	491	485
Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	631	629
Delhi	69	Delhi	666	663
Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	616	617
ALL INDIA			553	550

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	November 2005	December 2005
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	583	567
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	527	521
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	549	551
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	487	490
Tripura	5	Tripura	496	485
Goa	6	Goa	641	642

IRAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: OMINOUS PORTENTS

The International Atomic Energy Agency's decision to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council has opened a new and dangerous chapter in the pursuit of US hegemony in world affairs. The vote by the 35-nation IAEA Board will not help in resolving the Iran nuclear issue through negotiations within the framework of IAEA. The U.S. and the European Union made efforts to send Iran's nuclear issue to the UN Security Council, without regard for Iran's legitimate right to gain access to nuclear technology meant for peaceful purposes. They insisted that Teheran abandon its legitimate rights to the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. The IAEA resolution further benefits the expansionist policies of the United States and its European allies. Ideally for the U.S, Iran will react to the threat of sanctions by rejecting the IAEA additional protocol, or still better, by expelling inspectors and withdrawing from the NPT. Iran has already threatened to withdraw from NPT. Then the US can argue that there is no way to know how many nuclear bombs Iran is building and how far along it is, and that it is better to do something sooner rather than later. Even if that does not happen, the U.S. can argue, based on the resolution passed by IAEA, that Iran is in noncompliance with the NPT. That will eventually lead to "preemptive" military action by US. This exact same rhetoric was invoked prior to the Iraq invasion.

Already US Defence Secretary has warned of military action against Iran and a British newspaper has reported that the US is preparing for a missile attack on Iranian nuclear installations. Clearly, the US is preparing for another Iraq-type war on Iran. The Manmohan Singh Government has chosen to give in to Washington's blackmail on the civilian nuclear cooperation front by voting for a resolution that is flawed in law and suspect in intent. What is worse is that it has ended up endorsing something equally pernicious: the five permanent Security Council members' act of arrogating to themselves the right to decide the fate of other countries and international organisations. India's vote shows its inability to analyse the emerging realities and its readiness to get on the U.S. bandwagon, which was not in conformity with the pursuit of an independent foreign policy as enunciated in the NCMP.

The Left parties have been demanding that India should not be party to any referral to the Security Council nor countenance any recommendation for taking action through the UN Security Council. By voting for the referral to UN Security Council, the UPA government has succumbed to US pressures on the Iran nuclear issue.

It buckled under pressure from US, as evident from the warning by David Mulford, US Ambassador in India, prior to the IAEA vote. In the clearest indication of the cost of that vote, Mulford said that a 'no' vote or an abstention from India in IAEA would kill the nuclear deal that India signed with the US last year. In an interview to PTI, Mulford said an "observation" had been conveyed to India that if New Delhi decides not to vote for the resolution, "the effect on members of the US Congress with regard to (Indo-US) civil nuclear initiative will be devastating." Mulford didn't stop there. He even berated the Left parties for their stand on foreign investment in the retail sector. Recently he wrote a letter to the West Bengal Chief Minister condemning his comment on the US President. The utterances and actions of Mulford are unbecoming of a diplomat and a serious affront to our sovereignty. The Left parties have demanded his immediate recall. What is most surprising is the government's meek reaction to the outrageous interference of the US envoy in our foreign and economic affairs.

Another illustration of US intervention was the State Department's "aide memoire" to the government to protest against the decision to allow Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh to purchase a stake in a Syrian oilfield along with a Chinese company. The Bush administration has included Syria, along with Iran, in its black list. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had earlier advised New Delhi to desist from going ahead with the gas pipeline project with Iran. The servile attitude of the UPA regime has omnious portents.

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Showdown over selloff







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