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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Regularise ICDS !



Com. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, addressing the Anganwadi workers and helpers.

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

General Council Meeting

July 23 - 26, 2005
Alleppey, Kerala

NOTICE

A meeting of the General Council of CITU will be held on 23rd to 26th July 2005 at Alleppey, Kerala. The agenda of the meeting is as follows:

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the last General Council meeting
2. Presidential Address
3. Report of the General Secretary
4. Special discussion on " Organisation and cadre development"
5. Accounts
6. Any other issue with the permission of Chair.

The General Council meeting will commence at 10 AM on 23rd July 2005 and be concluded by mid-day of 26th April 2005. A mass rally will be held on the afternoon of 26th July. To partly cover the expenses, a delegate fee has been fixed at Rs 400/- per member. All the members of the General Council are requested to attend the meeting.

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) will be held on 21- 22 July 2005 in Alleppey, prior to the General Council meeting. All members of the AICCWW are requested to attend the meeting and all the state committees of CITU are requested to ensure that their representatives attend the meeting positively.

The members of the General Council and AICCWW (CITU) are requested arrange their onward journey and return reservation in advance to avoid last moment inconvenience. Comrades are also request to intimate their travel plans and the date and time of their arrival in advance to the Reception Committee office (Alleppey district committee office of CITU) at the address given below:

CITU District Committee Office
Near District Court Bridge
Alappuzha
Kerala
Ph: 0477 - 2261327

Mobile of Com. Prasad (General Secretary of the District Committee): 094471 80523

Chittabrata Majumdar
General Secretary

(Note: The inconvenience caused to comrades by the change of earlier indicated dates, though owing to unavoidable circumstances, is deeply regretted.)

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JUNE 2005

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



Some team! Go and outsource a coach.

Courtesy: The Indian Express

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EDITORIAL

PEOPLE WILL FORCE A CHANGE

The UPA government has completed its first year of tenure in office.

The wise men and women of the media world have indulged in 'credit'/ 'debit' rating of the performance of not only the government headed by Manmohan Singh but also the individual ministers. The only yardstick the media people apply universally for such rating seems to be the pace of implementation of 'economic reforms'.

Not only the media people - the pro-reforms lobby representing the corporates, multinationals and international finance capital also - blame it on the 'coalition pressures' for the 'failure' of the Man Mohan Singh - Chidambaram - Montek Singh Ahluwalia troika not being able to deliver enough on the 'reforms front'.

On the other hand, the Left Parties supporting the UPA government from outside have sent out a strong message by choosing not to be part of the celebrations bandwagon: "The UPA regime has to do more to address the expectations of the people".

The Prime Minister, speaking on the occasion of the first anniversary of his government pledged to the people "we do want India to shine, but shine for all".

The PM wants the people to judge his government 'by its performance, by its sincerity in keeping its promises'.

The PM has talked of 'the biggest challenge is to survive and flourish in the increasingly integrated and globalised world we are living in' and 'the bold policy initiatives that we have to initiate to take our country forward in our quest to regain our due place in the comity of Nations'.

On the other hand there is also the oft-repeated discourse on reducing wasteful subsidies.

These are pointers to one basic truth. This government only seeks to pursue the same old economic policy regime of the NDA government, rejected by the people. The thrust is only on giving a further push to 'bold' - *read anti-people* - reforms.

People of India are, no doubt, keen that this government should not succumb to the threats and manipulations of the erstwhile ruling combine - the hard-core communal forces. But it is also necessary for this government to remember that people cannot be taken for granted. They are 'impatient' - as the PM himself has noted: "impatient for change, impatient for a better quality life, impatient for new opportunities". The "out of the box" thinking cannot really take off without a directional change in the policies. The sooner the government changes gears, the better for it; the better for the country and its people. If the government keeps dithering, people will also force such a change. The working people must be in the vanguard of this urgently needed thrust.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY OVER FASCISM

M K Pandhe

The 9th of May was observed all over the world to celebrate 60th anniversary of victory over fascism. The Second World War took the toll of 5 crore people of which over two crore were from the former Soviet Union. Crores were disabled in the war in which the toll of women and children was very heavy.

The rise of fascism in Germany and Italy was looked upon by Anglo-US imperialism as a bulwark against Soviet Communism. Even when Hitler's army occupied Western Europe, British army preferred to be satisfied with "glorious retreat" from Dunkirk and allowed Hitler to occupy the entire western Europe. Appeal of the Soviet Union for a joint front to defeat fascist offensive fell on deaf years.

The Nazi forces treacherously attacked Soviet Union on 21st June 1941. About 250 Nazi army divisions entered the Soviet territory and Hitler even threatened to enter Moscow by 7th November. The Red Army heroically resisted the onslaughts of Hitler's marauders. The people were directed to adopt a scorched earth policy, which destroyed everything, and the advancing fascist forces could not get any resources. The factories were either shifted to safer places or completely destroyed. The retreating forces destroyed even the famous dam on the river Dnieper. Lakhs of people went underground to wage guerilla warfare.

Under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, the great patriotic war, fought by the people of USSR has no parallel in the world history. On 7th November 1941 Stalin appeared in the historic parade at the Red Square and declared that Hitler would never be allowed to enter Moscow, whatever cost the people would have to pay.

Nearly 5 lakh people died due to starvation alone but people resisted Nazi forces and did not allow them to enter the city of Leningrad. I had an occasion to visit the memorial for the people who died in the heroic battle of Leningrad which depicts how the patriotic masses can resort to unheard of sacrifices to save the fatherland.

When Hitler's Army failed to conquer Moscow and Leningrad it decided to capture Stalingrad at any cost. However, the heroic Red Army fought for every street and household and did not allow the fascist forces to capture Stalingrad. It was estimated that everyday over 7000 Soviet soldiers had to lay down their life.

When the people and the army of the Soviet Union were involved in life and death struggle to defeat fascism the Anglo-American powers were gloating in their hearts for the loss of Soviet armymen. President Truman expressed his feeling openly at the weakening of the Hitler and Soviet armies. Underground revolutionary movements in the Nazi occupied areas by the communists and other anti-fascist forces played an important role in the defeat of fascism. Several people lost their lives in Nazi concentration camps and gas chambers. Several communists were shot dead by the fascist forces in the German occupied areas. Julius Fuchich in his historic book "Notes From the Gallows" had depicted shocking condition in fascist prisons and how the detenues were tortured to crush their revolutionary spirit.

The treacherous attack on the Pearl Harbour by the Japanese forces in 1941, which destroyed all armada of US stationed in the Pacific Island, forced the US army to enter the war arena. Within a couple of months the Japanese troops captured Philipines, Malaysia, Indo-China, Thailand and other countries in South East Asia. The Anglo-US army could not offer effective resistance to the advancing Japanese army. The US General MacArther had to flee to Australia as per instructions from the US government.

It was only the Communist Party of China, under the leadership of Com.Mao Tse Tung, that offered effective resistance to the Japanese fascist forces. An estimated 2 crores of Chinese people died during the reign of terror of the Japanese forces in China. Guerrilla activists in Indo-China, Korea and other countries were active during the entire period of Second World War. The role played by the anti-fascist forces during the war against Japan had significantly contributed in defeating fascism in Asian soil.

Several writers of history of the Second World War during Khrushev and Gorbachev period have tried to underestimate the role of Stalin during the Second World War. They had attempted to point out the huge loss of the Soviet Army and the people due to the wrong military tactics adopted by Stalin. They failed to note the deliberate and heinous role of the Anglo-US Governments in not opening the second front to oppose the Hitler army. If they would have opened the second front the loss of Soviet life would have been considerably reduced. These history writers have failed to note the most modern German army with heavy destruction power was involved in the war. The military tactics adopted by the Red Army under the leadership of Stalin to defeat German fascism are unparallel in the world history. Several Western writers had clearly pointed out the role of Stalin as a genius in war fare strategy.

Though every family in the Soviet Union had to suffer during the Second World War this price had to be paid to protect socialism and liberty of the fatherland. It was Stalin who inspired the people in the Soviet Union to pay such a heavy price since it was the only way to defeat fascism.

After throwing out the yoke of fascism from the Soviet soil the Soviet army liberated the Baltic states, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and reached the border the Germany. It was only when the Red Army was nearing Berlin the Anglo-US forces send their troops to Western Europe mainly to prevent the further advance of the Soviet army. When German army was on retreat every where it could not give much resistance to the Anglo-US forces.

The red flag was hoisted on the Riechstag and Hitler had to commit suicide in his bunker. The Nazi army surrendered to the Soviet forces on 9th May 1945 and the entire world was relieved from the yoke of fascism. The people all over the world could see that it was not the capitalist England or USA but the Socialist Soviet Union which could give a crushing defeat to fascism.

After the defeat of German fascism, Chinese Communist Party played a notable role in liberating China from the yoke of Japanese imperialism. The Korean people under the leadership of Com.Kim Il Sung successfully threw the yoke of Japanese imperialism.

It was possible to defeat Japanese army without using atom bomb to destroy the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August. However US imperialism resorted to such a atrocious crime to kill lakhs of innocent citizens at night to force the surrender of Japanese imperialism.

Fascism in Italy was also defeated and the tyrannical role of Mussolini came to an end in Italy. The axis powers had a plan to capture the whole world and India was a part of that plan. It was due to the successful resistance of the Red Army that the German army could not advance further.

Vladimir Putin, President of Russia had to admit the glorious role played by the Red Army in defeating fascism on the occasion of celebrating the 60th anniversary of the war. He also had to note that dismantling of Soviet Union was one of the biggest tragedies of the 20th century. Putin had to say that "Stalin and his epoch are an inalienable part of the Russian history.

The emergence of Red Flag with hammer and sickle during official celebration on 9th May 2005 at Red Square in Moscow in presence of US President George Bush, French President Chirac, President of China, Hu Jintao, Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and German Chancellor, Schrodder only reflected the admission of the crucial role played by the Soviet Union in the great patriotic war against fascism. Many western commentators have criticized the glorification of Stalin and the Soviet Union on this occasion. These critiques were only shutting their eyes to the historic role played by the Red Army in the war against fascism.

Today President Bush and Tonny Blair are trying to play the role of Hitler in the world situation in a different way. They are trying to control the world politics by resorting to military aggrandizement and suppressing democratic aspirations of the people all over the world.

Under these circumstances people allover the world rejoice at the defeat of fascism in the world 60 years ago, and have pledged to carry forward the struggle against imperialist forces who strive to control the livelihood of the people around the world. It is only through a determined struggle all over the world that the people can defeat the imperialist forces led by US imperialism who desire to impose their hegemony over the globe.

UPA AND WORKING PEOPLE:

FROM HOPE TO DESPAIR, ON TO STRUGGLE PATH

W. R. VARADA RAJAN

The UPA government at the centre has completed one year in office on May 22, 2005. There has been no dearth of celebrations, assessments, ranking the performance of the ministers, reaffirmation of NCMP commitment and what not. What has been the experience of the working people of this country during the first year of tenure of the UPA governance?

The working people of India hailed the people's verdict in the general elections 2004 ousting the erstwhile NDA government, whose track record had been disastrous for all sections of the Indian society except a few affluent.

At the same time, 'The Working Class' editorial in June 2004 issue pointed out candidly: "The verdict is not just for change of government - it is for change of policies as well. The UPA government should fulfil the people's aspirations by embarking on an exercise to bring about a paradigm shift in the economic policies". It is this hope that had during the course of the last one-year has evaporated into the thin air and the despair is mounting amongst all sections of the workers.

The Manmohan Singh government had adopted a National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP); it swore to implement it faithfully. The NCMP was only a mixed bag viewed from the working class point of view. Yet, it had some positive commitments. The workers hoped to build on these aspects and seek at least some immediate relief.

The Prime Minister started on a welcome note by inviting the central trade unions for an interaction soon after taking office. The Finance Minister restored the pre budget consultations, which was discontinued during the NDA regime, affording an opportunity for the trade unions to place their proposals. But, these initiatives were not followed by actions that would have even partially met the concerns voiced and aspirations outlined during these occasions.

While presenting the Shram Awards on 4th October, 2004 the Prime Minister noted, "The last few years have seen the phenomenon of jobless growth and we need to reverse this trend so that more growth translates into meaningful results for the working classes". He added: "Structural reforms in a democracy, to be durable, must involve consultation with all stakeholders, particularly the workers and trade unions. Our government is committed to reforms with a human face. The working classes of our country have my assurance that we shall never pursue a path, which affects adversely the interests of the workers and the toiling masses of our country".

These words reflect a commendable attitude. But, has the practice of UPA governance matched this attitude?

The only apex tripartite forum for consultations on labour related issues viz. the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) has not met even once after the UPA government took office. Unfortunately, despite dates being notified twice during last year, the ILC session had been postponed. Reason: Prime Minister, who was expected to inaugurate the same, could not confirm the dates! It is time for holding yet another session of the ILC this year and there is no word even on that!

And a plethora of decisions have been taken on issues of serious concern to the working classes without any consultation whatsoever. From proceeding to disinvest up to 49 per cent of the government holding in public sector enterprises, despite the NCMP commitment of not privatising profit-making PSUs, to the launch of banking sector 'reforms' of mega mergers and facilitating take over by foreign banks of Indian private sector banks, unilateral and arbitrary moves are afoot, throwing to winds the NCMP promise of "Tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them will be actively pursued". The move for a "Bill to be introduced to amend section 66 of the factories Act, 1948 to provide flexibility in working hours of women" is yet another move *sans* consultations.

The UPA Government had, in its NCMP, asserted that one of its basic principles of governance

would be "to enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector, and assure a secure future for their families in every respect". For ensuring that this basic principle is translated into action, the CITU, in a memorandum presented to the Prime Minister, had urged giving utmost priority to the three long awaited, legislative measures viz. 1) Comprehensive Agricultural Workers Bill to guarantee minimum wage and to extend social protection to the vast multitude of agricultural labourers; 2) The Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, duly incorporating the unanimous inputs provided by all the Central Trade Unions and 3) A legislation to protect women workers from sexual harassment at work places as per the recommendations and guidelines issued by the Supreme Court as far back as August, 1997.

The document released on the one year of UPA government is silent on the first. For the second and third legislations suggested the report card only records as: "Bill on Welfare of Workers in Unorganised Sector under preparation" and "Law against sexual harassment of women at work place under preparation".

On the promise of reversing the phenomenon of jobless growth, the Prime Minister, while releasing the document said: "The Employment Guarantee Act, which will be passed in all likelihood in the next session of Parliament, will be our primary vehicle for providing income security to the poorest sections of society". But the fact remains that the Bill introduced and pending with the Standing Committee of Parliament is a much diluted version even of the draft of the National Advisory Council and just a mockery of the NCMP commitment in this regard.

The Prime Minister also asserted: "We must also do more to protect the interests of workers in the unorganised sector, improve their working conditions and give them social security, even as we create a more competitive environment for the organised sector". But, the UPA government had only circulated the NDA government draft on the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, duly incorporating therein the dubious Unorganised sector Workers Social Security Scheme launched by the previous regime as an election-eve gimmick. Even on this the unanimous recommendations made by the entire spectrum of trade union movement have been ignored.

The report card displays as its achievement the "Establishment of a Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority to promote old age income security by establishing, regulating and developing pension funds under the New Pension System, to protect the interests of subscribers to pension schemes" under the heading 'senior citizens'. This is nothing but toeing the retrograde NDA line of privatising pension funds and diverting the contributions to the speculative stock markets. The UPA Finance Minister has planned to open the 'pension sector' for FDI, along with retail trade and mining sectors!

The UPA government took the extreme step of deciding (by majority in the CBT) to reduce the interest rate on EPF from 9.5 to 8.5 per cent. Though the Finance Minister announced, after a meeting with the Prime Minister, that the interest rate would be maintained at 9.5 per cent, this issue still lingers on.

In yet another affront to the working people, the UPA government has put out a release stating: "The Labour Ministry has indicated readiness to raise exemption limit for establishments seeking government permission for retrenchment/lay off from employing 100 employees to 300 employees under the ID Act". This is resurrecting the much-resented recommendation from the shop-soiled report of the Second National Commission on Labour! Here again, the NCMP commitment to exclude "the Industrial Dispute Act from the labour laws that will be re-examined and procedures harmonised and streamlined" is merrily reneged!

It will not pass the test of objectivity if we fail to note a few of the steps taken, which are pro-labour. They are: a) undoing the NDA amendment to the Model Standing Orders providing for a new category of 'fixed term workman'; b) introduction of Unemployment Allowance Scheme under the ESI Scheme (though covering only around 80 lakh workers) and c) agreeing to delete the exemption from labour laws clause in the legislation on Special Economic Zones.

The first year of the UPA governance has left hardly anything to cheer for the working people. Rather, the dogged pursuit of anti-worker policies of the ousted NDA regime is forcing the working masses of the country to embark on the path of struggle with renewed determination.

THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES BILL 2005

Chittabrata Majumdar

At present, there are 11 functioning Special Economic Zones and approval for setting up another 35 new Special Economic Zones have already been given in the private, joint and public sector. So long, the policies relating to the incentives and other facilities offered to the Special Economic Zone developer and units were being implemented through various notifications and circulars issued by the concerned Ministries and Departments. Now the Central Government has come forward with a Central Act for Special Economic Zones in line with international practice. Accordingly 'The Special Economic Zones Bill, 2005' was drafted and that was placed before both the houses of the Parliament for adoption.

The Central Govt. wanted to pass the bill hastily. The same was placed at the fag end of the budget session and the time for examining the same thoroughly was not given. Many wanted to defer the bill till monsoon session.

As was apprehended, the rights of the workers working in the Special Economic Zone were attacked in section 49 (1) and in section 50 (b) (i) & (ii) of the draft bill, where all the rights of the workers might be withdrawn both by the Central and/or the state governments. However, it has been possible to force the Govt. to amend those.

The amended section 49 (1) categorically states, "Provided that nothing contained in this section shall apply to any modifications of any Central Act or any rules or regulations made thereunder or any notification or order issued or direction given or scheme made thereunder so far as such modification, rule, regulation, notification, order or direction or scheme relates to the matters relating to trade unions, industrial and labour disputes, welfare of labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pension and maternity benefits applicable in any Special Economic Zones."

Similarly, the right of the State Government for granting exemption from the labour rights have also been deleted. The original draft was "The State Governments may, for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Act, notify policies for Developers and Units and take suitable steps for enactment of any law:- ..... (b) directing that any of the provisions of any State Act relating to Trade Unions, industrial and labour disputes, welfare of labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pensions and maternity benefits or any other activity relating to the Special Economic Zones-

(i) shall not apply to a Special Economic Zone or a class of Special Economic Zones or all Special Economic Zones; or

(ii) shall apply to a Special Economic Zone or a class of Special Economic Zones or all Special Economic Zones only with such exception, modifications and adaptations, as may be specified in the notification;". Existence of bold portion would also invite competition among the states in withdrawing the rights and facilities of the workers. So the entire bold portion has been withdrawn from the Bill before its adoption.

Section 3 (4) of the draft gave right to set up and notify a Special Economic Zone without referring the proposal to the State Government. That also has been amended.

Due to shortage of time each and every section of the draft could not be examined properly. But there are certain provisions in the passed bill, which may properly be looked into. Section 2(r) of the bill has defined the term "manufacture" for the purpose of the Act. Here the definition of term 'manufacture' apart from the normal manufacturing activities also includes 'agriculture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, floriculture, horticulture, pisciculture, poultry, sericulture, viticulture and mining.

Thus the Special Economic Zone may be set up for agricultural activities etc, which lead to investment of capital both indigenous as well as foreign investment. So, if the foreign and private capital is permitted to be invested in agriculture, fisheries etc. it may have far reaching impact on the rural economy of the country as well as food security. Further private investment in mining has been allowed by the Act, which also may have detrimental impact on the national interest.

Though the bill has been introduced with the purpose of "the promotion of exports and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto", no provision has been made for protection of the indigenous industries from the competition from the units of SEZs; so far as the domestic market is concerned. However provisions have been made u/s 30 for imposition of custom duty including anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard duties under the Customs Tariff Act, 1975. But section 26 has given all the concessions related to customs, excise, central sales tax, service tax etc to the units within the zone. Also section 7 has given concession of cess, taxes and duties under numbers of enactments specified in the First Schedule of the Act.

In absence of proper restrictions on the movements of produced of SEZ to the domestic market, the domestic industries outside the SEZ and effective adherence thereto, will be facing unjust competition. Also the concession of cess taxes and duties under the acts specified in First Schedule will have bearing on the agriculture and number of industries as well as the workers engaged therein.

The power of approving the operation has been given to the Board, which means the administrative power over legislative power will prevail. Further, by the provisions of sub-section (3) of section 9, Board has been empowered to redefine the word "manufacture" as defined in section 2(r) and even more such act will be binding on all ministries, departments of the Central Government.

Thus applying the administrative power, the definition can be changed, which leave room for controversial application of power opposed to interest of the country.

Overriding effect as envisaged and provided by Sec. 51 may have effect in future.

We have, therefore to be vigilant and keep a watch on the activities in SEZs so that the interest of the working class and the indigenous industry is protected during implementation of the SEZ Act.

WORLD BANK FAILED...

The World Bank, largest financer of projects in developing nations, is failing to reduce poverty in the poorest countries, an internal audit found.

In the past 15 years, the Bank put too much emphasis on social development and cut spending on bridges, dams, pipelines and other projects that have a more dramatic impact on economic growth, according to Report, obtained by Bloomberg News.

The World Bank's model to fight poverty in the poorest of nations had, in practice paid insufficient attention to fighting poverty growth, the 115-page report said. Without growth, no sustainable poverty reduction is likely." The World Bank has cut by 40% financing for infrastructure projects since 1995 and shifted money to programme focused on climate change and faith-based initiatives, annual reports show.

Only about one-third of the developing economies had expanded more than 2% per capita in the past decade, the auditor found. In roughly the same period, the number of people living on less than $1 dollar a day increased in more than 40 out of 100 developing countries for which there is data, the Bank said. ...The absolute number of people living on a less than $1 dollar a day rose to 880 million from 850 million.

(The Financial Express, 20-05-2005)

Massive Convention in Delhi

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES DEMAND REGULARISATION

The Vithalbhai Patel House lawns in New Delhi reverberated on the evening of 26th April 2005 with the full throated slogans of the anganwadi employees who demanded regularisation of ICDS, which would be completing 30 years by 2nd October 2005.

In what was probably the largest congregation of women workers in the capital in recent times, thousands of anganwadi workers and helpers gathered on the lawns of Vithalbhai Patel House in New Delhi, a stone's throw from Shastri Bhawan, the headquarters of the Human Resources Development Ministry. These anganwadi employees came to participate in a National Convention on Regularisation of ICDS organised by the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers on the 26th April 2005. They travelled all the way to the capital from 20 states in the country including from such far off states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south, and Assam and Tripura in the East, and even Jammu and Kashmir. Along with them they brought the lakhs of signatures collected from the beneficiaries in their respective states, on a memorandum to the Human Resources Development Minister Arjun Singh demanding regularisation of ICDS.

The Convention was inaugurated by Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of CITU. Supporting the demand of the anganwadi employees, he told that the services rendered through the anganwadi centres were essential for the healthy growth of the children who are the future of our country. Such important services should be part of the regular activities of the Women and Child Development department and not as a mere scheme, which could be discontinued any time. He countered the argument of the government that it had no financial resources to meet such huge requirement. He told that the government was providing thousands of crores of rupees worth tax relief to the national and multinational corporations and the rich; it made no serious efforts to collect the black money, or the NPAs, which ran into lakhs of crores of rupees. But when it came to extending any benefit to the poor, the government posed the question 'where is the money?' He asserted that the question was not of lack of financial resources but of the political will to take decisions that would benefit the poor.

Syeda Hameed, member, Planning Commission, who participated as the Chief Guest supported the demand for regularisation of ICDS and promised to place it in the Planning Commission and before the government. Jayati Ghosh, renowned economist, and Vandana Prasad from Jana Swasthya Abhiyan also greeted the convention and supported the demand of regularisation of ICDS.

As the General Secretary of AIDWA, the largest organisation of women in the country, who form a big chunk of the beneficiaries of the scheme, Sudha Sundararaman, extended support to the demand and told that coordinated efforts of AIDWA and AIFAWH would benefit the women and children in the country. Most of the children and women who are the beneficiaries of the ICDS Scheme are from agriculture worker or poor peasant families. As representatives of their organisations, Vijaya Raghavan, General Secretary of AIAWU and NK Shukla, Joint Secretary of AIKS participated in the convention and demanded that the ICDS be integrated as part of the regular activities of the Women and Child Development department. They extended support to the campaign and struggle of the anganwadi employees for regularisation. Several members of Parliament belonging to CPI (M), including Sati Devi and Sujata from Kerala and P Madhu and Dr Babu Rao from Andhra Pradesh also spoke. They assured that they would raise the issue inside the Parliament and also fight shoulder to shoulder with them outside.

Brinda Karat, member Politburo of CPI (M) greeted the anganwadi employees and congratulated them for collecting around 1 crore signatures on the demand.

The Convention unanimously adopted a resolution demanding regularisation of ICDS and Upgradation of the anganwadi centres into centres from where all the necessary services for the overall development of children and empowerment of women could be delivered. It also demanded allotment of more funds for the Women and Child Development department and regularisation of the services of the anganwadi workers and helpers.

As the HRD minister Sri Arjun Singh was not able to meet the delegation to receive the memorandum, a delegation was advised to meet the Secretary, Women and Child Development department in Shastri Bhawan who, it has been told, would receive the memorandum and the signatures. But, to its utter dismay the delegation found that the concerned officers in the department had nothing but contempt and ridicule towards the needs and desires of the poor, particularly women. Instead of acknowledging the fact that collection of so many signatures reflected the wishes of the people, which requires due consideration, the Secretary bluntly told the delegation that the government could not be pressurised by collecting not one but even hundred crore signatures, from people who do not understand the financial implications of their demands. She also told that there was no need to increase the honorarium of the anganwadi employees, as it was enhanced only two years back and so many people were ready to work for even less. She referred to the crèche workers who were working for only Rs. 400/- per month. She also put forward the argument that the income of the anganwadi workers and helpers was only supplementary as their family members were earning and as such they should not complain of the meagre 'honorarium'. The delegation protested strongly and countered her arguments and asked her to do her duty by referring the demands to the government, to which she ultimately agreed.

The anganwadi workers and helpers who were waiting for the delegation to return and inform of the response of the government were full of indignation at the attitude of the Secretary, Women and Child Development department. The Convention condemned the callous attitude of the senior officers of the Women and Child Development department of the Human Resources Development Ministry and vowed to carry forward their struggle for the regularisation of ICDS. It has unanimously decided to intensify the struggle in the coming days.

After initial unwillingness to receive the signatures, the Joint Secretary told that he would receive the signatures after finding some place to keep them. But after the delegation left leaving one comrade to hand over the signatures, the Joint Secretary refused to receive the packets on the plea that there was no place in the department. The Federation took strong exception to the attitude of these senior officers in the department and a delegation lodged its complaint with the HRD minister, when it met him on the next day. It demanded that he arrange for collecting the packets from the CITU office.

The delegation submitted a memorandum to the minister demanding regularisation of ICDS. They also demanded that pending regularisation, the honorarium of anganwadi workers and helpers be enhanced to Rs. 2, 500 and Rs. 1, 500 per month, payment of yearly increment to both workers and helpers, Dearness allowance linked to consumer price index, social security benefits, medical leave on par with government employees etc. The minister promised to collect the signatures and to place the other demands before the Cabinet.

The Federation called upon all its state committees to intensify stir on these demands by sending telegrams to the Prime Minister and HRD Minister, holding project level demonstrations, and local, district and state level conventions by involving the beneficiaries etc. The state committees were also asked to send telegrams condemning the attitude of the Secretary and Joint Secretary of the Women and Child Development department.

Madhya Pradesh

ATTACK ON ICDS SUPERVISOR

Around a decade back it was Bhanwari Devi in Rajasthan. Now it is Shakuntala Verma in Madhya Pradesh. Bhanwari Devi, a saathin under the Mahila Samakhya Programme tried to stop child marriages in a village. She was attacked and gang raped by the powerful upper caste men. Shakuntala Varma is a supervisor under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. She was asked to intervene by the SDM of the district in child marriages, which were reported to take place in Bhangad village in Dhar district. When she visited the village she was threatened. Some unidentified person grievously attacked her when she was at her rented home. Her head and both her hands were seriously injured in the attack.

Hundreds of thousands of children, particularly in the Hindi speaking states, are made to tie the knot on Akha Teej or Akshaya Tritiya, which is supposed to be an auspicious day. Though child marriages are banned under an Act, ministers and political leaders of several parties other than the Left Parties and government officials enthusiastically grace the occasion to bless the newly married children, directly encouraging child marriages. The BJP with its retrograde ideology on women's issues like Sati, rape, women's role in society etc is not particularly known for its keenness to root out practices like child marriages. But the BJP government of Babulal Gaur in Madhya Pradesh wanted, for a change, to be seen as a crusader against child marriages. And true to its character, the responsibility was entrusted not to the District Collectors or senior Police officers who are supposed to be the protectors of law, for effective prevention of child marriages. It was given to the poor anganwadi workers and helpers, who are not even recognised as government employees and who have no authority or power whatsoever to implement it. Most of them come from socially oppressed sections and are not in a position to face the wrath of the vested interests in the rural areas. Employed under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme and termed part time workers, it is also not the job of the anganwadi workers and helpers to stop child marriages.

But of course the government was not serious about stopping child marriages. Without going deeply into this social evil, without doing the groundwork, it simply gave orders to the ICDS staff to stop child marriages in their villages. In a typical case of thrusting additional responsibilities unrelated to the ICDS, on the anganwadi workers and helpers, because of their close relationship with the people, the Commissioner, Women and Child Development Directorate wrote a letter to all the anganwadi workers and helpers in the state

COM SUNIL SENGUPTA

We record with deep sorrow the demise of Com Sunil Sengupta, General Secretary, UTUC on 22nd May. Com Sengupta played important role in the building the trade union movement since last several decades and he had been in the forefront of united movement of the working class. His crucial role in fighting various vacillations in the trade union and democratic movement will be remembered by all concerned. His death has caused irreparable loss to united struggle of the working class in the country.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' express grief at the demise of Com Sengupta and convey heartfelt condolence to the bereaved comrades and his family members.

informing them that the responsibility of stopping child marriages was being given to them on the occasion of Akha Teej this year. This was the background in which Shakuntala Varma saw herself trying to convince the villagers to stop child marriage.

Instead of owning up the responsibility for the attack, the government initially tried to dodge it and side track the issue. While the Minister of Women and Child Development blamed personal enmity for the attack, the District Collector saw 'Jadu Tona' (Black magic) as the reason. Only after there was public uproar against the attack with hundreds of people coming out onto the streets condemning the attitude of the government, did the government take up the responsibility of Shakuntala's treatment. The culprit was arrested after around a week.

The Madhya Pradesh state committees of Centre of Indian Trade Unions and All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) and the Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Ekta Union, Madhya Pradesh seriously condemned the attack. Neelima Maitra, President and Hemalata, General Secretary of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers rushed to Indore where Shakuntala was undergoing treatment and participated in a demonstration in front of the Commissioners' office. Addressing a Press meet they demanded that the letter be withdrawn immediately and that anganwadi workers and helpers or staff should not be made responsible for stopping child marriages. They also demanded that the state government bear the full medical expenses of Shakuntala till she regained complete health and the culprit should be accorded severe punishment.

The Secretariat of the CITU and AIFAWH had issued the following statement to Press on MAY 12, 2005:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers AIFAWH condemn the brutal attack on Shakuntala Varma, a Supervisor under ICDS project in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh, while she was deputed by the Sub Divisional Magistrate to look into a complaint of child marriage. The State administration had issued orders making the Anganwadi workers directly responsible for child marriages taking place within their area of functioning. The obnoxious social evil of child marriages is deep rooted in rural India, particularly in the Hindi speaking regions, and the rural elite has been patronising this practice. Quite recently the Chief Minister of the State (M.P.) has tried to justify this centuries old evil as one having the 'social backing'. It is reprehensible that the Secretary of State Women and Child Development Department had described this practice as having 'some degree of social backing', even after this horrendous attack on the Anganwadi worker.

The CITU and AIFAWH firmly believe that the social evils of child marriage, 'sati' etc. can be rooted out only if those in the governance act with political will and determination. In Madhya Pradesh we have witnessed a dubious situation where the Chief Minister and the ruling circles adopt a soft and permissive attitude towards such social evils but try to expose the women workers of the ICDS projects to such grave risks in what is termed as spreading social awareness to give up child marriages.

The CITU and AIFAWH demand immediate arrest of the culprits and the State administration should take immediate steps to ensure that all those responsible for the attempted child marriage and the assailant are awarded the most deterrent punishment. The State administration should also rescind the order making the Anganwadi workers accountable for child marriages taking place within their areas of functioning.

This incident in M.P. is not an isolated one. Earlier there had been instances of Anganwadi workers being attacked even in connection with the pulse polio campaign. The administrative machinery in the States should ensure adequate protection to the Anganwadi workers. Also, it is essential that the HRD Ministry at the Centre evolve uniform norms and procedures in connection with the workers under the ICDS being entrusted with such additional assignments at the discretion of the governments in the States.

ECONOMY : REALITY CHECKS

FDI: INFLOW OR OUTFLOW!

The global FDI inflows declined in 2003 successively for the third year to a $560 billion, the 18 per cent decline in 2003 followed a 17 per cent fall in 2002 and 41 per cent in 2001...

But the role of FDI and transnational corporations (TNC) activities in the global economy has continued to grow....It is observed that international production is carried out by over 9,00,000 foreign affiliates of at least 61,000 TNCs worldwide. These affiliates account for an estimated one-tenth of the world GDP and one-third of the world exports. Some large manufacturing TNCs have gradually shifted much of their activity to services, e.g., IBM and GE. The rise to prominence of European TNCs in many services has occurred in parallel with their increasing participation in cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A).

FDI flows between developing countries have grown faster than those between developed and developing countries. Asia was by far the largest outward investor in the developing world followed by Latin America and the Caribbean. Indian outward FDI has been mostly in manufacturing (about 55 per cent) although non-financial services also account for a 25 per cent share.

(Source: World Investment Report/UNCTAD as published in The Hindu dated 3-05-2005)

CAPITAL INVESTMENT.... DON'T GET MISGUIDED: IMPLEMENTATION FAR BELOW COMMITMENT

Cash balances on corporate balance-sheets are all time high now. But India Inc is going slow on capital expenditure, if the latest trend is anything to go by.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data shows the cumulative project investment outstandings are at an all time high of Rs 18,95,211 crore. The data includes projects announced by companies and govt institutions over the years. This is nearly 60 per cent of the country's gross domestic products (GDP). .....

However, analysts estimate that projects actually under implementation are only about 26 per cent of the GDP...The capital expansion or capex as a percentage of GDP is at a 31 year low in India according to J M Morgan Stanley.

In the past 10 quarters ending on January 31, 2005, Rs 5,74,833 crore worth of projects were added. Projects worth Rs 1,47,051 crore witnessed completion. This is less than 25 per cent of the announcement made. For the quarter ended January 31, 2005, Rs 81, 177 crore worth of projects were added. Project investment completed were worth Rs 15,609 crore. Again much below 25 per cent of the total announcement.

(The Economic Times, 3-05-2005)

OH CAPITALISM! .... TRADE ON HUMAN BEINGS

In the first ever global estimate, The Asia Pacific region accounts for 9.5 million of the total 12.3 million people trapped in forced labour around the world, a large proportion of which is said to be in India. A new Study, 'Global Alliance Against Forced Labour' (ILO) launched globally on Wednesday made above observation. It further noted that of the total 12.3 million, nearly 10 million were exploited by private agents, while 2.5 million were forced into labour by the State or rebel military groups as in the case of Myanmar.

Pointing out that this phenomenon is not only restricted to developing countries, the Report says that forced labour or in that matter trading in

human beings has become a lucrative businesses in the world generating $31.6 billion (approximately Rs 1,50,000 crore) globally. Although 9.5 million forced labour out of total 12.3 million are in Asia pacific region, the bulk of the profit from the forced-labour businesses is generated in industrialized countries.

About half of the global illicit profit from trading in human beings is made in industrialized countries($15.5 billion) and close to one-third in Asia ($9.7 billion). Globally, this represents an average of approximately $13,000 per year for each forced labourer or around $1000 a month. The huge funds generated by trafficking human beings is shared by not only the agents who transport or cross border movement of people, but also for the employers who exploits forced labourers in the place of destination.

The ILO report also notes that in developing countries, older forms of forced labour were transmuting into newer ones, notably in a range of informal sector activities such as agriculture, domestic services, brick-kilns, rice-mills, mining, quarrying and carpet weaving. ILO Director General Juan Somavia termed this phenomenon "a social evil in the modern world...which represents the underside of globalisation."

(The Financial Express, 12-05-2005)

DFID's FREE-MARKET POLICY LED TO FARMERS' SUICIDE IN AP

Blaming the policies of the Department for International Development (DFID) for farmers' suicide in Andhra Pradesh, a report by an international aid agency, Christian Aid has asked the United Kingdom Government to delink its aid to developing countries from conditionalities of market economy - liberalization and privatization.

Titled, "The Damage Done: Aid, Death and Dogma" the report released in London this week, has published a detailed investigation into the causes of farmers' suicide in Andhra Pradesh. It has concluded that indebtedness of the victims was a result of the free market policies followed by the State Government as a condition to the aid provided. The report has asked the key aid donors -UK Government, The European Union, the World Bank and the IMF-not to use aid to impose its trade preferences....."Developing countries should not be subject to external interference in these choices(raise tariffs, protect and nurture vulnerable industries), nor be punished with less aid, refusal to cancel debt or less trade access", says the report. The report urged the World Bank and IMF to ensure that "democratic decision making within the countries takes primacy over IFI (International Financial Institutions) views on economic policy".

Andhra Pradesh emerged as the DFID's "flagship focus state". While India received 764.4 million pounds in five years, 248 million pounds went to the state. While DFID was involved in poverty alleviation projects in the state, it also pushed for the policies of liberalization, involving itself in the restructuring programme launched by the World Bank. The agency provided 3.1 million dollar to help set up Implementation Secretariat (IS) "whose task was to assess the state's assets, decide which one were worth keeping and either sell close down or restructure the rest." The DFID then awarded the contract for running the IS to British based Adam Smith Institute.

Dwelling deep into the sordid saga of farmers' suicides, the report argues that the new policies which encouraged a shift from traditional crops to cash crops, trapped the farmers in the hands of money lenders and market volatility. The farmers had to pay more and had to borrow from money lenders who charged extortionate rates and pursued aggressive recovery policies. Also the power reforms meant withdrawal of subsidized power to farmers and the IS's (Implementation Secretariat of DFID) order to close down 14 out of 24 seed processing units of the AP State Seed Development Corporation brought in private players. Report said, the quality of seeds deteriorated. " The immediate cause of these deaths is debt. This debt was brought on by a number of factors, all of which, except for weather, can be ascribed to liberalization" said the report.

(The Pioneer, 23-05-2005)

CENTAUR HOTELS:

PRIVATISER'S LOOT OF PUBLIC ASSET!

Dipankar Mukherjee

The UPA government has, at long last, ordered an inquiry on the sale of Airport Centaur and Juhu Centaur hotels following the CAG report N0.2 of 2005. The privatisers' lobby terms this inquiry as an assault on disinvestment and privatisation. This is a concerted attempt to gloss over the facts to cover up the fraudulent deals carried out in the name of disinvestment by Shourie and his Disinvestment Ministry during the NDA regime.

Para 4.0 of the minutes of 172nd Board meeting of the Hotel Corporation of India held on 19.11.2001, where the sale transaction of the hotel was approved, states the objective clearly: "... Managing Director informed the members about the various transaction documents for the sale of business of various units except Centaur Lakeview Hotel, Srinagar...." So it is "sale of business," not "sale of property" which formed the basis for invitation of Expression of Interest (EOI) from different bidders for acquiring these hotels on a `going concern' basis. The footnote in the CAG Report (page 41) clarifies in no uncertain terms the "going concern envisages continuance of operation of business by infusing superior technical and managerial skills besides additional capital." This was the objective till May 2001. It was in September 2001 that the Ministry of Disinvestment took over the process and the sale of Juhu Centaur was concluded in March 2002 realising Rs 153 crore and Airport Centaur was sold in April 2002 at Rs 83 crore as a going concern. What happened in September/October 2002? Airport Centaur was resold at Rs 113 crore by the buyer i.e. M/s Batra Hospitality Pvt Ltd. (BHPL) to Sahara Hospitality not as a "going concern" as a hotel but simply as a property.

Did it happen suddenly? At least the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport & Tourism did not think so. From its 65th report, laid in Parliament in March 2003, I quote para 14 of the recommendation. "The Committee notes that the financial strength in respect of AB Hotels Limited (Radisson) was only taken into consideration for short listing M/s A L Batra. However, in the subsequent process Batra Hospitality Private Limited (erstwhile Batra Nibgo India Private Ltd) has been used as SPV. The list of companies of AL Batra Group, as given in the details submitted, does not include the name of M/s Batra Nibgo India Private Ltd name of which has been changed to Batra Hospitality Private Ltd. While AB Hotels Ltd does have the relevant experience of running 5 star hotels and the financial strength of AB Hotels Ltd has only been taken into consideration for short listing, use of BHPL as SPV(Special Purpose Vehicle) raises serious questions regarding the intention of the buyer. BHPL has been brought into the picture as SPV for acquiring the CHMA which appears to be a pre-motivated objective to dispose of the same flouting the provisions/ conditions of sale, since the transfer of 100 per cent holding in BHPL will automatically lead to the transfer of the property and not sale of the property. This would not have been possible if AB Hotels Ltd had acquired CHMA. The Committee is of the view that the above issue requires a detailed investigation."

Shourie did not agree for the investigation two years back. Why?. The Committee had said that the motive of resale was premotivated. Resale not of the business, but the property. Would you call it as disinvestment as a going concern or property deal where a speculator earned Rs 30 crores within six months? Refusal of investigation two years back shows that Shourie and his Ministry had implicit knowledge about the deal. This becomes explicit in the second sale of Juhu Centaur. Confronted with the reported deal of Kerkar to resell the Juhu Centaur with a premium of Rs 250 crore to some builders (nearly 150 percent gain), Shourie tells in an interview: "I have been hearing this for four months. When we sold it, I assumed he would sell it. When someone buys a property, he has a right to sell it 100 per cent." (Outlook 23rd May 2005)

It means that the former Minister himself knew it

would be resold. Would the reformers/privatisers still call it disinvestment of business or a property deal by a speculator? If the objective of word "disinvestment" itself is totally diluted or perverted to a mere property deal, is it not a prima facie case to investigate the reason behind changing the objective of "disinvestment" as perceived by the market reformers themselves? "I assumed he would sell it" holds good not only for Kerkar but for Batra also. Is it not true that an IOC oil pump in Airport Centaur was also given to Batra without the knowledge of IOC and Ministry of Petroleum (Standing Committee report para 33)? A bonus to a trader-cum-speculator in the name of disinvestment it is fine. Similar bonus in terms of land and state guest house in the case of Kovalam Hotel (ITDC) in Kerala may surprise "lay-people" (courtesy: Shourie), but for the walk the talkers it is only the part of new adage "Everything is fair in love, war and DISINVESTMENT."

Yes, I am using the words of the present Finance Minister, which are suave enough to satisfy Shourie & Company. Two areas of discomfort which the Finance Minister referred in his reply in Rajya Sabha on 18.8.2004 regarding Juhu Centaur are (a) repeated extension given to Kerkar in spite of his inability to arrange money for the purchase and (b) the meeting with bankers and bidder on Sunday (!) February 23, 2002.

Regarding repeated extension and non-encashment of bank guarantee beyond the stipulated date of 22.12.2001 Shourie says, "The fact is we were left with one bidder in the end. And he was having difficulty in raising the money...when I ordered twice that his bank guarantee be encashed, the purpose was not to cancel the deal but to pressure him." (Outlook, 23.5.2005)

Are these new guidelines for privatisation? That is (a) If a buyer has difficulty in raising money, it is the solemn duty of government to remove the difficulty and (b) If there is a condition in transaction to cancel the deal and encash the bank guarantee, it is only on paper and it is a MINISTER'S SWEET WILL not to cancel the deal but to put pressure in his own way(by arranging money for him).

The question is who was being pressurised on 23rd February? The bankers (to be precise those present were not even chairmen of the banks, but officials in the rank of Asst GM, Dy GM, Addl.GM, GM only) or the bidder i.e. Kerkar? Who will find out what happened in that meeting? But the people of the country, including the employees (both officers & workers) of both the hotels who are now on the road, would demand answer to these and other questions immediately to find out the intention behind, this case of monumental corruption causing loss to the exchequer, as quantified in CAG report No.3 of 2004 (PSU) and CAG report No.2 of 2005 and adverse observation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2003. Is it not corruption, or nepotism or both? Who were behind these front companies, which were utilized to buy a business and then to sell the same as property with huge premium? Being government property this has to be investigated by a government agency. That is why a demand for a CBI probe after two CAG and one parliamentary committee reports and recent admission of certain startling facts by Shourie himself.

COMRADE AMAL GHOSH DASTIDAR

We record with deep sorrow the passing of away of Comrade Amal Ghosh Dastidar - the veteran leader of CITU, Assam. He breathed his last at Kolkata on 16th May 2005.

Comrade Dastidar played a salutary role, almost single-handedly, in building CITU right from the foundation initiative in the state of Assam and that too at a time when the situation was very much challenging. He was the founder General Secretary of the Assam State of CITU. He was also elevated to the position of national Vice President of CITU. His popularity in the trade union movement of Assam far exceeded the organizational jurisdiction of CITU in the state. His popularity amongst the plantation workers in Assam shall be ever shinning. True to his position as the Member of the State Secretariat of CPI (M), he played the role of a teacher in politically strengthening the trade union movement in the state.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to the memory of Comrade Amal Ghosh Dastidar and convey condolences to the bereaved family and the Assam State Committee of CITU.

MAY DAY OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

WEST BENGAL

May day was observed by organising numerous mobilizations, rallies, processions etc by the workers and employees in all the districts and industrial centers throughout the state. In many places programmes were jointly organized with other trade unions and mass organisations.

At Calcutta a massive rally of several thousands workers and employees was held at Saheed Minar Maidan at the joint initiative of number of central trade unions and employees associations. Jyoti Lahiri of AITUC presided over the rally. The rally was addressed by Jyoti Basu, Vice President of CITU. Basu stressed upon the need of strenghthening and widening the unity of the trade union movement in the struggle against neoliberal imperialist globalisation. He also emphasized on the united struggle for defending the right to strike and other trade union rights which are now under severe attack from all the wings of the state including the judiciary. The main resolution of the May day rally was moved by Kali Ghosh, General Secretary, West Bengal State CITU. The rally was also addressed by S C Gaur(TUCC), Ashoke Ghosh(UTUC), Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS), Ranajit Guha (AITUC) and Chunilal Dasgupta (12th July Committee).

Besides the above, reports were received regarding May day programmes from the districts of Howrah, South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Midnapur, Darjeeling, Bardhaman and other places.

Himachal Pradesh

A huge rally of more than 6000 workers from all over the state at the state capital Shimla was held on the occasion of May Day. The rally preceded months long campaign throughout the state as a preparatory step to build statewide united movement against the policy of the Congress Govt in Himachal pradesh to recklessly downsize in all the Govt deptts, reckless contractorisation, and the move of the Govt to increase the user charges for almost all public utilities, non-implementation of labour laws etc all stated to aim at reducing Govt expenditure to comply with FRBM Act.

The workers came from different part of the Hill State by hired buses. On the way police tried to stop the buses and divert those away from the place of rally. At this, in many places of the state, the workers staged spontaneous road blockades to compel the police officials to allow the buses to reach the spot of meeting at Simla.

Despite the hell bent effort by the state administration to disrupt the rally, workers in thousands joined the rally and the Ice Skating ground of Simla was overflowing with crowd. More than one third of the mobilization was the women, the Anganwadi workers joined the mobilization in a big way.

The mass meeting was conducted by Jagat Ram, Treasurer, Himachal State CITU. The rally was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, Ravinder Kumar and Kashmir Singh Thakur, President and General Secretary of HP State CITU, Rakesh Singha, former President of State CITU, Prem Kumari and Devaki Sharma, President and General Secretary of Anganwadi Workers' Union and Ramdayal, President, Hotel Workers Union. Also, Dr Omkar Saad, President of All India Kisan Sabha, Tikender Panwar (DYFI), Balbir Parasar (SFI), Falma Chowhan (AIDWA), A C Chouhan (NZIEA), Avimanyu Khosla (BEFI), N D Ranaut, Rajesh Kumar, Sudesh Kumari, all state leaders of CITU spoke in the rally. From the rally, it was announced that on 18th May a massive demonstration would be held before the Chief Minister's office.

MAHARASHTRA

May Day was observed in various parts of the state like Pune, Thane, Nasik, Nagpur, Sholapur, Icchalkaranji, Gondia etc., through processions, public meeting, cycle rally and various other programmes. In the capital city of Mumbai, in all the industrial centers, May day was celebrated

with hoisting of flag, rallies etc in the early hours of the day. In the afternoon, workers affiliated to various trade unions assembled at Kamgar Maidan at Parel. Therefrom a huge procession of several thousands of workers decorated with flags, banners and festoons started to pass through Dr Ambedkar Road, Currey Road etc to converge in a mass rally at Maharashtra High School Maidan. The mass rally was presided over by R G Karnik, Convenor of the Trade unions' Joint Action Committee and President of the State Govt Employees Confederation. The meeting was addressed by K L Bajaj, General Secretary, Maharshtra State CITU, Dada Samant (Kamgar Aghadi), Sukumar Damle (AITUC), S K Bose (MRMU), K K Theckedath (BUCTU), G M V Nayak (BEFI) and leaders from others trade unions and mass organisations.

ANDAMAN

On the occasion of May day, a huge procession of workers and employees covered the main centers of the capital city of Port Blair and converged into a mass meeting at Dilanipur Park. The meeting was addressed by H N Parial, KG Das and P De-silva all leaders of CITU and other employees' organisations. Mass rallies were also held in other island-towns of Baratang, Rangat, Dilipur etc.

SIKIM

Mass rally was held at Gangtok which has drawn several thousands workers and employees The meeting was addressed by Dipankar Mukherjee MP, Secretary CITU, Anjan Upadhyay and Manoj Gupta, President and General Secretary of Sikim State CITU.

ASSAM

Joint rally was held at Judge's Ground at Guwahati by the central trade unions , viz., CITU, AITUC,HMS, AICCTU, UTUC, UTUC-LS and various employees Federations. The rally was addressed by Deben Bhattacharya, General Secretary of Assam State CITU besides leaders of other trade unions and federations.

PUNJAB

The industrial city of Ludhiana witnessed biggest ever rally of the workers with red flags on this May day. Almost all the factory gates in the town, the cycle factories in particular, witnessed meeting by the concerned workers and therefrom the workers marched in procession towards the Gaspura Maidan where public meeting was held. Streams of processions with red flag surrounded the entire city before converging into a 20,000 strong rally at Gaspura Maidan. The rally has created great enthusiasm among the common workers of the unorganized sector in the town who also joined the rally in a big way. The meeting was addressed by Balwant Singh, Raghunath Singh, President and General Secretary of Punjab State CITU respectively, Jitendrapal Singh, Secretary of Ludhiana District CITU besides others.

At Chandigarh, a huge colourful procession of workers and employees was organized in the morning of the May day which started from Cheema Bhawan and passed through various parts of the city and coverged into a rally at sector 22 LIC Colony. The rally was addressed by M S Gorsi and V D Aery, President and Secretary of Chandigarh District CITU. In the afternoon a meeting of workers and activists was held at Cheema Bhawan which was addressed by Raghunath Singh, General Secretary of State CITU and Charan Singh Virdi, All India Kisan Sabha, among others.

TAMILNADU

Mayday was celebrated in Tamilnadu with the usual enthusiasm by thousands of flags being hoisted and processions and rallies in various parts of the state. CITU and AITUC state committees had called of the day along with fraternal organisations in the state.

In the evening, processions were organised in all the district centres and major industrial centres and public meetings were held. Along with CITU and AITUC leaders, these meetings were addressed by leaders of AIKS, AIAWU, AIDWA, AIIEA, AIBEA, BEFI and various organisations of state and central Govt employees.

In North Chennai a massive procession with hundreds of women in the forefront was organised and a public meeting was held in Rayapuram. This

massive meeting was addressed by A.Soundararajan(CITU), D.Pandian(AITUC) and others. In South Chennai a public meeting after a procession was addressed by K.Appadurai, M.P (AITUC), A.K.Padmanabhan(CITU), C.H. Venkatachalam (AIBEA) Santhanam (AIIEA) and others. In Trichy, the public meeting was addressed by T.K.Rengarajan (CITU) and A.M.Gopu(AITUC). In Madurai R. Nallakannu (AITUC) and S.A.Perumal (CITU) addressed the meeting. In Tirunelveli N.Varadarajan (CITU) and S.S. Thyagarajan (AITUC) addressed the meeting. In Coimbatore, a massive procession culminated in a meeting, which was addressed by leaders including K.Varadarajan (General Secretary - AIKS) and K.Subbarayan,M.P (AITUC). In Tirupur, CITU and AITUC led processions from different centres culminated in a joint procession and then in a public meeting addressed by G.Ramakrishnan (CITU) and N. Periyasami(AITUC). Among those who addressed the meetings were J. Hemachandran (Nagarcoil), R.Singaravelu (Salem), S.Pancharathinam (Villupuram), Malathichittibabu (Karur) P.M.Kumar (Virudunagar), P.Mohan,M.P. (Coimbatore), T.A.Latha (Ooty).

HARYANA

May day was observed in the state through rallies and processions in all the districts. CITU affiliated unions along with the Sarb Karmachari Sangh and the unions in Banks, Insurance, Central Govt offices and the mass organizations of students, youth, women and peasants have participated in these district based rallies. In Hissar, the rally was addressed by Inderjit Singh, former President, Haryana State CITU, Pravat Singh, President State CITU, R C Jagga, General Secretary, Sarb Karmachari Sangh, Trilok Bansal (Insurance), Pratap Sangwan (BSNL) and Shakuntala (AIDWA). In Fatehabad, Punam Chand Awasthi (SKS), Ramkumar (AIAWU), Krishan Swarup (AIKS) spoke before the rally. The rallies were also held in Sirsa, Bhiwani, Zind, Sonepat, Rohtak, Karnal and Panipat which were addressed by Satvir Singh, General Secretary State CITU, and other State CITU leaders, Hawa Singh, Surendra Malik, Anand Jawhara, Binode Kumar, Birendra Malik and the leaders of various mass organisations.

UTTAR PRADESH

The industrial town of Ferozabad witnessed a huge rally of several thousands of glass and bangle industry workers on May day. The rally was presided over by Rajji Devi, President of Kanch Udyog Krantikari Mazdoor Sangh. The meeting was held in the backdrop of ongoing fierce struggle of about 20000 glass-bangle workers braving police brutality and imprisonment of hundreds of workers and activists. The rally was addressed by Daulat Ram, General Secretary, UP State CITU and Badal Saroj, General Secretary, Madhya Pradesh State CITU, B S Meel, General Secretary, Electricity Employees Federation of India besides other CITU leaders of the state and district. Speakers, while congratulating the brave workers of Ferozabad for their determined struggle in defence of the workers' rights, also stressed upon the need for heightening the consciousness of the working class for carrying on united movement against imperialism, the neoliberal policies and the disruptive and communal forces simultaneously.

At Kanpur, May day rally was held at Gopal Talkies Chowraha where workers joined in thousands with processions from different parts of the city. The Rally was presided over by Capt Laxmi Saigal, veteran freedom fighter and was addresed by Arvind Kumar, General Secretary, Kanpur District CITU, Subhasini Ali, President AIDWA, Bhagawan Mishra, Ashoke Tiwari and others. At Varanasi, processions were organized from different centers viz., Chandpur Industrial estate, Lohurabir, Haveli, Pilikothi, Chakia etc wherefrom several thousands of industrial workers and employees covered almost all the main thoroughfares of the city by huge colourful processions, cycle march etc and converged into a public meeting at Dashaswamedh Chittaranjan Park. The rally was addressed by Kamalapati Tripathy, President UP State CITU, Debashis, Secretary District CITU

AND other leaders viz., Dayasankar Tiwari, Rathin Chakraborty, etc.

MADHYA PRADESH

May day processions and rallies were held in all the major cities and industrial centers in the state. The rallies expressed determination to continue struggle against imperialist offensives and fight back communalism and other divisive forces to widen and strengthen the unity of the toiling people. CITU State Committee also decided to intensify campaign for right to work as a fundamental right of the people on the occasion of May day in preparation to a countrywide struggle on the issue. In Gwalior, GUCTU took initiative to mobilize other section of toiling people to observe May day through organizing a huge colourful procession from Shivaji Park to converge into a public rally in Maharaj Park. M K Jaiswal, General Secretary, GUCTU presided over the rally which was addressed by S R Nayak(BSNLEU), Rambilas Goswami, Secretary, MP State CITU, B S Kansana(Railways), R N Singh (AG Office), B P Ganak (postal union), J S Agarwal(Insurance) besides others. In Nagda, CITU and AITUC jointly organized May day rally which was addressed by Locumal Chhetri(CITU) and Ambalal Sharma(AITUC) and others. City Trade Union Council comprising CITU, AITUC, HMS and unions from Banks, Insurance, Govt employees, medical representatives etc held mass meeting at Khirsagar Gandhi Udyan which was addressed by leaders of all the constituents viz., Sanjay Bhabsar, Manoj Karlekar, Hanumantrao Shinde, Ravindra Jetwa, Dinesh Shah etc. The meeting was conducted by U S Chhabra(CITU). In Mandsor, Dainik Betan Bhogi Union, Starch & Chemical Mazdoor Union and Slate-Pencil Mazdoor Union jointly organized procession and held rally at the gate of Starch factory. In Bhopal, rally was held at Roshanpur Chowraha which was addressed by P N Verma(CITU) and Roop Singh Chowhan(AITUC) besides others. In Jabalpur, a huge procession of workers, after passing through different parts of the city converged into a public meeting at Super market junction. The meeting was addressed by Pramod Pradhan, President State CITU. In Chhindwara, May day was observed by holding a trade union convention on 'Right to Work' which was attended by various trade unions and other mass organisations and noted intellectuals. Hussain Baksh was the main speaker in the convention. Reports of rallies and processions on the May day were also received from Satna, Neemach, Ashoknagar, Shibpuri and other palces in the state.

DELHI

A huge mass rally was held in Town Hall area of Old Delhi in the afternoon where several thousands participated. The rally was jointly organized by the central trade unions and employees federations. The workers and employees assembled at Ramlila Maidan at 4 pm and there from a big colourful procession started to pass through Chowdi Bazar, Lalkuwan and Fatehpuri to converge into a mass rally at Town Hall. The meeting was conducted by a presidium comprising Ramanand(AIBEA), H Sharma (BEFI), N P Saini (DSMRO), K Pillai(MTNLEU) and Prasad (NZIEA). Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary CITU addressed the rally and called upon the working class to unitedly fight against the neoliberal policies and in defence of the rights of the toiling people. Among others who spoke in the rally were Amarjit Kaur (AITUC), Thomas(AICCTU), Harbhajan Singh Sidhu (HMS). The programme ended with performance of two street dramas by Jana Natya Manch and Janasanskriti. Besides the workers,youth and women also joined the May day rally at the initiative of AIDWA and DYFI.

GUJARAT

May day rally was held in all the major districts and industrial centers. At Bhavanagar more than 7000 participated in May Day procession which converged into a public meeting. The rally was colourful and had notable participation of women workers. Leaders of all the trade unions including CITU addressed the rally.

RAJASTHAN

FARM WORKERS IN STRIKE BRAVING REPRESSION

From 11th April 2005, the workers of the agricultural farms at Sardargarh, Jaitsar and Suratgarh in the district of Sriganganagar had been on continuous strike. All the three farms are under State Farms Corporation of India, a central public sector undertaking. The Farm workers have been agitating since long for regularization of daily rated workers, working continuously since last 20 years, and appointment of the kins of the deceased workers and withdrawal of victimization on the workers and trade union activists and vindictive transfers.

Just on the eve of the strike, the Managing Director of the State Farms Corporation called for a meeting with the CITU unions but that meeting ended in failure as the management took a negative stance on the genuine demands of the workers and even backed out from promises made on earlier occasion. The conciliation meeting was also called by the labour deptt just to fulfil the formality as nothing emerged out of the same owing to indifferent attitude of the management.

Despite disruptive ploy including threat and intimidation by the management, strike was complete in all the three farms and it was continuing peacefully. In such a situation, the BJP led State Govt joined the management to break the strike. On 18th and 19th April, police lathicharged on the peaceful dharna of the striking workers injuring many. On 22nd April 2005, the District Collector personally led a huge team of armed police force to ransack the workers' colonies, break open in the residential quarters and beat the workers and even manhandle women and children brutally. In this operation, the womenfolk also were not spared and many complained that the police snatched their mangalsutras, ear-rings etc.

Ravindra Shukla, General Secretary of Rajasthan State CITU telephoned the State Labour Minister and Home Minister on 22nd night itself to lodge his emphatic protest against the repressive measures on the striking workers and ransacking of the workers' colonies. But there was no result. It was also learnt that the State Administration is planning to invoke ESMA. Hetram Beniwal and Ravindra Shukla, President and General Secretary of State CITU rushed to the spot on that day itself.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary CITU lodged protest against the onslaught on the striking workers to Sharad Pawar, Minister for Agriculture and demanded urgent intervention to end the stalemate. On 25th April 2005 negotiation started before the RLC(C) at Suratgarh and ultimately a settlement is arrived at. According to the settlement, the proposal for regularization of 10 per cent daily paid workers every year as was prevalent till 1998-99 will be favourably considered by the SFCI after finalisation of restructuring of SFCI by the Govt of India. The dependents of the deceased employees (regular) will be given employment as daily-paid workers for 240 days subject to approval of ministry of finance. The recommendation for employment of the dependents of the deceased daily rated workers as made by the RLC (C) will be put before the Board for approval and sent to the Agricultural Ministry immediately thereafter. There will be no victimization of the striking workers. Following the settlement, the strike was withdrawn.

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GOA

STATE-LEVEL TRADE UNION CONVENTION

At the initiative of Goa State CITU a convention was held demanding implementation of the pro-people commitments of NCMP and opposing the anti-workers steps of the UPA Govt. The convention was conducted by a presidium comprising Santosh Nadkarni, Krisna Tandel and Ramesh Naik. S S Naik, General Secretary placed the report and the charter of demands. He dealt on the grave experience of the BJP rule aginst which the people gave verdict in the last Lok Sabha election. It is the duty of the UPA Govt to take lesson from the peoples' verdict and reverse the economic policy of the NDA regime, Naik asserted. Detailing the demands on pro-people policies, Naik called upon the working people to mobilize and fight for realization of those demands.

The convention was also addressed by Pradeep Salgaokar of Mormugaon Waterfront Workers' Union,Nilkant Phadke, President of All Goa General Employees Union, Mukund Chimulkar of Goa Mines Workers' Union, Anand Bethikar, President of Goa State CITU, Thalman Perrera Secretary State CITU, besides others.

PUNJAB

CYCLE FACTORY WORKERS' STRUGGLE

Owing to determined and united struggle by the cycle factory workers at Ludhiana, braving reckless victimization, ultimately the cycle factory owners had to retreat, may be temporarily. The industrial town of Ludhiana hosts a number of cycle factories viz., Hero, Atlas, Avon etc besides a number of ancillaries to these cycle factories. Majority of workers of these cycle factories joined the CITU union two years back. But the employers made it a prestige issue not to allow the CITU union to function and they are lobbying with the State labour dept not to register the CITU unions in those cycle factories. As a result for more than a year, seven applications for registration of trade union in these cycle factories are gathering dust with the labor dept although all formalities and requirements have been complied with by the CITU unions. The cycle industry owners' association wrote to Chief Minister of Punjab not to allow registration of CITU unions in the cycle factories at Ludhina. Meantime, the employers in all these cycle factories have been recklessly victimizing the workers and union activists on flimsy grounds to terrorise the workers and desist them from joining CITU unions. Regular chargesheets and suspensions have become a normal day to day affairs in these cycle factories, braving which the workers are struggling undr the leadership of CITU.

In these cycle factories, the workers are normally being paid the minimum wages meant for the unskilled workers irrespective of the level of skill of the workers. This is gross violation of the statute on minimum wages which laid down different minimum wage rates for different level of skill. Other labour laws pertaining to safety and social security are also being desperately violated and the CITU unions have been fighting for implementation of the labour laws for these workers and nothing else.

At this moment more than hundred workers are facing charge sheets and suspension; false police cases have been registered against many of them. The owner of Hero Cycle Ltd is leading the factory owners in this vindictive exercise. During last one year numerous demonstrations and rallies before

the offices of Labour Commissioners, District Collector and other administrative officials were organized by CITU demanding implementation of labour laws but nothing could move the servile state administration. In such a situation, in protest of victimization by the owner of Hero Cycle Ltd, the workers went on spontaneous strike on 12th April 2005, when management tried to get the workers' signature on blank papers. The striking workers sat on dharna before the gate and despite huge police reinforcement there and threats and intimidation by them, the agitation could not be subdued.

In such a situation, management was compelled to call the union for negotiation. In the process of negotiation, management had to agree for giving appointment letters and pay the minimum wages to workers according to the level of skill. The employer was also forced to withdraw charge-sheets and suspension orders from 31 workers out of total 41 and rest will also be withdrawn as committed by management. The false cases registered against the workers will also be withdrawan. The management also agreed to form a joint committee of six members with three from employers' side three from the CITU union to look into all the problems and grievances of the workers the first meeting of which has taken place in the presence of Labour Officer and SSP of Ludhiana. Besides the officers of Hero Cycle, the owners of the factory Vijay Munjal and Suman Munjal were also present in the meeting. After the agreement, more than ten thousand workers of Ludhiana took out procession and held rally under the banner of CITU which was addressed by Raghunath Singh, General secretary, Punjab State CITU and Sukhbinder Singh besides other leaders of district CITU.

STATE GOVT EMPLOYEES PREPARE FOR STRUGGLE

The National Executive of All India State Govt Employees Federation met at Bangalore on 24-25 April 2005 to decide the course of action against the anti-employee measures being adopted by the Govt of India. The issues identified for struggle were 1) to oppose the move for privatization of the pension scheme for the Govt employees, 2) stoppage of privatization and downsizing in Govt departments and educational institutions, 3) filling up of 14-15 lakh vacant posts in the State Govt, Central Govt offices and educational institutions through regular employment. 4) restoration of 12 per cent interest rate on GPF, 5) Recognition of Right to Strike for all including Govt employees and ratification of relevant ILO Conventions through appropriate legislation.

The Federation called upon the employees to get prepared for united struggle including countrywide strike action in the days to come and decided to to organize state level conventions on the demands. The Federation also appealed to Central Govt employees movement to join countrywide united struggle on common demands. The Joint discussion between the All India State Govt Employees Federation and Confederation of Central Govt Employees and Workers on this issue will be held on 17th May 2005 at Delhi.

RAILWAY CONTRACTOR WORKERS DHARNA

Several hundreds contractor workers under Indian Railways have staged dharna at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi on 10th May 2005 under the leadership of CITU. The contract workers working under Railways in various departments like conservancy and sanitary, engineering, catering, parcels etc from the eastern and north-eastern regions of the country assembled at Delhi for the

dharna. The main demands of the workers are regularization of service, pending which payment of departmental wages and facilities and social security benefits and continuity of jobs and employment of the contract workers in the event of change of contractors etc. The dharana and public meeting was presided over by Ganesh Shankar Singh, President of All India Railway Contractor Kamgar Union (CITU). General Secretary of the Union Rajkumar Jha explained the demands of the workers. Others who addressed the dharna were Kanai Banerjee, Secretary CITU, Chandi Prasad, President, Bihar State CITU. Basudev Acharya, MP and leader of the CPI(M) Group in Lok Sabha also addressed the rally and assured of taking up the just demands of the workers with the govt. A memorandum containing the demands of the workers was submitted to the Railway Minister.

MADHYA PRADESH

COAL WORKERS' CONFERENCE AT SOHAGPUR AREA

The Sohagpur Area Conference of Koyla Shramik Sangh was held in workers club. Motilal Shukla placed the report which outlined the urgency for strengthening the organization to meet the challenges facing coal workers and the working class in general. Badal Saroj, General Secretary of MP State CITU addressed the conference and concluding speech was delivered by Kameshwar Singh, Vice President, Chhattisgarh CITU. The conference elected Ramdarsh, Motilal Shukla and Ramharsh as president General Secretary and Treasurer of the union.

AGAINST ATTACK ON WOMEN WORKERS AT REWA

A massive demonstration was held before the office of the district collector at Rewa in April 2005 at the initiative of Anganwadi Karyakarta Sahayika Ekta Union(CITU) and Janabadi Mahila Samity against the attack on the Anganwadi workers and women workers of PWD while they were on duty. Satyabati Abadhiya, Anganwadi worker was physically attacked by local anti-social elements while she was working for pulse-polio campaign. Despite lodging of complaints with the local police, the miscreants were not arrested. In PWD local office three women workers were asked by the officer to go to his house for his domestic work. The concerned women workers refused to do so and they had to face a 15days pay-cut. Against all these a massive demonstration was organized and memorandum was submitted to district collector. The demonstration was addressed by Vidyashankar Muflis, General Secretary of Rewa District CITU and Kishori Verma from AIDWA. From the demonstration a delegation comprising Sabitri Shukla, Fulbasi Namdev, Badarunnisa, Satyabati Abadhiya, Sehrunnisa etc met the District Collector and demanded action against the miscreants and erring PWD officer.

SEMINAR ON KARL MARX BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

UP Medical and Sales Representatives Organisation organized a seminar on 5th May 2005 on the occasion of the 187th birth anniversary of Karl Marx at Gonda. The seminar was presided over by veteran leader of the Communist movement, Birendra Singh. The seminar was addressed by S K Pandeya (EEFI), Bhagaban Mishra (UP Bijli Board Employees Union), Daulat Ram, General Secretary, UP State CITU besides other leaders.

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month Feb.' 05	Mar.' 05
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	509	504
	2	Guntur	498	501
	3	Hyderabad	520	517
	4	Visakhapatnam	517	513
	5	Warangal	542	534
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	435	441
	7	Guwahati	521	521
	8	Labac-Silchar	403	403
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	443	443
	10	Rangapara-Tezp	418	423
Bihar	11	Monghyr	491	497
Chhattisg	12	Bhillai	463	466
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	505	505
	14	Bhavnagar	529	528
	15	Rajkot	477	480
	16	Surat	482	485
	17	Vadodra	485	484
Haryana	18	Faridabad	542	538
	19	Yamunanagar	503	508
J & K	20	Srinagar	625	635
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	493	492
	22	Jharia	421	426
	23	Kodarma	455	451
	24	Noamundi	478	475
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	476	480
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	516	519
	27	Belgaum	573	575
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	528	528
	29	Mercara	491	491
Kerala	30	Alwaye	536	533
	31	Mundakayam	507	506
	32	Quilon	540	537
	33	Thiruvanan	599	601
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	450	452
	35	Bhopal	546	549
	36	Indore	523	526
	37	Jabalpur	529	529
Maharastra	38	Mumbai	621	617
	39	Nagpur	545	542
	40	Nasik	577	569
	41	Pune	586	586
	42	Solapur	536	531
Orissa	43	Barbil	463	464
	44	Rourkela	457	459
Punjab	45	Amritsar	481	482
	46	Ludhiana	488	498
Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	531	532
	48	Jaipur	485	483
Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	563	557
	50	Coimbator	508	504
	51	Coonoor	501	499
	52	Madurai	501	500
	53	Salem	471	475
	54	Tiruchirap	570	569
Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	500	503
	56	Ghaziaba	551	548
	57	Kanpur	505	510
	58	Saharanp	492	491
	59	Varanasi	553	554
West Bengal	60	Asansol	488	493
	61	Darjeeling	430	421
	62	Durgapur	577	581
	63	Haldia	609	614
	64	Howrah	597	599
	65	Jalpaiguri	435	438
	66	Kolkata	565	570
	67	Raniganj	455	459
Chandigarh	68	Chandigar	599	599
Delhi	69	Delhi	633	635
Pondicherry	70	Pondicher	569	570
ALL-INDIA			525	525

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	February 2005	March 2005
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	537	535
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	498	499
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	524	522
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	460	459
Tripura	5	Tripura	445	446
Goa	6	Goa	630	628

REVIEW RAILWAYS' NEW CATERING POLICY

R G Pillai

Seven lakh catering vendors spread all over Indian Railway are facing bleak future as the danger of losing their job looms large consequent on the implementation of new catering policy 2000/05 from 1.7.05. Employed by about 7000 licensees of Indian Railways, they earn their livelihood with the meager commission they get in selling food and beverages to passengers at stations and on trains. As they are categorized as commission agents and not employees they are deprived of any protections from labour laws. The way in which they perform their duty is extremely hazardous, serious accidents some times fatal are of frequent occurrence. Either the Railways or the licensees do not come to the help of the affected family and they are deprived of the protection of any existing labour laws. Apart from all this now they are being evicted from Railway station and pantry cars silently and are being deprived of their job as a consequence of the implementation of the new catering policy 2000 formulated during NDA regime and brought into force from 1.7.05.

99% of the passenger segment of Indian Railway is comprised of ordinary 2nd class passengers of mail/express trains including sleeper class. Thus, hitherto, the main object of the railway catering policy was to provide clean and quality food and beverages at affordable prices for the ordinary passengers who constitute mostly the poorer section of the population and profit was never its concern. With this aim only a nominal fee was charged as license fee and the license was renewed based on satisfactory performance. The scenario changed after the advent of new economic liberalization in late 80s. License fee, which was only Rs 4000/- per year during 1974-80, was increased to Rs 13,990 in 1984-85 and 79850 in 1985-90. Again the same was increased to Rs 244200 in 1995-2000 and al these hikes were accompanied by a steep hike in administered prices of food items to the detriment of the traveling public. When the new catering policy was formulated the license fee was fixed as 12% of the sales turnover, which comes to Rs 10,22,000 for an NVRR/VRR which was paying 244200 in 1995-2000. Further the system of renewing the license of caterers, whose record of service was satisfactory, was also given a go-bye and a new tender system was introduced, which enables the Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to enlist monopolies in the hospitality industry with scant regard to past record of service or other performance parameters.

Railways are relinquishing all their responsibilities towards passengers to provide cheap and quality food and they have already divested these responsibilities to the newly formed IRCTC which was established in 2001 as a commercial concern functioning as an inter-mediary between railways and the caterers.

The reports of the Standing Committee on Railways of 13th and 14th Lok Sabha had stressed review of policy with regard to awarding of contracts by IRCTC. As the case filed by the 7000 licencees against arbitrary enhancement of license fee and other conditions imposed were disposed of by the Supreme Court in favour of Railway and IRCTC and they are now speeding up the process of implementation of the new catering policy. As a consequence of the change over of managements about 7 lakhs catering vendors employed by 7000 licencees all over India will be rendered jobless at a late hour of their life. They have no other alternative than to starve and die unable to find any other livelihood. As the National Common Minimum Programme of UPA Government requires undoing of the anti-people policies of the erstwhile NDA govt. and to implement employment guarantee scheme and create more job opportunities, the new catering policy 2000 passed by Parliament during the turbulent days without any discussion should be reviewed and replaced.

The Railway Contract Catering Workers Union (CITU) has appealed for suspending implementation of the new catering policy, pending appointment of an expert body to review the same. *(The writer is the President, Railway Contract Catering Workers Union - CITU)*

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DEALING LABOUR ISSUES SANS LABOUR UNIONS?

On the May Day 2005, Delhi witnessed a big show of "National Dialogue on Protection of Legal Rights of Workers" at by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and the Union Law Ministry. All the national dailies published reports of the event with big photographs. Next three four days' print media carried full page advertisements on the event, obviously with the Government footing the bill. The event of so called National Dialogue, was claimed to be, aimed at providing " access to justice and legal empowerment for the workers, ensure labour law implementation and reaching legal aids to workers free of charge at their doorsteps". Interestingly enough, in the entire exercise, stated to be for the benefit of the workers, neither the trade unions nor the labour ministry has been involved. And most of those who have been involved, like film-personalities, big businessmen, and a tainted minister, do not have even remotest involvement at present in any labour related matters.

Responding to the event, CITU wrote to Chairman, NALSA requesting clarification on such innovative parade show on the May Day. The CITU wrote "We are elated at the liberal promises made by NALSA for ensuring implementation of labour laws and reaching legal aids to workers in every district free of charge etc. showered through full-page advertisements with photographs in the national dailies. But interestingly and surprisingly too, in the entire exercise the labour ministry have been involved... Sincerely speaking, we are yet to grasp the real sense of this innovative exercise, and we shall be grateful if the matter is clarified."

Precisely in similar spirit, the Government of India made another move for "benefiting (?) labour" without caring for or consulting the trade unions. On 11th May, the Union Cabinet has decided to amend the Labour Laws (Exemption from furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishments) Act 1988 and also to amend the Scheduled Acts for simplifying the forms of returns or registers required to be maintained and submitted by the employers. The representatives of the labour, who are the victims of non-compliance of labour laws or defects therein, have not been consulted. CITU, lodged protest against such unilateral move of the Government of India, which is also violative of the commitment made in CMP. The CITU expressed concern that while making such move, the Government did not bother to consult the trade unions and thus faulted in identifying the priority. For majority of the establishments in the country, the labour laws are not being properly implemented and in particular, employment registers are not being maintained and regular returns are not being filed as required by the statute. Proliferation of contract labour system in all the workplaces has given an easy escape route to the principal employers to evade the obligatory provision of maintaining employment registers covering all the workers deployed in any workplace. Dismantling of the inspection machineries in most of the states and reliance on the self-certification by the employers, all under the so called plea of investment-friendliness has led to virtual anarchy by the employers in the field of labour law implementation.

The legislative initiative in the fields of labour law must prioritise on proper implementation of the existing laws through pro-active well-equipped enforcement machinery and arrest the disastrous trend of promoting evasion by the employers in collaboration with the enforcement agencies. But the move for simplification of labour laws should not aim at legitimising the existing unlawful activities of the employers in respect of implementation of labour laws.

Given the obsession of those in governance at present regarding so called flexibility of labour laws, such possibility of legitimising the ongoing violation of labour laws by the employers under the garb of so called "simplification move" cannot be ruled out.

The persistent attitude of the authorities taking up labour issues without involving the labour unions needs to be resisted seriously.

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