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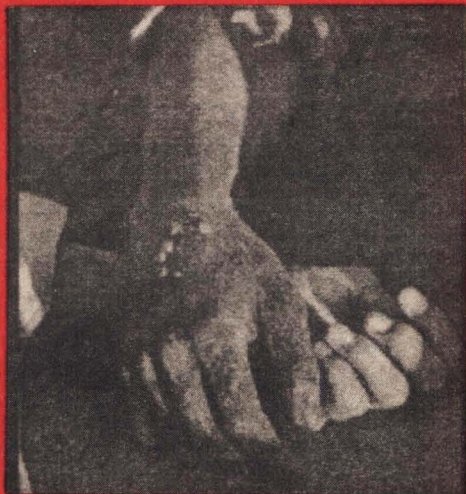
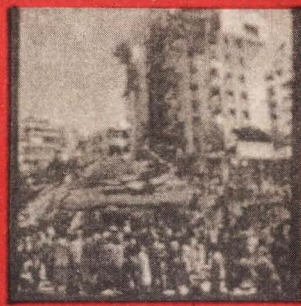
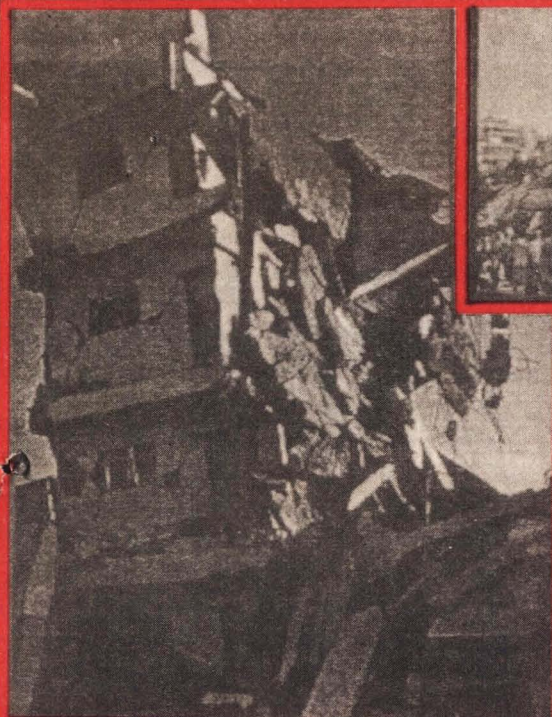
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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



TRAGEDY OF GUJARAT
Let's Share the Grief



CITU SECRETARIAT MEETING

A full-fledged meeting of the CITU Secretariat was held on 13th February 2001 at New Delhi. The meeting was presided over by E Balanandan. The meeting discussed the follow up actions to be taken on certain decisions of the 10th conference of the CITU.

The meeting noted the rising discontent among the people of all sections against the fall out of the economic policy of liberalisation and the urgent need to channelise the same through countrywide united struggle from the National Platform of Mass Organisations. From all indications already pouring in, the forthcoming budget is going to be an atrocious one and more burdens are going to be imposed on the people. On the other hand, the Govt will exercise more haste and desperation in its move to sell out the blue chip PSUs on a platter and close down the sick ones. Moreover, the Govt is also planning to vigorously push through their plan to change the labour laws in favour of the employers and the MNCs. The working class movement must resist all these through united struggle.

The meeting called upon the CITU State Committees to take maximum initiative in the forthcoming programmes of National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) in respective States. The NPMO convention (later held on 19th February 2001) has decided a) to hold countrywide demonstration against the union budget on 2nd March, b) State and district level conventions thereafter and c) prepare for countrywide strike action for which dates will be decided later on.

The Secretariat also discussed on various organisational issues and decided as under:

* A two/three day workshop on organisation at the state level in the all the States to be completed within next six months. In view of the forthcoming elections in some States, the time frame has been kept as six months. The State committees not facing elections should hold the organisational workshops earlier. The dates of the workshops should be finalised in consultation with the CITU centre. The State committees should prepare written reports on various aspects of organisation and proposed action plan and priorities in the State

in the light of the Bhubaneswar Document on organisation, documents of the central workshop on organisation (published along with the Report of Kozhikode General Council meeting held on 20-22 April 2000 and the paper on Task on Organisation passed by the 10th conference (circulated with the Conference Documents as annexure to General Secretary's report) to be discussed in the workshop.

* The 10th conference had decided a target of 40-lakh membership from the present position of 32 lakhs. The State Committees are requested to plan a serious drive for increasing and widening the membership base of CITU in the States, which must include organised drive to renew the existing membership, reach non-member workers in a big way in respective union/industry and also identifying new areas/ industries to build up the CITU organisation and activities. The State level workshop exercise should also be oriented towards this.

* The CITU centre has already shifted to BTR Bhawan. But the quotas for fund on that account taken by various State committees are yet to be fulfilled. In view of the above, all the State Committees are requested to please make serious efforts to fulfil their quota for the BTR fund to the centre at the earliest.

* The solidarity action in support of the Peasantry's struggle on 5-7 February has to be deferred owing to deferment of the programmes by our Kisan Sabha and agricultural workers' union. The programme of countrywide picketing/dharna by the peasantry and agricultural workers has been rescheduled on 29-30 March 2001. All the State Committees and industrial federations are requested to organise solidarity action on those days, which must culminate in a massive mobilisation/demonstration of workers on 30th March 2001 in all the centres.

* The 10th Conference of CITU has adopted a task document on our work in the Working Women front. We have to take up implementation of the said task at the State/district/unit level for which the State Committees have to take initiative to draw suitable plan of activities.

(Cover page photo courtesy; *Cultural and Banking Solidarity*)

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

MARCH 2001

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



Let's hire this guy! He is the right man to sell off our public sector companies!

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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DISASTERS AHEAD, UNITE TO RESIST !

The NDA Govt. led by the BJP is taking measures after measures which are portending further disasters for the economy, the people and the country.

The prime Minister in his musings from Kumarakom, where he had a year end holiday, had asserted that "we need to broaden and further accelerate the economic reforms". He added: "We have to reduce the size of the Government". (He meant downsizing Government employment and not the cabinet of the motley coalition he is heading). He further asserted: "We must also reform our labour laws...", and hinted that "some of these are difficult measures".

What difficult measures are in the offing is spelt out by this Govt. in the address of the President, while opening the budget session of the Parliament. To quote from the address, which was drafted by the Vajpayee cabinet:

"The past decade's experience has clearly shown that economic reforms can yield desired results only if they are fully complemented by administrative, judicial, educational, and labour reforms.

"The Government's approach to PSUs has a three-fold objective: revival of potentially viable enterprises; closing down of those PSUs that cannot be revived; and bringing down Government equity in non-strategic PSUs to 26 percent or lower. Interests of workers will be fully protected through attractive VRS".

The same address also stated firmly about allowing private sector in Coal mining, total removal of all restrictions on imports and also asserted that "amendments to some of our labour laws cannot be delayed any more".

These (amendments) will remove "the hurdles to faster economic development by giving businesses the opportunity to make investments both in new units as well as to expand existing ones." The latest sell out of BALCO is indicative of the direction in which the Govt. is moving.

The Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister, in its report, had to admit: "One common misgiving about the reform process is that it is elitist and that the poor, particularly in the rural areas, are not touched by it. There is some truth in this..... It is possible that some sections of our population, especially those in rural areas have benefited less".

By the time this issue is in the hands of our readers, the Finance Minister would have added atrocious burdens on the people while gloating on his 'feel good factor'. There is nothing good, either to feel or to experience, for the people. The impending dangers have to be resisted by the masses unitedly. The National Convention has given the call to prepare for the ensuing phase of struggles. Let us prepare!

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATIONS NATIONAL CONVENTION

February 19, 2001

New Delhi

DECLARATION

This National Convention organised by the National Platform of Mass Organisations expresses deep condolence over the death of about one lakh people in the devastating earthquake that rocked Gujarat on 26th January. (See Resolution published separately).

The convention condemns the BJP-led Government at the centre for its pronouncement for a harsh budget including increase in Railway fares and freight to cover up the expenditure for the earthquake rehabilitation.

As otherwise the Government has stepped up heaping further miseries on the people in a blitzkrieg manner through the second generation of economic reforms.

While speaking of "Swadeshi" the Government is allowing entry of MNCs in all sectors of the Indian economy, creating multi-dimensional crisis in all the sectors, ignoring the opposition of all sections of the people.

The Public Sector is being dismantled undermining the foundation of the self-reliant economy. All the vital sectors including power, telecom, banks, insurance and the financial sectors are being privatised and opened up for the multinationals.

Disinvestment is going on in a fast track manner. Sick PSUs are being closed down instead of revival. Salaries have been withheld in the sick PSUs, which have led to committing suicides by some workers. The Second National Commission on Labour has been asked to recommend amendments to the Labour Laws to suit the policy of liberalisation. Even before the recommendations, some State Govts like Maharashtra Govt has taken a move to amend the State laws. Big business and MNCs have been allowed entry even into the small scale and tiny scale sectors, resulting in large scale closures of these units.

The BJP-led Government has violated the agreement between the Central Govt employees' organisation and the former Govt. It has stopped filling up the vacancies and has abolished the vacant posts. It has imposed 10 percent further cut in staff strength in all departments and banned recruitment in Govt services and also stayed all promotions for an unspecified period of time. A number of States pursuing the Central Govt's policy have also followed suit. The Centre has further refused devolution of funds to the States, due to which many State Govts are refusing to grant

parity of pay of the State Govt employees with those of the Central Govt.

This Convention expresses serious concern over the judicial pronouncements banning *Bandhs*, *Hartals*, etc which impinge on the trade union and democratic rights of the working class and the people. At the same time such pronouncements to close down or relocate polluting units result in throwing out lakhs of workers jobless. The industrialists on the contrary should be compelled to implement the environmental norms in the units.

The peasants and agricultural workers are among the worst hit. The Government has refused to carry forward any land reforms. The amendment of the Patent Act will adversely affect the Chemical & Pharmaceutical industries, as well as agriculture. The peasants will have to purchase even the seeds from the MNCs at high cost and which cannot reproduce themselves. It will endanger the food security of the country. In many States the peasants are committing suicides. Further, the Government is withdrawing the quantitative restrictions on imports of 1429 items. This will cause unprecedented crisis in agriculture and in the SSI units.

The new Agricultural Policy will bring in unprecedented crisis in agriculture. The new policy will accelerate the process of eviction of small, marginal and middle peasants and be replaced by corporate farming. They are multiplying the ranks of the agricultural labourers. The Government has even refused to

enact a comprehensive Central legislation for the vast multitude of agricultural labourers to give them social protection or guarantee minimum wage. There has been a cut back in the subsidies given to the agricultural sector. The official agencies are not buying the agricultural produce, although

the Government has declared the support prices. As a result, while the peasants are deprived of remunerative prices for their produce, they are forced to sell them at extremely low prices and are groaning under indebtedness and fleeced by the system of usury. With price rise and collapse of the PDS system

NPMO CALL:

PREPARE FOR COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE ACTION AGAINST ANTI NATIONAL POLICIES OF BJP GOVT.

The national Convention of Mass organisations, comprising 56 organisation of workers and employees, peasantry and agricultural workers, students, youth, women and professionals from various walks of life was held on 19th February 2001, at V P House lawn, New Delhi. More than three thousand delegates from the major central trade unions, and the independent employees federations of the State and Central Govt, Bank, Insurance, Railways, and various other sectors, and from the organisations of peasants and agricultural workers, students, youth and women took part in the convention. The convention adopted an unanimous declaration giving a clarion call for countrywide struggle against the anti-national economic policy and communal design of the Vajpayee Govt and preparing for massive strike action all over the country.

The presidium comprised J Chittaranjan(AITUC), E Balanandan(CITU), A D Nagpal(HMS), N K Shukla(AKS), Thangamony(AIYF), Pramila Pandhe (AIDWA), S Bhardhan(BEFI), Bhangoo(AIREC), V A N Namboodri(Telecom), Mandal(UTUC-LS) among others. The convention started with adopting a resolution condoling the death of numerous people owing to earthquake at Gujarat and also the death of coal mine workers due to accident in Bagdighi mine at Dhanbad owing to criminal negligence of the management to safety provisions. The convention also adopted a resolution condemning recent bombardment of Iraq by USA and UK and called upon the people to raise voice against the international gangsterism by the imperialist powers.

The convention called upon the constituents and all mass organisations to hold massive protest demonstration all over the country, in all industrial centres, State and district head quarters etc on 2nd March 2001 against the forthcoming anti-people budget, the grievous indications of which are already pouring in. The convention also called for carrying on intensive countrywide campaign against the anti-national policies of the Vajpayee Govt and ensure the broadest mobilisation of people from all walks of life and hold State level and district level conventions of mass organisations all over the country. All these campaign must culminate in a massive countrywide strike action and the convention has given a call to carry on intensive preparation for the same.

Among the leaders who spoke in the convention were: A B Bardhan(AITUC), M K Pandhe(CITU), Swapan Mukherjee(AICCTU), Ashok Ghose(UTUC), Satyaban Mukherjee(UTUC-LS), Shyamacharan Gaur(UTUC), Sukomal Sen(AISGEF), T I Madhavan(AIDEF), Tarakeshwar Chakraborty(AIBEA), Brinda Karat(AIDWA), Kumudini Pati(AIPWA), Amarjit Kaur(NFIW), KKN Kutty(Central Govt Emp Confederation), Sunit Chopra(AIAWU), DP Dubey(FMRI), Shamik Lahiry(SFI), Anil Bhatnagar (NZIEA) and others.

and growing unemployment, there is continuous growth of poverty as well.

Women continue to be blatantly discriminated socially and in wages and employment. Sexual harassment and crime against women are on the increase. Unemployment of women is showing steady rise. The Government has not even introduced the 33 per cent Women's Reservation Bill. Despite tall talks of equality, they are not being given equal

property rights and joint pattas in the names of husband and wife. Maternity benefit is not implemented. Ban on night work is being lifted. Even in various, unorganised sector of industries where women are in majority, like in Beedi, handloom, etc, identity cards are being issued in the name of their husbands only.

While prices of all commodities are increasing unabated, there is a galloping rise in unemployment which is being

aggravated by increasing closures. Students and youth are facing bleak future due to growing lack of jobs. The Government had promised one crore jobs every year. But there is no employment policy at all. This Convention expresses serious concern over the growing attacks on and the killing of trade union leaders by management hirelings. It condemns the nexus between the management, police and administration.

MINE DISASTER IN BAGDIHI

Situated in Dhanbad district of Jharkhand state, the Bagdihi colliery is a unit of Area X of the Bharat Coking Coal Ltd, a subsidiary of the Coal India Ltd. The colliery was inundated on February 2, at about 12 noon, when the workers were working underground in the general shift and first shift. The workers working at different levels of the seventh seam of the mine were entrapped by the huge amount of water that rushed in from the now abandoned, adjacent Jairampur colliery of the same Area X of the BCCL. Hearing the deadly sound due to the in-rushing water, those working above the third level of the seventh seam (stratum of coal layer) rushed out of the mine. But none from any other level of the seventh seam could come out.

It is apprehended that the inundation was caused by a rupture of the barrier between the two (Bagdihi and Jairampur) collieries. The rupture reveals criminal negligence on part of the management and non-compliance with the mine statutes. The fact that a safety week was observed immediately before the ghastly disaster in Bagdihi, reveals the utterly callous attitude of the authorities towards safety.

The dead body of Pritam Singh was recovered on February 5, at 7 a.m. Coordination between the management and the rescue team was found seriously lacking during the rescue period. The 11 divers, who were brought from Bombay and Vizag for the job of recovery, alleged that they were being supplied wrong plans and maps. A senior officer of Indian Navy said that the BCCL had invited a team of navy divers only to appease the local people and as an eye wash, and also to have some time for a cover-up. This reveals the high-level criminal conspiracy on part of the management.

The Bagdihi colliery is a strong base of the CITU. Almost all the workers entrapped were CITU members. Two camps are functioning round the clock at the Bagdihi and Jiarampur collieries. Local comrades, including S K Bakshi and Gopi Kant Bakshi, president and secretary respectively of the Jharkhand state committee of CITU, were camping on the spot. Basudev Acharya, MP, visited the spot on February 3 night and pressed the management for issuance of fund and material relief for the members of the victims' families and for accelerating the process of drawing the water out. On February 4, Haradhan Roy, former MP and general secretary of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India (CITU), visited the spot.

The CITU observed a programme in all the collieries of the BCCL to protest the delay in rescue and recovery operations, as well as utter negligence of the state and central governments and the management. The members of the families of the victim workers and officers went on a hunger strike, demanding their people alive or dead.

(Report from Gopi Kant Bakshi)

With the globalised economy, there has been a growing offensive by the decadent imperialist culture on the Indian youth. Education is being commercialised and communalised. History is being distorted. Institutions like ICHR, ICSSR, NCERT, etc are being filled by RSS ideologues and text books are prepared with the fascistic ideology of *Hindutva*. No sooner than the present BJP-led Government came to power, in a planned manner the RSS, VHP, Bajrangdal, etc have launched and heightened the nefarious offensives on the Muslims and the Christians and on the secular democratic foundation of the country and its composite culture. The Government is even trying to amend the Constitution to install a presidential form of authoritarian Government. The Government has even undermined the Non-Aligned Movement and showed its pro-imperialist stand. This National Convention condemns the Government for its entreaties to the USA to serve as its junior partner in the globalised economy.

Demands

This convention, therefore, calls upon all the mass organisations to organise countrywide campaign and agitation on the following demands:

1. Reversal of the draconian policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation and ensure a self-reliant alternative economic policy free from the fetters of the Bank-Fund-WTO.
2. Halt reckless entry of MNCs

in the Indian economy.

3. Strengthen the Public Sector, stop privatisation, disinvestment and corporatisation.
4. Re-open closed industrial units and revive the sick ones.
5. Protect the small scale and traditional Indian industries and revive the policy of reservation of items for production in these units.
6. Check price rise and strengthen and implement the Public Distribution System.
7. Increase direct taxes on the MNCs and Corporates and reduce indirect taxes to benefit the common people.
8. Initiate actions to recover the so-called NPAs from the nationalised banks.
9. Implement thoroughgoing land reforms, distribute ceiling-surplus and benami lands to the landless. Reintroduce quantitative restrictions on imports, stop agricultural imports, restore the agricultural subsidies and the prices of diesel and kerosene to former levels. Formulate a comprehensive insurance scheme to protect the peasants and agricultural labourers from national calamities. Write off all debts of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. Guarantee remunerative prices for agricultural and dairy products. Introduce food for work programme. Enact a comprehensive Central legislation for the agricultural labourers.
10. Withdraw ban on recruitment and downsizing of Govt staff and fill up all vacant posts in Govt departments and PSUs.
11. Draw genuine schemes for

employment generation both in the rural and urban sectors, and pay unemployment allowance to the jobless and displaced workers.

12. Introduce the Women's Reservation Bill in the ensuing Budget session of Parliament. Stop sexual harassment and social discrimination of women. Draw special employment generation schemes for women.
13. Ensure free and compulsory primary education for all. Stop commercialisation and communalisation of education and distortion of history. Abolish capitation fees, halt fee hike of students and allot 10 per cent of Union Budget on education. Withdraw the proposed Private University Bill. Implement the promise of universal education by enacting the 83rd Constitutional Amendment Bill. Ensure democratic rights of the academic community by ensuring elected representatives in all governing and academic bodies.
14. Ensure need based minimum wages. Formulate genuine schemes to eradicate poverty and of elimination of child labour.
15. Guarantee rights of Dalits and tribals and SC/STs and fill up back log of SC/ST quotas in employment.
16. Stop entry of MNCs in the media sector. Curb all media and cultural programmes which violate secular values.
18. Stop attacks on Muslims and Christians. Stop communalisation of the various departments and the society. Refrain from undermining the secular democratic foundation of the Indian Constitution.

YET ANOTHER TALKING SHOP EXERCISE

M K PANDHE

The Thirty seventh session of the Standing Labour Committee held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on 14th February, 2001 proved to be a mere debating society without drawing any definite conclusion on issues before it.

Though the agenda included the questions of Health and Safety in agriculture including security for agricultural workers as well as impact of Globalisation on Indian industry, labour and economy, these issues were discussed in a very casual manner. Sufficient time was not allotted to these important issues and within two and a half hours, all the Central Trade Unions, employers' organisations and State Government representatives were to express their viewpoints. Only 3 minutes were allotted to each speaker, though some managed to get more time.

The session was addressed by Manohar Joshi, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, who spoke at length only on the virtues of globalisation and how India can benefit from the policies of the NDA Government at the Centre. Referring to the present economic difficulties, he said, it would be a short-term phenomenon and the economy would prosper after some time.

The Union Minister of State for Labour, Muni Lal and Minister of Labour, Satya Narayan Jatia, spoke in the same vein, only adding that the interests of labour should be protected under globalisation.

M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, M.A.Gaffoor, Secretary, represented the CITU in the meeting as delegates, and Ravindra Shukla, General Secretary, Rajasthan State Committee of CITU and J Ballabh from CITU Centre attended as advisors.

PAST DECISIONS IGNORED

The meeting reviewed the action taken by the Government on the decisions of the 36th Session of the Standing Labour Committee held on 9th

February, 2000. The CITU representatives pointed out that on almost all the decisions taken in the last

meeting, the Government has not taken any effective action with the result that all these issues have been kept pending for a long time. The last meeting took the decision about immediate payment of statutory dues by the Public Sector undertakings, which have reached over Rs.2200 crores last year. These dues include the wages earned by the workers, contribution to the Provident Fund and ESI, Gratuity payment, overtime payment etc. The Ministry of Labour, however, beyond writing letters did not take any action with the result that in some of the PSUs, the statutory payment of wages has not been made for the last 20 months and workers have been literally starving for days together. Even the retired employees did not get these payments in some cases. Cases of committing suicides by workers in such undertakings have been increasing all over the country. But the Ministry of Labour and other Govt. Departments are totally unconcerned with the plight of these workers.

It was also agreed by the Govt. in the last meeting that the employing ministries would consult trade unions before adopting policies of disinvestments and privatisation. However, no Ministry has consulted any trade union with the result that all decisions concerning disinvestments and privatization were taken unilaterally. The Labour Ministry was merely behaving like a silent spectator during last year. In the last meeting, the Standing Labour Committee recommended that the Govt. should bring a Bill for agricultural workers during the budget session of Parliament in the year 2000 itself. As a matter of fact, the question of comprehensive bill for agricultural workers is being discussed for more than one and a half decades in various Tripartite Forums. However, even now, the Govt. is adopting dilatory

tactics to bring such a bill, which was severely criticised by the CITU representatives in the meeting.

WORKERS' PLIGHT WORSENING

Regarding Home-based workers, whose number exceeds 50 lakhs, the Govt. of India has promised formulation and implementation of a National Policy. Recently an ILO convention has been adopted on this issue which was supported by the Govt. of India. However, the Govt. of India is only consulting some ministries and the Labour Ministry prepared some notes. But no consultation has been held so far with the workers organisations. The CITU representatives strongly criticised the inordinate delay on the part of Ministry of Labour to take action on such important issues.

It was unanimously agreed in the last session of the SLC that workers' rights and living conditions should be protected in the Export Processing Zones and compliance of Labour Laws should be ensured through labour inspection. The Ministry of labour earlier issued a circular stating that whenever the Govt. officials visit the EPZ for inspection, they should take the representative of labour with them. However, this directive has not been implemented even on a single occasion. Naturally the inaction of the Govt. was a matter of strong criticism by the trade unions.

Regarding the provident fund organisation, the last meeting strongly criticised the Dave Committee's recommendations, which wanted workers' provident fund money should be invested in the

share market. It also proposed that even the pension funds can be invested for boosting the share market. Though the trustees of the PF Organisations opposed this decision and demanded that the Ministry of Finance should not implement any such decision to play havoc with deposits of workers amounting to Rs.75,000 crores in the provident fund organisations, the Govt. is going ahead in that direction.

DECLINING TRIPARTISM

A strong criticism was made in the last meeting that the tripartite machinery in India has been made extremely weak by the Govt. of India and consultations with labour have become a farce. Though Union Labour Ministry have 34 tripartite committees, most of them do not meet periodically and whatever decisions taken in those meetings are not implemented by the Govt. The Ministry of Labour, instead of admitting this failure, tries to give dubious replies by giving a list of statutory committees formed during the last one year. The trade unions opposed this method of evading replies by Ministry of Labour and demanded that all the tripartite committees, which consider policy matters concerning labour, should be regularly convened and their decisions should be implemented.

CITU CRITICISM

The last meeting demanded enhancement of import duty on various products which are killing Indian Industries. But, the Ministry of Labour has not taken any steps except writing formal letter to

COMRADE INDRAJIT GUPTA

With profound regret we record the demise of Comrade Indrajit Gupta, veteran leader of the Left and democratic movement and the working class, on 20th February, 2001 at Kolkota. He was 82 and succumbed to cancer.

Com.Indrajit Gupta was a person of eminence in various strata of public life and a longest serving parliamentarian. He was, for a long time, the General Secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress and of the Communist Party of India. He was also a Vice-President of the World Federation of Trade Unions. His contribution to building up of the trade union movement in India and in the international plane will be cherished by the posterity.

His was a life full of dedication to the cause of the toiling people. In his death, the democratic and working class movement has suffered an irreparable loss. The void caused by his death would be difficult to fill up.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to the memory of Com.Indrajit Gupta and convey heartfelt condolences to the bereaved comrades and family.

the Ministry of Finance, which also was criticised by CITU representative in the meeting.

On the question of industrial sickness, the non-implementation of the decisions by the Govt. was extremely glaring. The Govt. did not take any steps except showing lip sympathy for the workers in the sick industry. But no concrete measures are forthcoming. The demand for improving managerial inefficiency in the last meeting was practically ignored by the Govt. and merely quoted a circular issued in 1992. This made a mockery of the very concept of ensuring better accountability especially in the case of willful default and mismanagement of funds, the Govt.'s reply was not at all convincing and trade unions sharply criticised it. As a matter of fact, the Govt. did not take any action on the decision.

Regarding the question of transparency in restructuring in the Public Sector Enterprises, it was agreed in the last meeting that trade unions will be consulted before restructuring process. But no step has been taken by the Govt. in this matter, as a result of which the sickness continued to grow at a faster rate and many units have faced closure. On several issues, the Labour Ministry made it

clear that they were acting merely as a post office and not as a Ministry, and doing nothing except making vague statements.

The demand for greater credit and marketing support for the small-scale industries, to overcome their sickness, also remained unattended on the plea that a Special Task Force has been created for that purpose. However, the Task Force has not implemented any task during the last one year. The Ministry of Finance is already considering scrapping SICA, which will give a green signal to the employer to close down the units and throw workers to the street to face starvation and destitution. The Government failed to implement the commitment given before the BIFR in several industrial undertakings, with the result that the units became sick. The workers have been fighting against such closures but the Government does not pay any attention to such a situation.

On the other hand, the insistence by the trade unions to make BIFR revival oriented, to facilitate revival of all potentially viable sick units, through Govt. support, have not been paid any heed.

The last meeting of the SLC recommended that the Workers Participation Bill introduced in

DONATE YOUR MITE FOR THE EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS OF GUJARAT

Earth quake on 26th January has caused unprecedented disaster in Gujarat. The extent of the catastrophe is such that the total death toll even after five days still remain unpredictable and it will cross lakh. The loss of property is immeasurable. And those who survived in the devastated areas, lost their everything and are spending days under the sky in inhuman distress and in the midst of absolute uncertainty.

The relief operation going on remains tragically inadequate. It is the duty of the working class movement of the country to come forward in the aid of earthquake victims in Gujarat. Our trade unions in many places of the country have already jumped into mass collection for relief of the quake victims. In many PSUs workers have already decided to donate one day's wage for earthquake-relief. We must take all out initiative to reach widest section of workers and common people and pool our mite for the assistance of the people in distress in Gujarat.

We urge upon all the CITU units all over the country and the trade union movement in general to expedite mass collection for relief-fund for the quake victims of Gujarat and send the same to CITU Centre at the earliest. A separate bank account titled "Gujarat Earth Quake Relief Fund (CITU)" is being opened by the CITU Centre for the purpose. We call upon the working class to donate their mite for the relief and rehabilitation of the quake-victim people of Gujarat.

Note: Contributions must be sent by Demand Draft payable at Delhi favouring "Gujarat Earth Quake Relief Fund (CITU)".

Parliament more than a decade ago should be adopted. But the Government has been adopting dilatory tactics and the Bill has not seen the light of the day. The decision of the last committee again remained unimplemented due to the prevaricating attitude of the Government. The CITU representatives, therefore, pointed out in the meeting that the very purpose of the meeting becomes meaningless if decisions taken are unimplemented in such a manner and demanded that the Government should be more vigilant in taking action on the decisions taken at the highest Tripartite Committee level in the country.

During the course of discussions on Health and Safety in agriculture including social security for agricultural workers the CITU representative, M.A.Gaffoor, pointed out that without improving the living conditions of the workers, the talk of health is meaningless. Increase in wages and working conditions of the agricultural workers, is an important aspect, if health of the workers in agricultural sector is to be improved. He, therefore, demanded formulation of a comprehensive law concerning the agricultural workers by the Government. He criticised the opposition by some of the State Governments to adopt such a law and demanded that the Central Government should pass the Bill in Parliament despite opposition by some State Governments. The real wages of the agricultural workers are falling and their living standards are going below the poverty line. The Committee, therefore, recommended bringing a comprehensive law concerning agricultural workers. But, the employers' representatives expressed serious reservations because they were opposing any such comprehensive law for agricultural workers.

FALL-OUT OF GLOBALISATION

The Committee discussed the impact of the policy of globalisation and its impact on the working class and the economy. All the trade unions sharply criticised the paper prepared by the Government, which was merely supporting the policy of globalisation and accepting the dictates of the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The trade unions criticised the role of the multinational corporations damaging the growth of the Indian economy. They also pointed out to the anti-national policy of bringing down the customs duty and removal of

quantitative restrictions on imports. The growing industrial sickness was also criticised by the trade unions. They demanded that without proper changes in the Government policies, the industrial sickness could not be overcome.

The policy of privatisation and disinvestments also came under sharp criticism from the side of the trade unions. CITU demanded a complete review of the policy of globalisation and its impact on the working class. It demanded activation of the Special Tripartite Committee to look into the impact of globalisation on the working class so that steps can be taken to protect the interests of the working class. The representatives of the employers and the State Governments, however, welcomed the policy of globalisation and wanted to pursue it. They also wanted changes in the labour laws so that they can withdraw the facilities available to workers and increase their exploitation. Trade unions did not agree to changes in the labour laws in favour of the employers.

The CITU representatives opposed the basic approach of globalisation, which has resulted in increasing inequality at international level and damaged the progress of developing economies. The representatives of CITU further demanded that Government should take initiative in bringing together developing countries to jointly oppose the policies of globalisation, which is helping the multinational companies in advanced countries. Though there were sharp difference of opinion between the representatives of the management and the unions, the labour Ministry tried to draw a hasty conclusion of a so-called consensus, which was objected to by the trade unions.

The 37th Session of the Indian Labour Conference is likely to be held in Bangalore in the month of April 2001 to discuss further the policies of the globalisation and the functioning of the Tripartite machinery and social security measures for the entire working class.

As a result of these deliberations, the issues were merely talked out without proposals emerging for concrete measures for developing the national economy and taking the country on the path of self-reliance.

The Labour Ministry, however, conducted the exercise as a mere ritual, making a mockery of Tripartite consultations.

NINE PER CENT GROWTH: CHASING A MIRAGE?

When the Indian economy is experiencing long drawn recessionary trends, the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has directed the Planning Commission to examine the feasibility of a 9 per cent target of GDP growth per annum during the Tenth Plan period. According to the estimates made by the Planning Commission itself during the Ninth Plan, even a 6 per cent GDP growth is not likely to be achieved considering the serious slowdown of the Indian economy.

The Planning Commission estimated that the achievement of a 9 per cent growth rate is possible if substantial growth rates can be ensured in the country. The agricultural production will have to increase 4.7 per cent per annum, the industrial production growth should be about 11.1 per cent per annum. The growth in the service sector will have to be boosted to 10.4% per cent annually. The import bill will grow by about 14.4 per cent, while export will have to grow at 15 per cent per annum to achieve this objective.

However, the mid-term appraisal prepared by the Planning Commission for the Ninth Five Year Plan clearly indicates that the Indian economy is in doldrums and heading towards stagnation. The mid-term appraisal notes "Significant shortages in growth performance have been recorded in agriculture, mining

and quarrying and manufacturing sectors." It further admits that "both domestic savings and investment have fallen short of targets by over 5 per cent." Investment in agriculture and allied services, mining and financial services have fallen short of target by over 20 per cent.

MEETING WITH TUs

The Planning Commission convened a meeting of central trade union organisations to consider the feasibility of the achievement of 9 per cent growth in GDP. The representatives of the CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS, HMS and UTUC attended the meeting.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, while speaking in the meeting pointed out that mere rate of growth of GDP does not indicate social progress, since bulk of the growth of GDP is pocketed by richer strata of the society. He noted that with the existing policy framework of following the World Bank, IMF and WTO dictates will only result in further decline in the rate of growth in the economy.

Giving example of China of achieving higher rate of growth, Pandhe observed that the policies of building self-reliant economy, public ownership of means of production, land reforms, growth of employment with higher incomes has resulted in sustained economic growth in China. Generation of employment resulted in expansion of market for the goods produced in the society.

Within 20 years, per capita income in China has increased 4 times which testifies to the correctness of the policies pursued by China in developing its economy.

During the Eighth and Ninth Plans, in the name of opening of the national economy, the Government of India has opened floodgates for foreign investment and goods which is ruining Indian economy and sickness in industry is growing at a faster rate. The unemployment has grown alarmingly and people below poverty line have gone up substantially.

POVERTY INCREASING

Challenging the official claim of poverty reduction, the CITU representative noted that practical life in India clearly indicates that poverty has grown in the recent past. He quoted from the report of Planning Commission to substantiate the point.

"...the food consumption of the poor in India has gone down in the last 10 years. Poor do not have cash to buy 20 kg at a time...and price charged often exceeds the official price by 10 to 14%."

"...all is not well with the Public Distribution System in India. There is 36% diversion of wheat 31% of diversion of sugar from the system at the national level."

UNEMPLOYMENT UNABATED

Regarding Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the Planning Commission noted that it

created jobs only for 11 days in a year. It admitted violation of material labour norms, corruption (fudging of muster rolls), execution of projects through contractors who sometimes hire outside labourers at lower wages. The Mid Term Appraisal admitted about the non-existent training centres, non payment of stipend etc. as causes of failure of various Government schemes.

UNREALISTIC TARGET

The CITU pointed out that the entire plan process is done through bureaucracy which eats up funds and benefits do not reach the needy people. Hence the progress appears only on paper and does not benefit the

poor in the country.

Pandhe, therefore, stated that the Prime Minister's directive

about 9 per cent growth rate of GDP is stated with an eye on vote catching and not for sincere effort to really enhance the economic growth with social justice.

The Planning Commission in its report admitted: "Due to serious slippages in public investment in physical and social infrastructure, the pipeline investment for the Tenth Plan will be low. This may weaken the possibility of significant acceleration in the growth rate during the Tenth Plan period."

This admission of Indian

economy heading towards deeper crisis exposes the real character of the announcement of the Prime Minister, calling for 9 per cent growth rate of GDP in the Tenth Plan period.

The NDA Government is pursuing the same economic policies during the 10th Plan with more vigour, which only makes the talk of 9 per cent growth rate a mere gimmick and cannot be taken seriously, the CITU pointed.

The representatives of BMS, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC criticised the Government of India's policies and demanded changes in the policies, if higher growth rate has to be achieved.

SKEWED REFORMS, AND THE SLOWDOWN

The key results of the National Sample Surveys 55th Round (over 1999-2000) regarding employment and unemployment have just been released.

These results reveal a sharp, and even startling, decrease in the rate of employment generation across both rural and urban areas. Indeed, so dramatic is the slowdown in the rate of employment growth that it calls into serious question the pattern of growth over this decade.

Based on the employment rates (as per cent of the population) that are given for the 55th Round, it is possible to calculate the rate of growth of aggregate employment in rural and urban areas since the previous large sample survey conducted in 1993-94. These are shown in the Table.

Growth rates of employment

(Annual compound rates, in per cent)

Period	Rural	Urban
1983 to 1987-88	1.36	2.77
1987-88 to 1993-94	2.03	3.39
1993-94 to 1999-2000	0.67	1.34

This Table shows growth rates of employment which have been calculated using extrapolated annual population data based on Census figures up to 1991, and thereafter using the now standard projections of annual rates of growth of 1.73 per cent for the rural population and 1.84 per cent for urban population for the period after 1991.

This shows a very significant deceleration for both rural and urban area, with the annual rate of growth of rural employment falling to as low as 0.67 per cent over the period 1993-94 to 1999-2000. This is not only less than one-third the rate of the previous period 1987-88 to 1993-94, it is also less than half the projected rate of growth of the labour force in the same period. In fact, it turns out that this is the lowest rate of growth of rural employment in post-Independence history.

(Jayati Ghosh - Courtesy: The Frontline 16th Feb. 2001)

(Delhi, the National Capital Region, has witnessed a great deal of turmoil over the issues related to the "Master Plan for Delhi," "Pollution," "Relocation of Industries", etc. In their zeal to make Delhi "cleaner" and "greener", the Government had demolished jhuggis; the judiciary had been chasing the authorities with a whip in hand to jettison the industries off Delhi. The miserable plight of the masses - particularly the large segment of workers employed in the industrial units - is not even pondered over. The day may not be far off when what is happening in Delhi might be re-enacted in other metros. We publish here two write-ups, which focus on some of the basic questions that remain parried. The first one "Delhi: Master Plan Vs Masses" is an abridged version of a two-part article by Subodh Verma. The second - "Politics of Polluting Industries" - comprises excerpts from "UPDATE", published by Update Collective, New Delhi—Editor)

DELHI: MASTER PLAN VS. MASSES

Delhi is undergoing an upheaval of far-reaching consequences these days.

* The Supreme Court has ordered the closure or relocation of nearly one lakh industrial units, employing nearly 15 lakh workers. Since only a handful of industrialists have been given possession of empty undeveloped land in Bawana, it is certain that most of the workers will become unemployed.

* Over 30 lakh people stay in *jhuggi* clusters all over Delhi. There is a move to uproot most of these. Some may be allotted land in the western rural periphery of Delhi.

* The Lt. Governor of Delhi has ordered a drive to remove over 5 lakh pavement-shop owners, street vendors and rickshaw-pullers.

All this 'cleaning up' is being done in the name of reducing the pollution of the city, reducing its population (over 145 lakhs) and providing better civic amenities to the residents. The legal sanction for these actions is claimed to be arising from a statutory document called 'Master Plan for Delhi - Perspective 2001 (MPD).'

On the face of it, this programme appears to be desirable. However, there lies a deeper and terrifying truth behind it. The city's super-elite—multinational corporates, big industrialists, trade barons, top bureaucrats and ruling party politicians—want to convert the national capital into an enclave for the wealthy alone. They do not want to see the poor around them. Let the labourers stay either 40-50 kms away, or better still let them 'migrate somewhere else' as one learned justice put it.

POLLUTION

It is being argued that industries should be closed down or shifted to other places in order to reduce pollution in the city. Furthermore, it is asserted that it is the poor who spread dirt and filth causing diseases etc. The reality is quite the reverse. The share of air pollution in Delhi from different sources is: vehicular: 67%, power plants 12%, industry 13%, other 8%. The main culprits for air pollution are over 32 lakh vehicles in the city, over 90% of which are privately owned. Surely, it is not the *jhuggi* dweller or the industrial worker who owns cars! Even middle-class employees would prefer to travel by any available public transport, rather than sweat it out on two wheelers. But then, there is no such system in the city. Incidentally, note that the three power plants (owned by the Government) contribute to air pollution as much as all the rest of the industries. Among 'other' sources of pollution, one of the major contributors is diesel generating sets (over 4 lakhs), again mostly owned by the rich.

The lion's share of pollutants actually originates from the affluent sections of the society. Thus the bulk of solid waste, especially of the non-degradable kind, originates in south and New Delhi areas, the preserve of the elite. The per capita garbage generated is 1360 g per day per person in NDMC areas while it is only 345 g per day per person in MCD areas. Sewerage is also generated at a higher rate in these areas.

Further, it is due to the tardiness and incompetence of the concerned Governmental agencies that these pollutants continue to pour into the environment. Thousands of tons of garbage are not even lifted by the local bodies.

Of the 4070 tons of solid refuse generated every day, only 2,700 tons are collected for disposal. Out of the 7 land fill sites identified by the MPD for dumping garbage, 5 were found to be occupied by people and hence not available. 25,000 tons of fly ash generated by the three power plants in Delhi is left unutilised. Untreated Sewerage is dumped into the river at the rate of over 2014.7 million litres per day. The Delhi Govt has officially stated that over 200 kms of its trunk sewer system is in a state of collapse, and would require over Rs 300 crores for replacement. Most of the trans-Yamuna area does not have a sewer system at all. Of the city's 44 resettlement colonies, only 19 have sewers, while only 250 of the 553 unauthorised but regularised colonies have it.

Thus, the consumerist lifestyle of the elite in this city is the predominant reason for environmental degradation while the poorer sections are suffering from its ill effects. Moreover, the responsibility for polluting the river, and groundwater sources, as also allowing garbage to rot on the streets vests solely with the local government. All these are well known facts taken from Government publications. It is shocking that neither have they been placed before the Supreme Court, by State and Union Govts., while considering the Relocation issue, nor have the learned judges reflected upon them. Whatever be the case, it is apparent that pollution will not be controlled by closing down industries.

Master Plan for Delhi

Except perhaps for the mandarins of the Ministry of Urban Affairs and the honourable judges of the Supreme Court, confusion prevails as regards the issues involved in relocation of industries. What does the Master Plan say?

The MPD lays down the policy of types of uses to which designated land can be put, norms for providing physical and social infrastructure, preservation of historical heritage, conservation of environment, etc. In particular, it defines 37 use zones classified under 9 categories, viz., residential, commercial, manufacturing, recreational, transportation, utility, Government (public and semi public), agriculture and water body. The moving spirit that imbues this document is to control the growth of population in Delhi in order to prevent the "collapse" of city structure due

to "unmanageable load."

Elite Philosophy

The MPD identifies population growth due to migration as the genesis of various ills plaguing the city and calls for "flexible labour markets" and "a definite restrictive policy on employment generation." Its approach towards the working people and poorer sections of the society is evident from the fact that it provides for only 3% of land for 'slum housing' as opposed to 68% for general housing (i.e. mostly middle and upper class sections). While working out detailed plans for provision of facilities to the settled middle class through its five tiered commercial/business structure, it unashamedly states that "financial constraints" may prevent provision of, say, sewerage lines for resettlement colonies.

Discriminatory approach

In pursuance of its overall philosophy of turning a blind eye and choking off the poorer sections, the MPD adopts a discriminatory attitude that has been vigorously pursued by successive rulers of the city and the bureaucrats.

While over 70% of the city's population resides in substandard housing (*jhuggis*, unauthorised colonies, etc.) only 3% land has been kept aside for these low income groups.

5% people residing in the NDMC areas get about 46.2 litres per capita per day of drinking water while the MCD areas get anything from 29 to 130. Even within the MCD areas, those taking water from community taps may get as low as 18-20 lpcd.

The NDMC and cantonment areas, where about 7% of the population resides, uses up nearly 12% of the power; if industrial consumption is ignored (there are no industrial users in these areas) the share is 20%.

No Finances

The Master Plan has not one word on the financial implications of all its recommendations except where it advises the people of resettlement and unauthorised colonies to fend for themselves, claiming financial constraints. The diverse agencies dealing with piece-meal aspects of the Plan were left to work out their own priorities. This laid the basis of discriminatory policies, best exemplified by the per capital expenditure for 1999 by the two prominent local bodies:

Population (lakhs)	Total Expenditure (Rs crores)	Expenditure per person (Rs)
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MCD	126.29	1,614	1,281
NDMC	5.03	661	13,220

Thus the privileged elite of the NDMC areas are pampered by more than ten times the expenditure compared to the poorer sections living in the MCD areas.

Above the People

MPD and its primary implementing agency the DDA are completely free of any democratic control. Land in Delhi is under the Union Govt and so is the DDA. The elected State Govt and legislature has nothing to do with it, except that two members of the latter are nominated as members of the DDA. The nominated LT Governor of Delhi is its *ex-officio* its Chairman and an IAS officer its operative head. The Delhi Development

Act (1957) provides that the Master Plans should be formulated in consultation with the people, the draft should be made available to the public, their objections/suggestions should be invited, etc. However, the draft of MPD was published only in English and after a cursory process of inviting objections, finalised.

This then is the nature of the statutory document that is serving as the legal basis for industrial relocation, environmental conservation and aesthetic uplift of the national capital. It is an anti-people document, with ill conceived and arbitrary premises, inherently was doomed for failure. **It does not reflect the needs and aspirations of the pole. It is also devoid of a rational, scientific basis. To have it as a statue is a shame, to use it for judicial pronouncements, a cruel mockery of justice.**

POLITICS OF POLLUTING INDUSTRIES

The recent turbulence in the Capital represented the success of the "neo-liberal" development path in affecting all the sections of the society. In fact, it encapsulated the multi-faceted processes going on in the whole of India. All the variables activated at the wake of globalising India seem to be jumbled up in the incidences. On the one hand, a determined neo-liberal ruling class thrives on the most anti-liberal coercive State machinery and means justified by the sanctified judiciary. The petty bourgeoisie, on the other, are struggling to bargain for their existence and to be accommodated as contractors and sub-contractors in the evolving corporate structure. And, always on the receiving end is the working class.

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM

The final decade of the last century had been a decade of judicial rejuvenation and activism. The judiciary became active, or rather, hyperactive in fulfilling the "public interest". It held that the industries, which have not obtained permission to operate in the residential areas, should be closed down by January 1, 1997. It further chalked out the schedule for completion of the shifting out of the polluting industrial units. When informed about the 98,000 non-conforming units and impossibility of their immediate closure or relocation, the court

commended the seriousness of the State Government and rescheduled the cleansing drive, but ordered it to submit quarterly reports. But the State Government repeatedly extended the deadline and could not develop the relocation sites. The court on November 14, 2000 issued a contempt notice. Even the choice of the Union Urban Development Ministry as the nodal agency for the implementation of the court's orders came to be a fiasco. The Centre and the State alleged each other.

The State Government pleaded for the extension of the deadline to the year 2002. It proposed the conversion of a large number of residential colonies into industrial areas and asked the court to permit it to regularise the industrial units operating in the non-conforming areas. The Centre vehemently contended all these proposals. In a peculiar fashion the bench presumed that since the workers were mostly migrants they would not object to shifting. "It is only the industriaists who are not keen on shifting their industries. Their attitude has set at naught the whole concept of the NCR."

Political Economy of Relocation

But the question remains, despite all irregularities and contradictions (apparent and real) in the

process, why this sudden active concern regarding informal industrial concentration? Is it simply an environmental awareness and concern that have inspired all the hands of the State machinery - executive, judiciary and bureaucracy? But, they are simply shifting or relocating the environmental muck, not eliminating it altogether. There is no serious demand for cleaner technology and industrial organisation.

An important question is obviously that the 'de-polluted re-greened city' would be for what purpose and for whom? Despite MPD's sincerity to separate industry and residence, the highest moral authority in the State, the Supreme Court has already resolved that the relocation of the largest mass of citizenry with the industries is natural and unobjectionable. It takes the compulsions and insecurity of the working populace as their will. Does not this sufficiency indicate the class bias of these policies, even judicial pronouncements?

The 'haphazard' industrialisation, which was the product of the age of national reconstruction, became 'outdated' in the age of global integration. Capital, consumer and even labour markets became localised, clogging the information flows of different markets. As a result, diverse price structures became operational, thus impeding a smooth expansion of capital. Demand patterns, too remain hidden. They fail to respond to the overall production and supply of goods in the market, and vice versa. In short, 'protected' and informally existing small scale industries (SSIs) and household industries thwart the integration of local markets. Through their ability to survive on low capital investment and cheap labour, they pose a grave threat for the profitability of the capital-intensive industries by providing substitute goods at a lower price.

But, most of the time, SSIs reduce the costs of production for these big ventures by making intermediate and complementary goods cheaply available. Further, consumption subsidised by the SSIs and household units help in reducing the labour costs too, (i.e., in a more technical terms, it reduces the value of labour-power). Hence, liberalisation provides means, essentially, not to eliminate them but to harness them. In other words, they should be made subservient to the

process of capital expansion, expunging their autonomous nature, which slacken the said process. The informal sector would exist but only in periphery, so that its activities are properly supervised and do not clog the mobility of capital.

BENEFITING BIG CAPITAL

Systematic urbanisation and zoning would allow big capital (national or transnational) to systematically exploit the resources and market opportunities. It would allow the investors to identify and target the prime and profitable areas. Delhi, under the liberalised economic regime, needs to be developed as the financial, commercial and service centre surrounded by dispersed and decentralised production units.

The centre and judiciary are actively enabling structural changes to provide for the politico-economic exigencies explained above. They did not spare any means, consensual or coercive to systematise the market opportunities available in Delhi. We find forced evacuation of slum dwellers and trampling of their livelihood. Reducing pollution and environment protection act as consent building "ideologies". The actual consequence of the policy implementation would be in fact, a relocation of pollution. Even the rights of citizens hailed regularly in the English media are myths serving the same purpose.

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REPORTS & EVENTS

FISHERMEN AND FISHERIES WORKERS CONVENTION

An All India Convention of Fishermen and Fisheries Workers was held at Bagla Guha Nagar, Mohanpura, in Nadia district of West Bengal on the 17-18 February 2001. As a unique example of worker peasant alliance, the convention was held under the joint auspices of the All India Kisan Sabha and the CITU. It was the first step in the attempt to build an all India movement of the fishermen and fisheries workers in the country. 81 delegates from Bengal, Tripura, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Orissa attended the convention.

MK Pandhe, General Secretary CITU hoisted the red flag and inaugurated the convention. Kiranmay Nanda, Minister in charge of fisheries, Government of West Bengal and president of the Paschim Banga Matsya jibi samiti, K Varada Rajan, General Secretary, AIKS, Mahboob Zahidi, MP and leader of the AIKS, MM Lawrence and Hemalata, both Secretaries, CITU presided over the convention. Zahidi placed the resolution condoling the death of all the martyrs who were killed in the struggle for the rights of the working masses and also all those who lost their lives in the Gujarat Earth Quake. Ashit Goura, chairman, reception committee welcomed the delegates.

In his inaugural address Pandhe

dealt at length the conditions of the fishing industry, fishermen and the fisheries workers in the country. According to the Planning Commission, there were around 38 lakhs and 40 thousands fishermen/ fisheries workers in the country, including those who are engaged full time or part time in the work. Besides there were another 38 lakhs workers who were engaged in the fish processing industry. Out of this total of more than 75 lakhs people engaged in the industry, around 30% were women. A large number of children also work in the fisheries.

In spite of such a large number of people depending on the industry for their livelihood, and its potential to earn foreign exchange, the Government of India is paying scant attention to the development of this industry. The financial assistance given to the fishing industry is 20 times less when compared to that given to big business houses. Though the Planning Commission allotted Rs.800 Crores during the Ninth Five Year Plan, only Rs 176 Crores could be spent in the first two years. In 1998-99, the Government of India decided to spend Rs. 160 Crores, but could spend only Rs. 91 Crores. As a result, the production of fish in 1998-99 remained only 52 lakhs and 40 thousand tonnes while the actual potential was 84 lakhs

tonnes including inland and marine fishing. The target of 70,40,00 tonnes for the year also could not be achieved.

Despite the recommendations of the Murari Committee to prohibit the operations of the foreign trawlers in India's inland waters, the Government of India was nonchalantly allowing them to loot our valuable marine wealth. As the fish in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are depleted, big trawlers of multinational companies are coming to the Indian Ocean. They possess the technology to detect the high density fish areas, catch, process and can the fish on the trawlers, so that by the time the trawler reaches the coast, the canned fish is ready for sale. This results in the displacement of thousands of fishermen from their only source of livelihood. Our country loses foreign exchange and our people are denied consumption of fish.

The legal provision of not allowing mechanised boats within 12 nautical miles of Indian coast is also not implemented in many States. As a result, the livelihood of a large number of traditional fishermen is adversely affected. Thousands of acres of fertile paddy growing land are converted into ponds for shrimp cultivation. This land as well as the surrounding land and the ecology gets damaged; the water resources also get polluted.

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Pandhe pointed out that people engaged in pond fishing, river fishing, brackish water fishing or marine fishing have different problems. Many fishermen are supposed to be self employed but they do not get proper assistance from the Government. They do not have work throughout the year. The help given by the Government of India to the fishermen's cooperatives is paltry. Often these cooperatives are controlled by the mafia, while the Government remains a silent spectator. In the absence of proper credit and other help, they find it very difficult to carry their business.

Women do not get maternity benefit or any other benefits. Large number of women is engaged in the sale of fish; they are very frequently subjected to harassment including sexual harassment while they carry the fish in the public transport for selling. Women engaged in marine processing, mostly migrant workers are severely exploited. They are not paid minimum wages or any other benefits. They are kept in isolation and are not even allowed to talk to the local population.

The fate of the inland fishermen is also the same. They do not get minimum wages, provident fund, ESI or other medical benefits. They have no pucca houses, drinking water or sanitation facilities. During storms or cyclones, they do not get prior correct warning with the result that many fishermen lose their lives;

they are the worst affected as they live in the coast. Fishermen, who venture into the sea in their traditional wooden boats, sometimes get drifted by strong winds or currents, enter foreign waters and are punished, harassed and even killed.

Concluding his address, Pandhe emphasised the need to organise the fishermen and fisheries workers on a national scale and launch a powerful movement.

Pitabasan Das, convenor of the coordination committee told that the Aquaculture Authority Bill, which the Government proposes to place before the Parliament reflects the anti fishermen attitude of the Government. It does not recognise aquaculture as an industry but only as agriculture. While the courts are more concerned with pollution, they are entirely silent on the people. Fishermen living in the coast for decades are said to be encroachers and are evicted, without any compensation or alternate habitation. He also explained the various welfare measures implemented by the Government of West Bengal for the fishermen and fisheries workers.

The Convention unanimously adopted a declaration with a charter of demands and decided to form an all India federation - the All India Fishermen and Fisheries Workers Federation [AIFFWF]. An organising committee was elected with Pitabasan Das as the convenor. The committee included Mahbub Zahidi and Binoy Konar

from the AIKS, MM Lawrence and Hemalata from CITU and one representative from each State, and the Minister of Fisheries from West Bengal Kiranmay Nanda. It was decided to include the Ministers of Fisheries of Kerala and Tripura also, after taking their consent. A drafting committee was also formed to draft the constitution and the report for the All India Conference to be held before the end of the year. It was decided to conduct State Conferences before the All India Conference.

The Convention gave a call to all the fishermen and fisheries workers in the country to participate massively in the protest demonstrations against the anti people and anti fishermen policies of the Government of India, on 2nd March 2001, and also in the picketing programme given by the AIKS and AIAWU on 29-30 March 2001. All the State Committees of the concerned unions, AIKS and CITU were requested to ensure that the charter of demands is widely popularised among the fishermen and the fisheries workers on these occasions. A delegation would meet the Prime Minister and the Planning Commission with the charter of demands.

Binoy Konar, AIKS leader greeted the conference and emphasised the need to allot proper cadre to work for the federation as it was a very big task to organise around 75 lakhs fishermen and fisheries workers.

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K Varada Rajan called upon the delegates to implement all the decisions of the convention and also to mobilise the necessary funds for the effective functioning of the organising committee. MM Lawrence proposed the vote of thanks.

CHARTER OF DEMANDS OF THE AIFFWF

1. Immediate ban on foreign fishing trawlers as recommended by Murari Committee
2. Allotment of more funds by the Central Government for the all round development of fishing industry which is a prime foreign exchange earner and provides a source of livelihood to a large section of population.
3. Encourage formation of cooperative societies of fishermen by providing them more inputs and other assistance. Prevent mafias controlling such activities.
4. Ban catching of fish during the major breeding season.
5. Strictly implement the provision not to allow mechanised trawlers

to catch fish within 12 nautical miles of the coastline.

6. Enact comprehensive national laws providing minimum wages, social security, maternity benefit, and safety, housing facility, insurance and job security for fishermen and women.

7. Provide suitable protection to migrant men and women fishery workers. Proper educational facilities should be provided to the children of the fishermen and fishery workers.

8. No withdrawal of any of the quantitative restrictions on industrial, agricultural, animal husbandry and fishery and allied products to protect the livelihood of the working people of India from flooding the Indian markets by the MNCs.

9. Formation of a single Ministry of Fisheries by the Central Government to cover all aspects of fishermen and the fishing industry.

10. Formation of a tripartite All

India Industrial Committee on fishing to periodically consider the problems faced by the fishing industry.

11. Appoint an expert committee to recommend methods of prawn cultivation without damaging the paddy fields, drinking water resources and the ecology.

12. Diesel and kerosene at subsidised rates should be provided to fishermen and fisheries workers.

13. New fishing harbours should be developed and the existing fishing harbours should be improved.

14. Wide network of cold storage facilities should be provided for both inland and coastal fishermen. The Convention concluded with a well attended rally, which was addressed by the West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhdeb Bhattacharya, M K Pandhe, K Varada Rajan and Pitabasan Das besides other leaders. Kiranmay Nanda presided.

BEEDI WORKERS CONFERENCE

The All India Beedi Workers' Federation (CITU), from its Third Triennial Conference held at Farakka, W.Bengal from January 26 to 28, 2001, gave a call for March to Parliament programme by Beedi workers in pursuance of their demands.

The entire town of Farakka was well decorated with red flags, festoons and banners, including the premises which was named as

Com.Benoy Chowdhury Nagar and the Hall, named as Com.Vimal Ranadive Manch.

The Conference was attended by 265 delegates and observers including 44 women from almost all the Beedi producing States of the country, representing about 2.5 lakh Beedi workers organised under the federation.

Chairman of the Reception Committee, Abul Hasnat Khan,

MP welcomed the delegates. C Kannan delivered the presidential address. P K Ganguly, General Secretary of the federation placed the report.

The report dealt with the effect of the globalised economy in general and on the Beedi industry in particular. It pointed out how the BJP Govt at the Centre was aggressively pursuing the policy of liberalisation at the behest of

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the US led imperialist countries, throwing open the vast Beedi market in India to be captured by the giant multinational cigarette companies like Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, R J Reynolds, Rothmans of Pall Mall, etc. This was by way of allowing them to market mini-cigarettes with reduced excise duties and increasing the excise duty on Beedis, and also allowing 100 per cent FDI with excise exemption in the name of developing the under developed regions. At the same time, the Govt had taken the move to put statutory warning labels to Beedi packs on the ground of health hazards. The ban on smoking also was going to hit the Beedi industry as well as the tobacco growers. All these measures were being taken without any plan for alternate pastures for the millions of tobacco growers and 50 to 60 lakhs of Beedi workers. The move was also there to levy uniform excise duties for Beedi rolled in hands in India and those rolled in machines by the MNCs. In this background the USA had banned import of several renowned Beedis from India in the name of Child Welfare and Workers' rights under US Trade Law, Section 301. At the same time there is a move to allow import of Beedis from USA and other western countries. While all these measures had created a serious crisis in the industry, the Government remained totally non-chalant regarding the service and working

conditions of the lakhs of Beedi workers in the country. It has even refused to call conciliations to discuss the demands placed by the federation several years ago.

The report dealt with the organisational matters and the growing struggles launched by the Beedi workers in different States and the ripe occasion for joint movements with other trade unions. It called for a March to Parliament programme jointly with other trade unions after the forthcoming elections in several states. 29 comrades including 9 women from all the States participated in the discussion. They severely criticised the Govt's policies and narrated about their conditions, abysmally low wages, regarding non-receipt of welfare measures, housing problems and their movements and efforts to gear up organisational activities and membership. The report of the General Secretary and the Statement of Accounts were adopted unanimously.

Discussion on Working Women

Since women workers constituted the overwhelming majority of the beedi workers in the country one of the special features of the conference was a thorough going discussion on taking up the specific demands of the women workers, their involvement and mobilisation in movement, in union activities and bringing them up in leadership positions.

The report of the General Secretary laid emphasis on this point and the issue was reiterated

through a resolution moved by Hemalata and seconded by Papu, and supported by Ranjana. It was the experience that while the women workers suffered from the common problems of the Beedi workers, they were more vulnerable, ruthlessly exploited with all round discrimination and their specific demands and problems remained unattended to. In many States they are paid less than their male counterparts. Identity Cards are often issued in the name of their husbands or other male members. As a result, they are denied the welfare and other benefits. Provisions like maternity benefits, creches, etc are not implemented. While there is gross violation in implementation of various legal provisions, this callous negligence is marked when it comes to implementation of the specific provisions for the women workers. In addition, they are subjected to sexual harassment by the contractors and middlemen. The report and the resolution called upon the unions to include the specific demands of the women workers in the charter of demands, take the women leaders and cadres in the negotiations and take up these demands therein. It was pointed out that all these specific demands of the women workers were incorporated in the 21-point charter of demands formulated by the Federation, and these demands have to be focused in the action programmes being launched by the unions. While discussing self-critically about the

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weaknesses, it was further pointed out that despite the decision of the Working Committee to ensure at least 25 per cent women delegates in the conference, the women delegates/observers constituted only about 17 per cent. Only from Maharashtra majority of the delegates were women, i.e., 9 out of 14.

Sub-Committees on Working Women

There was a lively debate on the issue, which was concluded by the General Secretary of the Federation. The conference decided that i) sub-committees on working women in the Beedi industry would be formed in all states; ii) followed by districts and unions; iii) and State level conventions on working women in

the industry would be held in each State to discuss these issues; iv) women cadres and workers should be included in the leadership positions at all levels; and v) to involve them in decision makings and day today activities of the unions. Tasks were formulated in this regard. There was a consensus that since women constituted the vast majority of the Beedi workers in the country, this fact should be reflected in future in all committees, movements and the conference of the federation.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU addressed the delegates session on 27th January. He called upon the delegates to strengthen the organisation, increase the membership of Beedi workers in each Beedi manufacturing State

and launch all India movements jointly with other trade unions to compel the Government to concede the demands of the Beedi workers.

New Committee: The conference elected a Working Committee of 59 members including 14 office bearers. C Kannan, P K Ganguly and R K Swamy were re-elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Massive Rally: A massive open rally of about 50 thousand workers was held on 28th January. The rally was addressed by the Chief Minister of W.Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee and M K Pandhe, as the main speakers. Others who spoke were P K Ganguly, Abul Hasnat Khan, Chittaranjan Sarkar and K Hemalata.

MUMBAI: WORKERS PLAN PROTEST ON 15TH MARCH

A 50,000 strong public meeting at Shivaji Park in Central Mumbai on 15th February has called for a Long March against the anti-labour policies of the Maharashtra Government and the disastrous policies of the BJP and Central Government. This meeting was organised under the banner of Mumbai based Trade Unions Joint Action Committee, comprising 30 trade union organisations. The date of the march is 15th March. It will start from Dadar and culminate in a massive demonstration near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Memorial, in South Mumbai. The public meeting at Shivaji Park

on 15th February was conducted by a presidium comprising of R G Karnik (State Govt employees), K L Bajaj (CITU), Sarad Rao (HMKP), G V Chitnis (AITUC), Suryakant Bagal (HMS), Dada Samant (Kamgar Aghadi) and Pushpa Mehta (UTUC).

The main resolution, listing anti-working class measures initiated by the present State Government headed by Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and the BJP led Vajpayee Government, was moved by R G Karnik, General Secretary of the Maharashtra State Government Employees Confederation. Those who

addressed the gathering were Prabhakar Sangiri (CITU), Sarad Rao (HMKP), Sukumar Damle (AITUC), Dada Samant (Kamgar Aghadi), Hanumant Thate and Shanti Patel (HMS), Pushpa Mehta (UTUC).

The working class in Mumbai as in other places has launched several militant struggles in the recent period against the World Bank, IMF, WTO and MNCs dictated policies. Trade union leaders had also met the concerned ministers and made representations detailing the dangerous aspects of the globalisation policies. But the

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Democratic Front Government led by the Congress Party and Nationalist Congress Party in the State paid no heed to the voice of protests. On the contrary, as days pass on, the Government there and at the Centre have been initiating and implementing policies that have brought disastrous effects not only on the industrial and economic front but on the agricultural front also, in this premier State of Maharashtra.

When the entire 20 lakh Government and semi-Government employees were on a total strike in protest against privatisation, contractorisation and casualisation measures in the Government services on 2.1.2001, the State Government came out with a Cabinet decision to make (a) drastic reductions in staff strength in all departments, (b) non-appointment of fresh staff against the posts laying vacant due to retirement and resignation etc (c) deep cut in subsidies for primary education, (d) transfer of water supply from the irrigation department to cooperative

societies and (e) empowering the 40000 village panchayaths in the State to levy octroi on the goods entering the villages as a result of liberalisation of imports and (f) proposing anti-working class changes in the labour laws. Undoubtedly these were the demands of the vested interests.

Not satisfied with these, the State Government took a further retrograde decision in its Cabinet meeting held on 10th January such as (1) Freezing of dearness allowance (2) withholding of Bonus and (3) cut in the house rent allowance to the Government and semi-Government staff, (4) allowing mill owners to dismantle sick mills and sell mill lands. The amendment proposed by the Government in the labour and industrial laws specifically are such that once they become law by promulgation of ordinance by the State Governor, whatever protection the working class has achieved as a result of their century old struggles will be divested and old practice of hire and fire system will start

surfacing.

Another retrograde action of the Government to trifurcate the prestigious Maharashtra State Electricity Board into generation, transmission and distribution divisions. This was done with an ultimate intention to privatise the MSEB. This decision, it must be pointed out was, contrary to the assurance given by the State Electricity Minister, Padam Sinh Patil, to the leaders of electricity workers when they called off the 4 day long State-wide strike of MSEB workers on 28th July 2000. It is thus clear that the Sonia Gandhi led Indian National Congress Party and the Sharad Pawar led Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra are competing with the Vajpayee led Central Government at the Centre in taking oppressive and suppressive measures against the working class. This is wholly to serve the interest of the bourgeois and landlord class in collaboration with the multinational corporations.

AGAINST HANDING OVER TO PANCHAYATS

The Minister in-charge of Women and Child Development, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, assured a delegation of the All India leaders of the unions of anganwadi employees in the SSS that the Government of India was not considering any proposal to hand over the management of the Anganwadi centers to the

Panchayats, NGOs or any private organisations. In spite of that, several State Governments have started issuing orders and guidelines, handing over the responsibility of the Anganwadi centers to the Panchayats. The AIFAWH affiliated unions of the anganwadi employees in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, where the

State Governments have recently issued orders handing over the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats, have decided to intensify campaign and struggles against this.

In Punjab, after the centers were handed over to the Panchayats, harassment of the Anganwadi employees by the Panchayat

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Pradhans have increased. Activists of the Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab, and those who oppose the State Government's policies are the main target. Emboldened and encouraged by the attitude of the State Welfare Minister, who dismisses or terminates the services of the Anganwadi employees on the spot, without any enquiry, many Panchayat Pradhans have started doing the same. Nine anganwadi workers, who were union activists were recently removed from service by the minister without giving any proper reasons. Besides, the minister is habituated to use vulgar language and misbehave with the Anganwadi women.

Condemning the behaviour of the Welfare Minister of the State towards anganwadi employees and demanding reinstatement of

all the nine women, Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab, has organised a big mass demonstration on 17th February 2001. It was organised at Majitha, where the by-election was due, to expose the misdeeds of the Minister in the Akali Dal Government of Badal. Around 1000 Anganwadi employees from all over the State participated in the demonstration.

Hargobind Kaur, President of the Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab, in her address criticised the callous attitude of the State and Central Governments to the problems of the anganwadi employees. She told that repeated representations to the authorities on the problems of the anganwadi workers and helpers in the State fell on deaf ears. The Minister wanted to disrupt the unity of the employees. Even hundreds of

anganwadi employees coming in vehicles to participate in the rally were stopped 4kms. away from the town, to prevent their participation in the demonstration.

Gurjeet Kaur, General Secretary of the union, Lal Singh, Vice President of the Punjab State Government Employees Federation and AR Sindhu, Secretary of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AUFAWH), spoke in the meeting. A colourful procession of the women shouting slogans on their demands was held after the meeting.

In Himachal Pradesh too, The CITU affiliated Union had decided to organise a massive 'Chalo Assembly' programme during the budget session. Wide campaign against the relevant order of the State Government is going on.

STEEL WORKERS DECIDE TO GO FOR STRIKE

18th January 2001, Bhilai Steel City. The united convention of Steel workers decided to go in for countrywide action programme including strike against non-settlement of wage revision which got already delayed for five years. Trade unions from all the steel centres, affiliated to all the central trade unions participated in the convention and expressed their strong resentment over the negative attitude of the steel industry management on wage revision of the steel workers. M

K Pandhe, General Secretary, and Ardhendu Dakshi, Secretary of CITU participated in the convention. The convention adopted a declaration enumerating the following:

- 1) Immediate wage revision for the steel workers with effect from 1-1-97 and with relativity to the wage rise granted to the executives.
- 2) There should be full neutralization of cost of living at all levels
- 3) No privatisation or closing

down of any steel plants and units etc

4) Wage revision for the contract workers in steel industry pending which interim relief @ 12% to be paid with immediate effect. They should be given all statutory benefits like PF, gratuity, workmen's compensation etc and those working in permanent perennial jobs and also as casual and DPR workers for a long period should be regularized immediately. The convention also decided to hold dharna/

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demonstration in all the steel centres jointly on 30th January and

two-day strike in the steel industry on 27-28.2.2001 to press

for the demands of immediate wage revision as formulated above.

N F L WORKERS TO STRIKE ON 26th FEBRUARY

The Govt of India has decided to sell-out the highly profit making National Fertilizers Ltd. (NFL) by divesting 51% share of the company.

The National Fertilizers Employees Union has decided to go on strike on 26th February in all its plants/units in protest of such anti-national move of the Vajpayee Govt.

The NFL played a major role in making the country self-reliant both in respect of production of

fertilizers and foodgrains. During last 15 years, NFL has earned a cash profit of Rs.2282 crores, paid dividend to Govt Rs. 250 crore, besides paying Corporate tax and duties to the tune of Rs.286 crore. Further in recent period the company has invested huge money in modernization and expansion. The total asset base of the company is more than Rs.8000 crore.

This highly cash rich and profit making company is being planned

to be sold out on a platter.

In fact the Govt of India's Fertilizer policy is designed to close down numbers of Fertilizer units with HFC & FCI on the one hand and sell out the profit making ones like NFL to MNCs at throw away prices, like the distress sale of Modern Food to Hindustan Liver & BALCO to Sterlite Industries.

CITU extends its support to the strike action of National Fertilizer Workers against privatisation.

EARTHQUAKE: TU MESSAGES FROM ABROAD

The recent earthquake in Gujarat, which caused unprecedented disaster and immeasurable loss of life and property, has aroused deep sympathy and concern of the working people the world over. A number of fraternal trade unions from abroad, including the World Federation of Trade Unions, have sent messages to us.

The World Federation of Trade Unions has expressed profound grief at the colossal loss of lives and severe material damage caused by the earthquake in the Western India, and has appealed to the international community, including trade unions and humanitarian agencies, to rush

help for the victims of this disaster and for relief and reconstruction of quake affected areas.

The Bureau of Workers' Activities, ILO, Geneva has conveyed tremendous concern and pain at the gravity and magnitude of the tragedy and expressed sympathy for the affected workers and their families.

The Vietnam General Confederation of Labour has expressed deep emotions at the immeasurable loss of life and property and extended profound sympathy to the sufferers on behalf of the Vietnamese TUs and working people.

The Federation of Metallurgy

Workers affiliated to the CGT, France, has expressed deep sympathy for the earthquake victims and assured financial and material help for the rehabilitation of those who suffered this terrible natural catastrophe. FNME-CGT has also expressed its desire to send financial help for the rehabilitation of Gujarat quake victims.

ZENROREN, a major TU centre of Japan, has conveyed deep sympathy for the earthquake victims and also expressed their desire to send funds for the relief and rehabilitation of affected people.

We are thankful to all of them.

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

Sr. No	Centre	Oct. 2000	Nov. 2000	Dec. 2000	Sr. No	Centre	Oct. 2000	Nov. 2000	Dec. 2000
1	Gudur	447	446	442	45	Amritsar	396	397	392
2	Guntur	425	426	420	46	Ludhiana	405	410	407
3	Hyderabad	428	427	426	47	Ajmer	436	440	443
4	Visakhapatnam	441	442	431	48	Jaipur	408	410	406
5	Warangal	441	445	443	49	Chennai	486	489	483
6	DD Tinsukia	397	392	387	50	Coimbatore	439	441	440
7	Guwahati	469	467	461	51	Coonoor	438	438	434
8	Labac-Silchar	367	370	369	52	Madurai	452	458	456
9	Mariani Jorhat	420	420	412	53	Salem	441	435	442
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	423	419	417	54	Tiruchirapally	498	502	478
11	Monghyr Jamalpur	418	423	417	55	Agra	405	410	404
12	Bhilai	395	398	399	56	Ghaziabad	454	455	450
13	Kodarma	368	366	365	57	Kanpur	431	431	428
14	Jharia	368	364	361	58	Saharanpur	410	407	405
15	Noamundi	394	400	400	59	Varanasi	467	465	457
16	Ranchi-Hatia	422	428	426	60	Asansol	422	420	416
17	Ahmedabad	446	445	448	61	Kolkata	484	480	461
18	Bhavnagar	464	470	471	62	Darjeeling	393	393	386
19	Rajkot	426	429	422	63	Durgapur	501	499	489
20	Surat	450	455	452	64	Haldia	497	495	485
21	Vadodra	438	441	437	65	Howrah	530	522	510
22	Faridabad	444	446	442	66	Jalpaiguri	410	404	400
23	Yamunanagar	422	422	419	67	Raniganj	389	397	388
24	Srinagar	491	495	494	68	Chandigarh	467	471	471
25	Bangalore	439	440	431	69	Delhi	522	519	513
26	Belgaum	472	468	471	70	Pondicherry	488	486	495
27	Hubli-Dharwar	438	435	436					
28	Mercara	454	454	460		All India	449	450	446
29	Alwaye	448	443	445		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
30	Mundakayam	456	451	452					
31	Quilon	450	453	452	1	Kothagudem	455	461	448
32	Thiruvananthapuram	498	490	490	2	Himachal Pradesh	442	443	440
33	Balaghat	391	390	390	3	Bhilwara	448	449	445
34	Jamshedpur	409	413	411	4	Chhindwara	424	427	424
35	Bhopal	456	457	457	5	Tripura	423	434	423
36	Indore	451	453	456	6	Goa	521	526	531
37	Jabalpur	443	448	453					
38	Mumbai	513	516	512					
39	Nagpur	475	478	476					
40	Nasik	483	490	489					
41	Pune	503	509	511					
42	Solapur	462	464	460					
43	Barbil	422	428	427					
44	Rourkela	410	413	411					

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

NATIONWIDE STRIKE BY NTPC WORKERS

The NTPC workers all over the country shall go for one day's token strike on 15th March, 2001. The decision for the strike was taken at the all India convention of the NTPC trade unions held at the Ramagundam (Andhra Pradesh) on 15th February 2001. The trade unions affiliated to CITU and the trade unions who are constituents of the All India NTPC Employees' Federation numbering twenty are party to the strike decision.

The strike is to press for the demands of the trade unions for fresh negotiations for a fresh settlement in fulfilment of the just and logical demands of the NTPC workers. It may be recalled that the so-called MoU on wage revision signed on 25th January 2001 midnight between the NTPC corporate management and trade unions (mostly the adhoc constituents of the National Bipartite Committee [NBC] of NTPC) affiliated to INTUC, BMS and AITUC is far away from the genuine expectation of the workers. It is very important to note that barring one, all the unions democratically elected to the NBC through secret ballot and those affiliated to CITU have not signed the so called settlement.

The NTPC management admitted that "The Board had approved the proposal on the revision of pay-scales and other benefits for the executives after receipt of a letter dated 3-7-2000 from the Ministry of Power indicating that the Ministry did not have any objection to revised pay scales for executives as proposed by NTPC. The NTPC proposal on revision of pay scales, fitment benefit etc was in line with those adopted by ONGC and other Oil sector PSUs. After approval of the Board,

implementation circulars were issued and payment in this regard has been released to the executives."

The CITU unions had repeatedly put before the management that since the executives have been granted wage revision based on the pattern in ONGC and other Oil sector companies, why the NTPC workers should not be granted wage revision as per the ONGC/IOC workers?

The NTPC Executives have been granted a pay rise of more than 80% on the average and in some cases it has gone up to 91%. Further the Executives have been granted additional increments in revised rate for every three increments drawn at pre-revised scales. Moreover, they have been granted special pay upto a maximum of Rs.1208.00 while fixing their pay in the revised grades. It is a huge benefit indeed.

Whereas the Oil sector workers have been granted fitment benefit on the sum total of pre-revised basic pay plus all the components of Fixed Dearness Allowance, Variable Dearness Allowance, personal pay etc., the NTPC workers have been allowed fitment benefit only 66% on pre-revised basic pay and a very small amount of Rs.54. Not even the 'two increments at pre-revised rate' have been counted for calculating fitment benefit despite repeated persuasion.

The unions have demanded further negotiations for a settlement to ensure the pay revision/fitment benefit, revised pay scales and rate of annual increment should be in parity with the Executives of the NTPC or for that matter in line with ONGC or the other Oil sector workers.

ATROCIOUS MOVE BY NTPC MANAGEMENT

NTPC workers are going on countrywide strike on 15th March to press for their just demand after repeated persuasion with the management to see reasons failed. To combat this, the elite and civilized management of NTPC have virtually declared a war against all its employees and unfortunately some of the central trade unions sided with management in their nefarious game. The General Manager(Personnel) of NTPC in a circular to the heads of all its installations/project has instructed: "you must make preparations for taking strict administrative and disciplinary actions, including punitive deduction of 7 days' wage for one day's strike, suspensions, dismissals including discharge simplicitors."

NTPC workers all over the country would join strike braving all these barbarous attack.

SELL OUT OF NATIONAL WEALTH.... BALCO STYLE !

Tapan Sen

Yet another scandalous deal of plunder has been inflicted on the country's economy in the era of so called second generation reform by the BJP led Govt. The BALCO, a premier profit making PSU is being sold practically free of cost.

And why BALCO alone ? The infamous BALCO deal was preceded by the sale of Modern Food Industries Ltd to Hindustan Lever, and a company with 14 manufacturing units, 7 franchises and huge landed assets at its disposal and sizable market share, was sold at only Rs 104 crore. And now it is the turn of BALCO. Many other PSUs with huge asset base in the oil, electricity and other areas are waiting in the queue. And each and every deal is releasing bad smell of scam and scandals. In this process, the country has been put in the process of sale, brick by brick.

It has to be like that. The whole idea of privatisation is itself scam tainted. For a developing country like ours, suffering from resource crunch, the whole idea of giving away the regular resource-generating source like the profit making PSUs occupying vital strategic position in the national economy, for one time money of sales-proceeds, is itself a devil's design. No economic theory can justify this, although everyday the hordes of so called economists hired by the seller's brigade in the Governance are doing the same. They themselves also know that they are not talking in terms of economics but actually pushing through the agenda of the prospective buyers and the scamstar sellers' alliance in governance.

It is an absolute utopia that such scam-tainted idea can be made operative in a transparent and scandal-free route, as is being claimed by the present disinvestment minister. It cannot be so, by any stretch of imagination. From the day one of the disinvestment exercise, since the Narsimha Rao regime, every deal of selling PSU shares had been in scandalous route, leading to heavy loss to national exchequer and people and gains to mostly MNC buyers and the handling officials. Even the Comptroller and Auditor General(CAG) could not help making scathing observations regarding those PSU share-deals more than once. The off-loading of shares of GAIL in the overseas market at a rate much cheaper than the domestic market rate during the BJP regime glaringly exemplify the same ongoing process.

The BALCO sale-deal is the continuity of the said disastrous process. The company is a highly profit making one in the Aluminium sector commanding a share of more than 15% in the domestic market, which is suffering from a shortage of around 148390 tonnes in the year 2000, thus signifying a huge profit-potential. BALCO has been in consistent profit since more than one decade and contributing handsomely to Govt exchequer. Only

last year it made a profit of Rs 55.89 crore and this year the profit is around Rs 110 crore. It consisted of two plants, in Korba in Chhattisgarh and in Asansol, West Bengal, with huge land assets besides costly plants and machineries. And in addition to this huge asset base valuing more than Rs 5000 crore, BALCO has in its disposal a huge surplus fund of Rs 460 crore. All these are getting transferred to Sterlite Industries at only Rs 551.5 crore. It is not even a sale, it is a transfer practically free of cost. What else can be called 'the plunder of national wealth' ?

The manner, the whole deal has been processed, exposed a unholy collusion between the seller and the predetermined buyer. The disinvestment minister says, the sale is finalised through open global tender. But the reserve(minimum price) is fixed so low, at Rs 359 crore, totally unrelated with the real value of the asset, that it became the purchaser's day, and a loss to the nation. Even the minister could not but admit that the reserve(minimum) price was fixed on the basis of book value of the equity, which do not reflect the real value of the assets(around Rs 5000 crore) being transferred. Further, the job of valuation of the asset base of the metallurgical plant has been entrusted to a person having knowledge of only land and property valuation and not of plant and machineries. And this particular valuer admitted to have ignored the market share of an ongoing plant like BALCO, and also its huge surplus reserve of Rs 460 crore, as 'extraneous matters' or 'irrelevant'(Times of India, 22-2-01). The game to keep the company undervalued to facilitate the deal in favour of the particular buyer is open as daylight. Yet, the disinvestment minister will claim to be transparent and fair !

The minister, to cover up the crime and to plead legitimacy of the infamous deal, stated that trade unions were consulted in the matter, but he did not say that everybody opposed the sell-out of BALCO. He did not say that as a part of the deal with Sterlite, the minister was kind(?) enough to ensure protection for the existing workers only for one year and thereafter, the new employer is free to do whatever he likes with the workers. And the noted economist in the privatisation camp, Mr Bibek Dev Roy, commented in a TV discussion on 22-02-01(News Hour, Star News) that because of this one-year condition, the selling price has become somewhat lower.

The CITU Secretariat, in a statement issued on 22nd February, condemns the plunder of BALCO sell out by the BJP led NDA Govt just before the Union budget and called upon the working class and patriotic people of the country to oppose by all means this treacherous move of the Govt to sell out the precious wealth of the country one by one.