



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

POLLS ARE OVER—WHAT NEXT?

By the time this issue is out, the elections to the 12th Lok Sabha would be over to decide the fate of country's governance, supposedly for another term. Soon, election results would be out, heading the way for formation of the new government at the centre. We have to watch which political formation is going to rule the country. But, whichever Govt may take over, the trade union movement, will have a heavy agenda before it, taking up the common issues facing the working class.

ECONOMY IN SHAMBLES

Despite all efforts to cover-up the reality, the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in its recent statistical release showing growth of GDP (gross domestic product) in 1996-97, at 7.5%, the gloomy trend on the industrial economy could not be concealed. In fact, the industry sector (manufacturing, mining and electricity, water) marked a decline in growth rate in 1996-97 at 6.6% from 14% in 1995-96. And the GDP growth rate showed an increase due to 7.9% growth in agriculture and 8.1% growth in service sector. Again this higher growth rate in agriculture of 7.9% in 1996-97 was preceded by a 3% decline in the previous year (1995-96). And the growth figure of service sector has got jacked up by increase in the weightage of 47% assigned to it while making calcula-

tions. That is how statisticians are trying to confuse the gullible. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) paints a gloomy picture for 1997-98. It forecasts a slower GDP growth at 5.5%, widening trade deficit and weakening rupee. Despite all concessions and allurements, the foreign capital inflow will be lower than the previous year. The Industrial growth will slide down to 6.5% compared to previous year and foodgrain production would register a minimal rise in spite of good monsoon.



TAPAN SEN

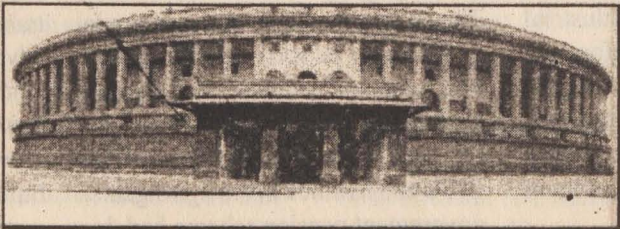
The situation, painted above, has started casting its shadow on employment situation which is already under severe pressure, exerting further downward pressure on wages and quality of employment. Casualisation and contracting of employment has become the order of the day, thanks to the so called liberalisation of the

ation in the coming days. In such a situation, the TU movement has to take up with priority various vital problems facing the working class and the common people.

PROBLEMS GALORE

The problem of sickness of industries, with the callous approach of the government and the financial institutions, is becoming more complicated. In public sector, the problem has become more acute particularly after the Disinvestment Commission recommended virtual writing off the sick PSUs from industrial map, except those which can be made saleable after a white-wash.

The fate of the other PSUs making profit is not comfortable as well. The 'great intellectuals' in the Disinvestment Commission have already publicised their six volume recommendations for 40 odd profit making PSUs, most of which have practically been certified for sale-out to private hands and removal of the PSU stamp. And both Congress and BJP are inclined to accept and implement the same, as their election manifestoes indicate.



economy. Trade union movement, no doubt, is going to face a tougher situ-

tion. The recent WTO policy on financial sector has also become a source of serious concern before us. It has mounted greater pressure on India to open its financial sector, particularly the insurance sector, more widely. This, many political parties

and so called "experts" in our country are ready to oblige. It appears many of those politicians could not yet read the lessons of Asian currency crisis. Hence it is left to the working class movement to build up resistance against further move to liberalise country's financial sector for plunder and speculative operation by the multinational companies.

ENSUING STRUGGLES

Hence, in the post poll situation, the trade union movement of the country has to address a host of problems through united struggles and various other means. The struggles for rise in Minimum Wages above the poverty level, has become the most burning issue to be addressed with priority by the TU movement.

The workers in the vast unorganised sector representing the overwhelming majority of workforce in the country have been worst-hit by the policy of liberalisation. Besides, wage level going down in real terms, labour related and social security legislations carry no meaning for the workers in the unorganised sector. Even in the last Indian Labour Conference held in December, 1997, the theme paper submitted on behalf of Labour Department, could not deny such a reality. It is but urgent task of the TU movement to take up the issues of unorganised sector workers, including improvement and proper enforcement of labour related and social security legislation to cover the entire unorganised sector.

The problem of revival of sick industrial units is also an important agenda before the TU movement. This has attained urgency particularly in the background of the Sick Industrial Companies Bill pending before the Parliament. The new bill is designed to facilitate liquidation of the sick companies and have to be fought against resolutely by the trade union movement.

The disinvestment of public sector

shares, the need to build up all out struggles against the design for privatisation of the public sector industries. As already decided a National Convention of trade unions on public sector policy will be organised by the five major central trade unions AITUC, CITU, INTUC, HMS and BMS shortly to decide next course of action.

Besides, the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU), has planned a long drawn agitation including strike to expedite the wage revision of public sector employees, long overdue since 1.1.97, and payment of interim relief pending finalisation.

Moreover, the issue of removal of ceiling on bonus both in respect of payment and entitlement is another burning problem before the trade union movement. The present ceilings on bonus, have practically pushed out almost the entire organised sector workers beyond the purview of bonus payment and the right of bonus earned through hard earned struggles stands practically annulled. Such a situation cannot be accepted by the TU movement. The question of enhancement of the exemption ceiling for income tax payment is yet another urgent issue to be taken up unitedly with all seriousness by the trade union movement.

The recent move of the Govt of India to change the price index series including the base year from 1982 to 1996 is another source of concern before the TU movement. This has been dealt with in detail elsewhere in this issue. TU movement has to unitedly fight back this move as well. The struggle against the retrograde government pension scheme which was opposed and rejected by the workers in general has also to be renewed with greater vigour. The CITU and its allies in the fight against government pension scheme had declared for a countrywide strike ac-

tion in December 1997 which had to be deferred owing to dissolution of Lok Sabha and changed political situation. Now we have to resume our course of action on this issue. In view of the fact that the election manifesto of the left parties has upheld the demand for pension as a third retirement benefit, it is expected that the struggles for alternative scheme of pension should draw broader support.

PENDING LEGISLATIONS

On the legislative front also certain issues of vital importance are awaiting intervention by the trade union movement.

As already mentioned, the Sick Industrial Companies Act 1985, sought to be replaced by a new Sick Industries Companies Bill 1997, is a retrograde piece of legislation. Now is the time to build up united struggles to defeat such atrocious design to kill the domestic industries and throw lakhs of workers on the street.

In this context we must also refer to another bill seeking amendment of the Companies Act, in the same retrograde direction, to facilitate easy merger and take over of domestic companies by MNCs, and liberate the monopoly houses and big capitalists from scrutiny of their managerial and financial irregularities. Trade union movement must take up this issue as well with all seriousness.

The comprehensive legislation on Agricultural workers is a long pending demand of the trade union movement to which the U.F. Govt was committed. But concrete and effective step to legislate on this pressing demand of the agricultural workers has not yet been taken. On the contrary the concerned Bill contained adverse clauses due to the pressure of landlords lobby. On this issue as well, there is a general consensus in the TU movement and movement has to be built jointly with the agricultural workers' organisations.

Similarly trade union movement has

also to take up with all seriousness the demand for passage of the pending bill on 33% reservation for women in the Parliament and Assemblies and also to agitate over the demand for legislation on Recognition of Trade Unions through secret ballot and workers participation in management. Also we have to fight and defeat the retrograde move for so-called labour deregulation and to achieve a proper industrial relation legislation to expand the rights of the workers and the TUs.

STRUGGLE AGAINST NEP

Most of the issues mentioned above are inseparably linked with the pursuance of the disastrous policy of economic liberalisation and

globalisation. Countrywide organised and united mobilisation of working class and mass organisation against such policy of liberalisation is a must to carry on issue based struggles in the right direction.

The crisis is getting aggravated not only within the country but also in the surrounding Asian economies. This reflects the arrogant onslaught of IMF, World Bank and the imperialist forces to take over the economy and the market of the developing countries once identified as Tigers. It has become all the more urgent on the part of working class movement to take up with renewed vigour the task of uniting and mobilising the workers, peasants and people from all walks

of life against the policy of liberalisation and globalisation and for defending the self-reliance of the country's economy.

FIGHT COMMUNAL FORCES

Further, the communal and disruptive frenzies roused during the just concluded election campaign may have its continuity even after the poll creating further divisions among the working class and common people. Hence, alongwith the struggles on the burning issues and demands of the TU movement, we have to carry on with all seriousness our campaign and offensive against the forces of communalism. We have to defend the unity of the toiling people and advance the united struggles to greater strength and consolidation. *

CITU GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

Chennai(Madras), 22-25 April 1998

NOTICE

A meeting of the General Council of the CITU will be held at Chennai(Madras) from 22nd to 25th April 1998 to consider the following:

AGENDA

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting of the General Council held at Kochi (Kerala) on 26 April 1997.
 2. Resolutions on condolence
 3. Presidential Address
 4. Report by the General Secretary
 5. Statement of Accounts for the year 1997
 6. Consideration of the applications for new affiliations and disaffiliation defaulting unions
 7. Special discussion of the working of the ESI scheme
 8. Special discussion on the movement of the unorganised workers
 9. Collection drive for the BTR Memorial Fund
 10. Resolutions
 11. Any other subject with the permission of the Chair
- The meeting will commence at 2 PM on 22nd April 1997. All General Council members are requested to positively attend the meeting.

Venue of the meeting will be Vijay Rane Mahal, Arcot Road, Vadapalani, Chennai 600 026.

Comrades are requested to arrange their return reservation sufficiently advance so that there would be no eleventh hour difficulty.

All members will have to contribute Rs 350 only towards boarding expenses.

Comrades should inform train/plane of their arrival at Chennai at the following address so that arrangements to receive them can be made by the Reception Committee

Com.T K Rengarajan
Reception Committee
CITU General Council Meeting
52 Cooks Road,
Chennai 600 012
Phone 044-5323568, Fax 044-4341294

With greetings,

Yours comradely,
M K Pandhe
General Secretary

**PRIOR TO GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING,
WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE
HELD ON 22ND APRIL 1998 AT 10 AM AT THE
SAME VENUE.**

NOTICE

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of working women will be held on Tuesday the 21st of April '98 in Chennai. The meeting will start at 10 a.m. The venue will be intimated by separate circular.



11th International Conference of Transport Workers

M K PANDHE

The 11th International Trade Union Conference of Transport Workers held at Damascus (Syria Arab Republic) from 5th to 7th February reviewed the situation all over the world in the Transport Industry and decided to revitalise the organisation, strengthen the movement of transport workers in defence of the working class.

As a result of globalisation, the multinational companies in all the continents have been reducing manpower, curtailing the wage rise and imposing higher workload on the workers in the industry. The governments of various countries have taken the path of privatisation of transport industry with the result that the role of public sector has declined considerably at a global level. Stiff competition among various advanced countries to capture the world market of the Transport industry is also increasing day by day while transport industry in developing countries has become victims of the depredations of the multinational cos. About 130 delegates attended the conference from 44 organisations all over the world, and emphasised the need for resisting the capitalist offensive to project the interest of the transport workers.

From India a twelve member delegation comprising Air Corporation Employees - 4, Forward Seamens Union of India - 3, Air India Guild - 2, Dakshin Rly Employees Union - 1, All India Road Transport Workers Federation (AITUC) - 1, CLW Labour Union - 1, participated in the conference. The conference was held in the auditorium of General Federation of Trade Unions of Syria.

The Prime Minister of Syria, **Mahmoud al Zou'bi**, inaugurating the conference highlighted the aggressive role of US imperialism all over the world particularly in the Arab countries. He condemned the attempts by the US armed forces to impose blockade of Cuba, Lybia and Iraq with a view to weakening their economy and he hoped that the conference would campaign against the attempts by the US imperialism to impose its hegemony in the world.

Naser Zareef Muhriz, President of the TUI Transport, while welcoming the delegates explained the struggles con-

ducted by the transport workers in Syria in defence of national sovereignty from Israeli aggression and occupation of Golan Heights. He expressed the hope that the international solidarity of the working class all over the world will succeed in defeating all aggressive actions of imperialism - zionism.

Hasan Jamam, Secretary General of the International Confederation of the Arab Trade Unions pointed to the growing cooperation between the Arab countries against the Israeli aggression. The recent years witnessed the intransigence of the Israeli government and more arrogance and savagery on the part of the Zionist occupation forces which are still occupying Palestine, the Syria Golan and South Lebanon which is under daily Israeli acts of aggression against innocent and unarmed civilians.

Israel is flagrantly rejecting the Middle East peace process which is originally based on the implementation of the legitimacy resolutions, withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from all the occupied Arab countries and recognition of the national legitimate rights of the Arab Palestinian people to repatriation, self determination and the setting up of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital as a basic condition for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Alexander Zahrikov, General Secretary, WFTU while addressing the conference emphasised the need for struggle against the efforts of the imperial monopoly capital to impose unfavourable working and living conditions on the working class.

The conference elected eight member presidium to conduct its deliberation. From India Dr M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU was in the presidium.

Joseph Toth, General Secretary TUI Transport presented the report of activities of the TUI Transport since its last conference held in 1990. The organisation could not hold its conference according to the constitution due to several factors including acute financial crisis faced by the TUI Transport.

Several delegates who participated in the discussion on

the general report emphasised the need for more coordination among the transport unions in all branches such as air, water, road, rail so that the common dangers posed to their working and living conditions are properly countered. They also underlined the need for more solidarity in the struggle of the Transport workers and repression launched against them by several governments, all over the world. Most of the delegates from Arab countries who constituted majority of the delegation in the conference explained that in their countries the transport workers have to fight against machinations of US imperialism and Israelism.

Liu Jiyong representing from China conveyed his warm greetings and explained the difficulties of globalisation of economy and expressed solidarity with the struggle of the transport workers all over the world against the attempts to impose humiliating working and living conditions on them.

VU Minh Tam, President Vietnam Communication and Transport Trade Union, while addressing the conference explained about the Vietnam workers who are fighting for developing their economy and expressed support to the struggle of workers of transport industry of the world.

Fernando Perez Concein, Secretary General National Trade Union of Transport Workers of Cuba, explained the heroic resistance of the working class of Cuba in fighting US blockade of their country and expressed happiness over the world wide support they received from working class and people of all continents.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU while speaking at the conference noted that the IMF and World Bank all over the world are creating serious difficulties for the 3rd world countries and pointed to the need for developing more unity of the workers in third world countries to fight the menace of globalisation. He impressed upon the need for more activities by the TUI to strengthen the struggle of the transport workers. **George Guild** explained the struggle of the Air India Workers in India against victimisation. He also noted the 'fare-war' launched by big countries in Air Transport to cripple the economies of the public sector air transport companies in the 3rd world countries. **Ishar Singh**, from All India Road Transport workers Federation stressed the need for activities among the Asian Trade Unions in the Transport Industry to improve the regional coordination of the transport unions. Among others who spoke from India were **R Elangovan**, **Nirmal Mukherjee** and **Arun Kumar**.

Premansu Gupta, who was a member of the main document committee of the conference, participated in the discussion to finalise the documents. While **Sadhan Kanjilal** participated in the discussion on the resolution committee, **Ishar Singh** participated in the discussion on consti-

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tution committee.

Dev Kumar Ganguli placed before the conference the panel for new leadership which included **Naser Zerief** as President and **Joseph Toth** as General Secretary. From India, **Ishar Singh** was elected as Vice President and **Sadhan Kanjilal** as member of the General Council. The conference also adopted the changes in the constitution of the TUI Transport. The conference adopted several resolutions against US and Israeli aggression and the blockade of Iraq by US and threats of further aggression against people of Iraq. It supported the demand for vacation of territories of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine by Israel and condemned the blockade of Lybia. The resolution condemned the blockade of Cuba and also supported the struggle of the Korean people for unification of their motherland. By another resolution the conference condemned the fare-war launched by the developed capitalist countries against the air cos. of third world countries.

The conference concluded with expressing firm determination for unity of all transport workers in the world and with the call for defeating imperialist conspiracies to dominate the world economy. *

FORM IV
(See Rule B)

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M K Pandhe
Publisher

COIMBATORE BLASTS & MASSACRES - A TRAGIC

Series of bomb blasts rocked the city of Coimbatore on 14.2.1998 leaving many killed including women and children and the communal clashes following it as witnessed also in Ajmer, Ferozabad during the election campaign trail — are all the manifestations of on-going phenomenon injected within the national polity in the name of Hinduisation of Indian society.

Preliminary police enquiry as reported by the Press has revealed that Coimbatore blasts have been engineered by none but the ISI of Pakistan and was executed with the help of some extremist muslim fundamentalists. Executers of the blasts received training and supply of explosives from foreign agents. Subsequent blasts on the following day and unearthing of huge arms and ammunitions during police raids from extremist hideouts also suggest involvement of foreign hands. Around sixtyeight persons including 11 women and five children were killed in the 'spree' of blasts. But what is deplorable and agonising is that the so called guardian of Hinduism in Indian politics was extraordinarily prompt in their effort to reap a political advantage out of the dastardly massacre and sought to polarise the electorate on communal line. The saffron outfits of the Sangh Parivar have been actively engaged, over time, in whipping up communal passions and organising clashes, with an aim to get a foothold in otherwise peaceful Tamilnadu.

During Nov.-Dec. '97, Coimbatore witnessed communal riots set off by the Hindutwa forces. The saffron gangs have constantly been targetting the working class belts in Tamilnadu - Coimbatore, Tirupur, Nagercoil, Dindigal etc. The present blasts are to be seen in this background - a backlash of the muslim fundamentalist groups to a chain of events set in motion deliberately by the communal elements.

The CITU condemns the perpetration of the heinous crimes -setting off blasts, loot, arson and orgy, of violence indulged in by the communal forces - both of the minority and majority religious fanatics. It is imperative for the working class to realise the immense damage caused by these communal forces to the unity of the workers. The working class must come forward to decisively isolate the communalists and defend the unity of our

JIBON ROY

class and the people. The CITU hopes that the enlightened people of Tamil Nadu will see through the saffron game and frustrate their efforts to gain electoral mileage out of this situation. R. Umanath, CITU Vice-President and Polit Bureau member of CPI(M) in his press statement issued after a visit to Coimbatore said that it would be incorrect to conclude that the looting and arson committed over the vast areas in Coimbatore after bomb blasts were done by merely anti-social elements. It was undeniably the handiwork, he mentioned in the statement

issued on 18.2.1998, of the supporters of the BJP and AIADMK combine. In wrecking communal vengeance on the minority community, they organised gangs of BJP and AIADMK cadres and indulged in mass scale arson, looting and torching of shops. Also to wreck political vendetta on DMK and CPI(M) parties, these gangsters resorted to destruction of the offices of these parties and the properties and houses of the supporters of the DMK, CPI(M) and TMC. The gangsters broke open and set fire to the local office of the CPI(M) at Rathnapuri. However, the resistance by party cadres and timely police intervention saved the Dist. CPI(M) party office at Gandhipuram. The bombs were set off at 13 different centres scattered round populated areas of the town in and around R.S. Puram, one of the posh localities in the city near where the BJP President was to address a gathering, besides medical college hospital, central bus stand, Railway station, Big Bazar Street, Town Hall, Gandhipuram, Perumal Street, Sundara Puram, Sivananda colony, Mettupalayam Road and Ratnapuri. Some of the bombs were planted in parked cars. It is interesting to note that though the explosion started at around 3.30 P.M. near the R. S. Puram venue of the meeting to be addressed by L. K. Advani of BJP, it was 200 yards away from the stage. There was no bomb planting in the route through which Advani's convoy was scheduled to pass through. Moreover, police en-

*Special Issue of
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May 1998
on
Globalisation and
neo-liberalism*

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FALL OUT OF COMMUNALISATION OF POLITICS

quiry has revealed that the bomb blasted near Advani's meeting was

neither a human bomb nor a pre-detonated time bomb. It was a car bomb

blasted instantly. Hence, it transpired that the blasting was not aimed at the life of Advani, but was ignited coinciding the visit of Hindutwa leader in Tamilnadu for ensuring high political mileage for them.

R UMANATH'S APPEAL

We appeal to all secular and democratic parties of the country not to reduce these incidents to mere inter-party quarrel but to view these as part of a larger conspiracy against the unity and integrity of this nation.

We also appeal to the state government to grant relief/compensation to the people who have lost their properties in the wanton destruction and arson that followed the bomb blasts. We demand:

* Strong and stern action against the BJP-AIADMK elements who fanned up communal hatred and perpetrated wanton destruction following the bomb blasts.

* Effective action to prevent recurrence of such bomb blasts.

* Prevent fanning up of communal and religious hatred among people even after elections by any communal or fundamentalist organisation like BJP, Hindu Munnani or Muslim fundamentalist organisation either from public platforms or through leaflets.

We appeal to all the secular and democratic parties and mass organisations to come forward to contribute to restoring peace and order in society and harmony and amity among the people.

The working class and democratic forces must clearly see the warning signals from this terrible episode. They must realise the danger posed to the working class unity and movement by vicious communalism and unless these forces are fought and beaten back, the working class movement will suffer a serious disruption. The working class and the trade union movement must take up this challenge posed by both majority and minority communalism, carry forward the fight against these forces by stepping up both the class-based movements and a relentless political-ideological battle to rally the people, and isolate these forces who have still to strike deep roots among the people.

Immediately after the blast, the BJP leadership came out with the theory of human bomb that missed its supreme leader. Thanks to media hype such theory got nationwide immediate publicity. Local prophets of Hindutwa immediately jumped over the streets. This was not restricted to Coimbatore or Tamilnadu alone. Clashes thus spread in the north - Ajmer and Ferozabad, where curfew had to be imposed. It is a matter of great shame that the world famous Dargah in Ajmer, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, the shrine where millions of muslims and people of other religious beliefs take pilgrimage every year has to survive on police protection. It would be a shame for all Indians, if perpetrators of such crime of disruption and hatred-those communal forces and their political platforms can garner footing in this great country. *

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FIXATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF MINIMUM WAGES

Most of the workers in our country work in the informal/unorganised sector. They are not only paid low wages, they are also not effectively protected under labour legislation to take care of their legitimate dues. The minimum wages legislation is the main labour legislation for the workers in the informal sector. The Act came into existence after bitter struggles by the workers. However, due to absence of any criterion to fix the minimum wages, the Act failed to give any succour to the vast sweated labour in the unorganised sector.

Minimum Wages Act, 1948

The Act provides for fixation and enforcement of minimum wages in respect of schedule employments. Once a minimum wage is fixed according to the provisions of the Act, it is not open to the employer to plead his inability to pay the said wages to his employees. In other words, once the minimum wage is notified under the Act, the obligation of the employer to pay the said wage is absolute. The appropriate government under the Act can fix minimum wages in respect of employments in Schedule-I and Schedule-IF. The appropriate government means the Central Government and the State government as specified under the Act. The Governments have also been empowered to add any employment to the schedule. The minimum wage may be fixed at "time rate, piece rate, guaranteed time rate and overtime rate." It can consist of a basic wage and an allowance linked to the cost of living index. It is to be paid in cash and payment of wages fully or partly in kind may be allowed in specific cases. The government can also fix the number of hours of work, provide for weekly days of rest, payment of remuneration in respect of such days of rest, payment of overtime wages and payment for work on holidays at a rate equal to the over

time rate. The Act also provides that different minimum wages may be fixed for (a) different schedules of employments (b), different tasks in the same employment, (c) adult, adolescent and children or (d) different locations. In West Bengal, the government considers the representations received from different individuals, associations or unions, consult the advisory board and fixes or revises the rates by notification in the official gazette. The advisory board is tripartite in nature and is represented by the government, trade unions and associations of employers.

Criteria for wage fixation

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 does not define minimum wages, nor does

SHANTI GHATAK

it go into the details of norms for quantification of minimum wages. It also does not prescribe guidelines for its quantification. The rates of minimum wages in different states and in different employments indicate that no uniform principle has been followed by the various State governments.

It was the 15th Indian Labour Conference which for the first time moved in the direction of formally quantifying the main components of minimum wages. The 15th Indian Labour Conference adopted a resolution about the norms to be followed in fixing of minimum wages, which is described below:

"a) While accepting that minimum wage as need based and should ensure the minimum human needs of workers, the following norms were accepted as a guide for all wage fixing authorities including Minimum Wage Committee, Wage Boards, adjudicators etc

i) In calculating the minimum wage the standard working class family should be taken as three consumption

units for one earner.

ii) Minimum requirements should be calculated on the basis of a net intake of calories as recommended by Dr Aykroyd for an average Indian adult of moderate activity (2700 calories per day).

iii) Clothing requirements should be estimated on the basis of a per capita consumption of 18 yards per annum which would give for average workers family of four a total of 72 yards.

iv) In respect of housing, the rent corresponding to the minimum area provided for under the government industrial housing scheme should be taken into consideration in fixing the minimum wage.

v) Fuel, lighting and other miscellaneous items of expenditure should constitute 20 percent of the total minimum wage."

According to a recent Supreme Court order (1992) there should be additional components for children's education, medical requirements, recreation including expenditure for festivals/ceremonies and provisions for old age and marriage which should constitute 25% of the total minimum wage.

IN WEST BENGAL

In West Bengal, the expenditure on food for the purpose of framing proposal is determined on the basis of his family budget inquiry. The calorie value obtained from the family budget inquiry is upgraded to 2200 calories by proportionately increasing quantities of different items. Attempts were undertaken from time to time to determine expenditure on food on the basis of standard food basket. On the basis of October 1993 prices and Dr Aykroyd's diet (reduced to 2200 calories) we get Rs 1047.00 as expenditure on food per family per month. On this basis minimum wages come to Rs 1476.00

The diet containing the minimum

amount required for sustenance, according to the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad has a calorie value of 2160 per unit per day. The diet prescribed by the institute does not contain any animal protein and as such cannot be regarded as a balanced diet for the people of this region who are mostly non-vegetarian. On the basis of October 1993 price this diet gave Rs 616.00 as expenditure on food per family per month. Accordingly, the minimum wages came to Rs.901.00. With inclusion of fish and meat item (42gms) and reduction in milk so as to give 2200 calorie value expenditure on food on the basis of October, 1993 prices came to Rs. 745.00 per family per month and minimum wages came to Rs. 1074.00. Taking in to account the rise in consumer price index during the period October, 1993 to August, 1997 minimum wages come to Rs.1195.00 if the minimum diet according to the National institute of nutrition, Hyderabad is taken into consideration.

On the basis of improved diet (2200 calorie), the minimum rates of wages

in West Bengal in different employments have been fixed (see box)

The National Commission on Rural Labour recommended for a floor level of daily rate at Rs.20/- at 1990 prices which has been subsequently estimated at Rs. 35/- per day. The same rate was recommended by the Central Government in the 33rd Session of the ILC, which was not accepted by the trade unions. The rates fixed in West Bengal are above that recommended floor level of minimum wages recommended by the National Commission on Rural Labour.

GUIDELINES NEEDED

It is, however, neither possible nor desirable to fix a particular rate of minimum wages for an employment for the country as a whole, as prices of items of consumption and other conditions vary from State to State. But, there should be uniform norms for determination of rates of minimum wages. The guidelines may be the same so as to check the flight of workers from one State to another and to ensure that the industry in one state does not suffer because of the rates

fixed by other States. The committee of Labour Ministers constituted under the Chairmanship of the Labour Minister of West Bengal on the various issues raised in the 41st Labour Minister Conference had made recommendations as to the guidelines to be followed in fixation of minimum wages. The Committee had recommended the following norms:-

1. Family of five consumption units
2. 2700 calories value food per unit containing balanced and nutritious food in conformity with food habits of the region.
3. 80 yard cloth per family per year
4. House rent as under subsidised industrial Housing Scheme, say, 5% of the total.
5. 20% of the total for fuel, lighting and miscellaneous expenditure.
6. 25% of the total wages is to be allowed for expenditure on education, social obligations and medical care as per the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Keeping the spirit of the legislation which is to be used as a facilitation tool the Government has not deliberately gone into areas where the work-

Minimum Wages in WB

Daily Minimum Rates as on 30.6.97	Rs	Daily Minimum Rates as on 30.6.97	Rs
Shoe Making	58.81	Tailoring	61.12
Dal Mill	60.96	Medicinal Plant Plantation other than Cinchona	
Bidi Making	63.41	Plantation	57.40
Bell Metal & Brass	58.88	Glass	60.50
Refractory	56.12	Paper Board & Straw Board Manufacturing (machine dry)	53.96
Cinchona Plantation	57.40	Powerloom employing less than 10 persons	62.65
Oil mill	68.08	Powerloom employing 10 or more persons	62.65
Rope Making	60.46	Manufacture of Rubber and Rubber products	61.23
Construction or Maintenance of Road or Building Operations	50.56	Ceramic	60.65
Stone Breaking or Stone Crushing	51.34	Clinical Nursing Home	60.69
Public Motor Transport	71.92	Plastic	60.65
Tanneries or Leather manufactories	59.12	Iron Foundry	61.34
Agriculture	45.22	Saw Mill	61.77
Hosiery	51.61	Decoration	50.34
Bone Meal	48.58	Bakery	59.21
Cinema	48.67	Forestry of Timbering Operation	51.15
Silk Printing	58.61	Brick Manufacturing	59.23
Chaki Mill	62.15	Salt Manufacturing	56.62

ers are able to get more than minimum wages by agreements.

The matter has been discussed in several conferences but guidelines are yet to be finalised. It is not possible for any state Government to adopt any guidelines without taking into consideration the rates prevailing in the adjoining States.

But given the awareness and unity of the workers in West Bengal, it is found that bipartite and tripartite agreements are entered into providing for wages higher than the minimum wages that could be notified.

High Court Cases

In a number of cases, operation of the notifications fixing/revising minimum wages in different employments has been stayed by the High Court on petitions by the employers or their associations. However, it has been possible to get some injunction orders vacated. At present the number of employments under injunction is 17. These are rice mill, bidi making, public motor transport, cinema, chakimills, tailoring, printing press, glass, paper board and straw board, rubber and rubber products, ceramic, clinical nursing home, plastic, saw mill, bakery, shops and agriculture. The State Government has been trying to get the stay orders vacated but the matter is time consuming. The experience in other States is also not

likely to be different. We have proposed that the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 should be included in the 9th schedule of the Constitution.

PERIODICAL REVISION

In West Bengal in all minimum wage notifications, the minimum wage consists of two parts—the basic wage and dearness allowance which is linked to consumer price index. Frequent revision of minimum wages becomes necessary when there is no component of Dearness Allowance in the minimum wages rates. In our State wages have been fixed providing for Dearness Allowance and there has been increase in minimum wages along with increase of consumer price index. The increase is now more than Rs 100/- per year in the monthly rates of minimum wages.

TUs and Enforcement

Trade unions have a major role to play in implementation of minimum wages. Minimum wages legislation as well as many other labour laws remain a dead letter where trade unions are weak. There is limitation of enforcement of minimum wages legislation by the government agency. Experience indicates that presence of trade unions can make the enforcement more effective. This is particularly true in remote areas where there are no government offices. One of the main problems in the informal sector

Payment of Wages Act: West Bengal Amendments

The Left Front Government of West Bengal has enacted the Payment of Wages (West Bengal Amendment) Act, 1993. The assent of the President of India was first published in the Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary of the 28th November, 1997. It is to be noted that before amendment only the employees earning wages upto Rs 1600/- in a wage period were covered by this Act. But as per this Amendment the ceiling limit under sub-section (6) of Section 1 of the Payment of Wages Act has been withdrawn. Henceforth, every employee engaged in a factory or industrial establishment in W Bengal is entitled to enjoy relief under the Payment of Wages Act. Further, the amount of fine has been raised to Rs 500/- and Rs 5000/- in place of Rs 200/- and Rs 1000/- respectively as provided in Section 20 of the Act for contravention of certain sections laid down therein.

is lack of awareness amongst the workers and their representatives about the rates of minimum wages in different employments and the entitlement of the workers under different labour laws. This is an area which requires special attention of the trade unions in the informal sector. *

MURDEROUS ONSLAUGHTS ON COLOMBIAN WORKERS

Attack on trade unions and killing of workers has become the order of the day in Colombia. According to the ICFTU's 1997 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, "At least 80 trade unionists were killed during the year. Many of them belonged to SINTRAINAGRO, the agricultural workers' union in the banana region of Uraba, an IUF affiliate.

The state led "military-paramilitary partnership" continues to operate with

impunity through massacres of banana workers and assassinations of trade unionists.

The cycle of violence continues to be most concentrated in Uraba, where all sides in the conflict—the landlords and Farm-owners, drug traffickers, armed insurgents, government troops, and paramilitaries - have converged in their desire to eradicate democratic trade unionism. In recent years, 20 SINTRAINAGRO leaders and more than 400 members have been assassinated.

SINTRAINAGRO was reluctantly recognised by the Farm-owners in 1989 following a 33-day strike of 20,000 banana workers. Since then, it has been engaged in a daily struggle for survival in a world of violence. (The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association).

NATIONAL POLICY ON CIVIL AVIATION: - A DEATH KNELL FOR THE NATIONAL CARRIERS

TAPAN PATHAK

The wave of liberalisation of economy has touched the Civil Aviation Industry, experiments galore in this sector. Many policies have been made and unmade. Air Corporations Act 1953 has been repealed with a view to allowing private sector in the domestic Civil Aviation Industry. Many private players came, saw but just could not conquer. The hopes of the travelling public from the private airlines were raised to dizzy heights but nose-dived in a short while. The private airlines are condemned as worst defaulters in making payment towards Govt. dues. Consequent upon the multiplicity of the operators in domestic civil aviation sector, oligopolistic tendencies among the operators and other market distortions surfaced. The experiments failed. A sinister proposal for participation of foreign airlines in domestic civil aviation industry - a concept, first of its kind in the world civil aviation scenario, has been mooted in the name of 'TATA SINGAPORE AIRLINES PROJECT'. A strong opposition from a large number of political parties particularly the Left parties have put the proposal in cold storage for the time being. All the experiments of Central Govt. are carried out at the cost of economic health of the National Carriers - Indian Airlines Ltd. and Air India Ltd, which are wholly owned Government Companies.

FINE TRACK RECORD

The Kelkar Committee appointed by the Govt. for thorough study and improvement of the National Carriers have, in their report submitted to the Govt., stated that the accumulated losses of Indian Airlines have been caused by various directives issued by Central Govt. such as grounding of A320 aircrafts in 1991 after Bangalore air crash, policy of over-pricing of ATF applicable to Indian Airlines Ltd. Gulf evacuation cost during the Gulf War in 1990, unfavourable changes in the foreign exchange rate, delay in increasing air fare to match ever rising cost of input, subsidised operation in North-East sectors as social obligation etc. The Committee has recommended that the Central Government should reimburse such losses to the national carrier Indian Airlines Ltd.

Despite several odds, Indian Airlines Ltd. has boldly faced the new competitive environment and its turn around strategy has started producing fruits. It has already made operational profit in 1996-97 and is on its way to record a net profit during the ongoing financial year 1997-98. IAL offers approximately 40,000 seats capacity per day against total demand of less than 30,000 seats per day with its most modernised fleet and advanced maintenance/engi-

neering infrastructure coupled with well trained human resources. The huge all round infrastructure available in IAL along with most modernised training facility at central training establishment at Hyderabad, is capable enough to cater to the future needs of the country through proper fleet augmentation to match growth of Traffic.

NATIONAL POLICY(?)

The Central Government has of late drafted a "National Policy on Civil Aviation which is aimed at dismantling the 'National Carriers' - Indian Airlines Ltd. and Air India Ltd. The policy is said to have been drafted to concretise a vision for the year 2020. Though many lofty words have been used while drafting the objectives of the policy, the main purpose is to ensure "Deregulation, decentralisation and creation of (so-called) competitive environment in air transport industry to subserve the interests of the consumers" or in other words disinvestment and privatisation. It is a fact that the growth of domestic air transport industry depends mainly on the index of industrial production and foreign tourist arrivals. Since both the main factors for the growth are likely to be favourable in the years to come, domestic civil aviation is a potential and prospective industry. The policy has been drafted to ensure market share of the potential industry for the private players in the name of "Creation of adequate capacity in the domestic as well as international sectors for carriage of passengers, cargo and mail to, from and within the country".

Keeping in mind the interest of the private operators, the policy ensures lucrative packages as follows:

1. TREATMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION AS INFRA-STRUCTURE INDUSTRY

The policy states after 44 years of existence of civil aviation industry under the state ownership that aircraft purchase and the airline operations shall be treated as Infrastructure Industry and the fiscal incentives and other concessions announced by the Govt. of India from time to time in Budget such as Tax-holiday, financial guarantee by Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) are available for airline industry.

2. ATF PRICING

Over the years Indian Airlines Ltd has been paying 2 to 3 times higher prices towards ATF. Now in order to facilitate the private players, the policy recommends that "ATF price needs to be brought at par with international prices."

3. SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Exemption of Sales Tax on ATF consumed for domestic

operations has been recommended in the Policy statement and the State Governments are being requested accordingly.

4. EXEMPTION OF LEASE CHARGES FROM INCOME TAX

In a bid to facilitate private airlines which are the domestic lessees of aircrafts, the Income Tax exemption proposal from lease charges in the Draft Policy shall encourage the private airlines stake holders as the tax burden is passed on to them by the lessors of aircrafts.

DISINVESTMENT & PRIVATISATION

The main features of policy towards national carrier, inter-alia, include reduction of Govt.'s share in the equity of Indian Airlines Ltd. and Air India Ltd. with the objective of reaching 49% within a five years time frame. A part of equity, 10 to 15% will be made available to the employees of the airlines.

Thus the national carriers will cease to remain national carriers within a five years time frame. The specialised engineering and maintenance infrastructural facilities of the two national carriers will be combined and converted into a joint venture company for broader utilisation. In this field 100% foreign direct investment for maintenance infrastructure will be encouraged.

The endeavour of the draft Civil Aviation Policy is mainly to encourage 'Serious Players' from Private sectors including foreign equity upto 40% and NRI investment upto

100%. Foreign Airlines will, however, not be permitted to hold equity directly or indirectly in domestic air transport sector. In order to ensure financial soundness in this capital intensive sector the minimum financial stake of the promoter in an Airline with aircraft weight below 40,000 Kgs will be Rs.10 Crores and for the aircraft with above 40,000 Kgs Rs.30 crores. Ownership of the part of the fleet of the 'Serious Players' (Private) has been made mandatory and the operators will be given adequate time to fulfil this requirement.

AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Foreign investment will be encouraged for ownership as well as management of airport facilities in the country. Foreign equity participation upto 76% will be permitted with automatic approvals and 100% with special permission in respect of construction/upgradation of airport facilities.

The National Policy on Civil Aviation will put an end to the concept of State owned airlines operation and airport facilities within 5 to 10 years time frame. A massive reduction in work force will take place in this sector due to knife edge sharp competition ahead.

The Unions/Associations attached to this Industry should give serious thought over the consequences of the policy implementation and should take initiatives to organise massive awareness campaign and united struggle against the policy. *

DELHI: INCREASING INCIDENCE OF RAPE

The rate of rape cases in Delhi is double the national average, and is increasing, latest official figures show.

The incidence of rape in the city - rising steadily in recent years - will be the highest in 1997. Reported cases of rape increased from 255 in 1993 to 484 in 1996. In 1997 the number of reported cases had already touched 497 till November 15.

The 'rape rate' - the number of rape cases per one lakh of population - was 3.4 per cent in 1995, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

Another dimension of rape relates to the work place.

Rapes by employers and colleagues is contributing to increasing insecurity among working women.

But Delhi is not alone in reporting an increase in the number of rape cases. There was a rise of 40 per cent in reported rape cases all over the country - nearly 14,000 in 1995 compared to 9,793 in 1991.

The highest number of cases in 1995 were reported in Madhya Pradesh with 3,119 followed by Uttar Pradesh 1,808 and Bihar with 1,312. Rajasthan reported 1,036 cases, Andhra Pradesh 856 and West Bengal 787.

The rate of rape cases, however, is highest in Mizoram with 5.2 Madhya Pradesh with a rape rate of 4.3 follows. And Delhi with 3.4 is third.

CHILD VICTIMS

The statistics of paedophilia (child rape) in the city are also shocking Records show that 332 cases of rapes have been committed on minors this year.

Till November 15, 100 cases were reported of rapes of children below 12 years. In nearly 157 other cases, girls in the 12-16 age group were victims, and in 75 cases the girls were in the 16-18 age group.

According to figures with the NCRB, at least two children are raped everyday in the country. About 71 per cent cases were reported in five states and union territories in 1995: 107 in Madhya Pradesh, 120 in Maharashtra, 78 in West Bengal, 77 Andhra Pradesh, 76 in Uttar Pradesh and 71 in Delhi.

CONSTRUCTION OF BTR MEMORIAL STARTED SPEED UP THE DRIVE FOR FUNDS

After laying the foundation stone on 19th December, 1997, the construction work of the BTR Memorial has already commenced in right earnest and it is expected that it would be completed before the end of the year.

The earth work for the foundation has reached an advanced stage and the piling work has already commenced. The photograph clearly indicates the progress of the construction work of the Memorial.

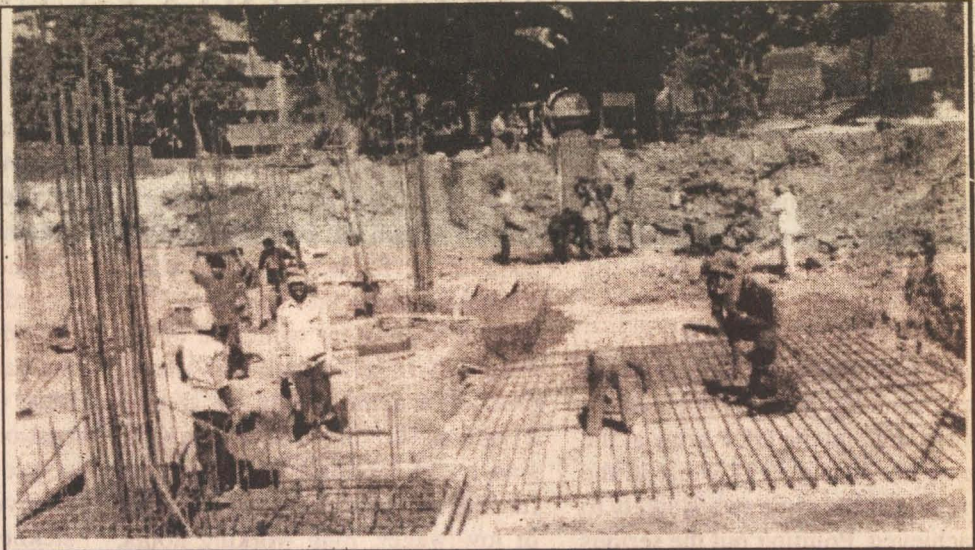
However, the work should not be allowed to suffer due to shortage of funds. So far the comrades were busy in Parliamentary elections and the work had to be deferred. All the State Committees, affiliated unions and industrywise federations should take up the job with utmost seriousness so that the collection is completed sufficiently in time. The dream of lakhs of CITU workers to erect a fitting memorial to the founder and builder of CITU will come true only if the collection drive is taken seriously by everybody who cherish the memory of the great teacher of the working class.

The memorial also includes a well developed library, a research organisation and training school for worker activists and corpus for these activities is extremely necessary.

The General Council of CITU has given quotas to all the States for the collection of funds which must be completed as early as possible. West Bengal has done a remarkable job and hopes to complete the quota within the stipulated time. The States which have not yet made much progress in the matter should give top priority to this task.

The CITU also appeals to friendly organisations to contribute liberally to this fund so that the construction work can be completed as per schedule.

Please remember, your contribution in effect, is your participation in building up a fitting memorial-an institute for labour studies-in memory of one of the outstanding leader of the Indian Working Class Movement.



Construction Work In Progress at B T R Memorial Site (Photo courtesy: J Ballabh)



The collection to BTR Memorial Fund received after the last Working Committee meeting held in October, 1997 at Shimla and published in December '97 issue of working class is given below:-

Delhi State Committee of CITU	3,200.00
Delhi State Committee of CITU	5,100.00
Grindlay's Bank Employees Union, Mumbai	8,833.00
Delhi State Committee of CITU	2,500.00
RBI Employees Association, Trivandrum	5,000.00
RBI Employees Association, Cochin	1,175.00
Indian Bank Employees Association, Kozhikode	1,247.00
Delhi State Committee of CITU	2,500.00
Chamra Udyog Kamgar Union, Ghaziabad	5,100.00
Delhi State Committee of CITU (Ghaziabad)	9,500.00
Coalfield Labour Union, Hazaribagh	1,400.00
Delhi State Committee of CITU	1,200.00
NCOEA (Kathara Washery)	200.00
NCOEA (Govindapur Branch)	600.00
Through CITU A/c	96,860.00
V. Krishnamurthy, Karur Vysya Bank Emp Union	1,000.00
Prasanta Kumar Basu, Calcutta	250.00
G. Janardhana Reddy, Hyderabad	200.00
J. Ballabh (CITU Centre)	1,000.00
All India Insurance Employees Association	1,00,000.00
Syndicate Bank Staff Union, Chennai	65,560.00
Bank Employees Federation, West Bengal	1,00,000.00
Through CITU A/c	1,00,000.00
Total	5,00,000.00

B/f Contribution till Oct. '97
as published in working class

December issue.	80,51,904.00
Total Receipts till Feb. '98	85,64,329.00

[At the invitation of Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), a three member delegation of CITU led by M K Pandhe, General Secretary comprising Chandi Prasad, Vice President and Nikhil Mukherjee, Member, Working Committee, visited Vietnam from 1st to 7th January 1998. Here is a report by M K Pandhe - Editor]

CITU DELEGATION VISITS VIETNAM

Nguyen Van Tu, President, VGCL welcomed the CITU delegation in its central headquarters on 2.1.1998 as the first foreign TU delegation visiting Vietnam during 1998. He along with 7 senior leaders of VGCL had a wide ranging discussion with the CITU delegation.

VIETNAM SCENARIO

While explaining the present economic situation in Vietnam, Van Tu pointed out that the GDP grew at the rate of 9% during 1997 while in the current year the same rate is likely to be achieved. Pointing out the serious food situation created in early 1990s when rice had to be imported from India, Van Tu mentioned that production increased by 48% in agriculture in the recent past. Last year Vietnam produced 30 million tonne foodgrains of which 3.5 million tonnes were exported. This year one million tonne extra foodgrains are likely to be exported due to higher production. During 1997, value of industrial production increased by 13% while export earnings increased by 10%. During 1998 value of exports are likely to increase 25%

Van Tu explained that in Vietnam, TUs are involved in all decision making processes in the country while they play a crucial role in production management, national defence and construction programmes. They have a broad based programme of workers' education in the country.

The structure of the TUs consists of VGCL with 61 provincial level committees and 18 industrial unions. At the lower level there are district organisations. The industrial relations and working conditions are governed by a Labour Code which protects the workers rights. Private sector enter-

prises have been developed in the recent past employing 5 lakh workers. VGCL has 4 million membership of which 4.lakh is in the private sector. As a result of recent economic reforms Vietnam signed agreements for 2042 foreign funded projects of which 1700 have come into operation. The foreign investment would be of the order of \$ 10 billion and the value of production in these units was about \$ 27 billion. He pointed out that in some small and medium sized foreign funded projects there have been cases of low wages, long working hours, massive dismissals, misuse of power and even beating of workers. However government took action against such employers and some of them were punished with prison sentence or house arrests while some had to be expelled from the country for gross violation of the national laws. The TUs have also given mass-media publicity to these violations and also the State actions to prevent such occurrences.

Vietnam has made considerable efforts to improve the efficiency of the State enterprises and ensure better working conditions for the workers. With regard to redundancy of job the trade unions are insisting for provisions of suitable alternative jobs.

The minimum and the maximum wages in the undertakings vary from \$ 60 to \$ 300 per month and regular attempts are being made to improve the living standards.

Van Tu stated with pride that Vietnam has overcome the problems of hunger and considerably reduced poverty in the country. Though the technological development needs more improvement, efforts are being made to upgrade it in all spheres of

activities.

INDIAN SITUATION

The Indian delegation explained the present situation in India arising out of the structural adjustment programme and how the working class and the mass organisations have been unitedly fighting against these IMF-World Bank dictated policies under the banner of National Platform of Mass Organisations. The Indian delegation also noted the dangerous consequences of privatisation, disinvestment and growing industrial sickness. Referring to the political situation the delegation noted the emergence of the UF Government to keep Congress and BJP parties out of power. It highlighted the role played by the left parties in the present situation. The delegation explained the present mid term election scenario in the country and how the UF is trying to defeat the Congress and the BJP combinations.

The CITU and VGCL leadership emphasised the need for strengthening cooperation between the two organisations.

In the afternoon on the same day the Indian delegation visited the Headquarters of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The delegation was received by Pham The Duyet, Member of the Polit Bureau of the Party and other senior leaders. He explained how the CPV has been trying to build socialist economy despite several difficulties faced due to present world situation. He expressed pleasure at the identity of views between CPV and the CPI(M) and expressed the confidence that the bonds of friendship between the two parties would be further strengthened. He clarified how the party was ensuring self-reliant de-

velopment of economy despite allowing entry of foreign capital in selected sectors in Vietnam. He enquired about the present Indian situation and the delegation explained the present electoral background in India.

VISITS BY CITU DELEGATION

The CITU visited Quang Ninh province on 3.1.1998 and had a meeting with Nguyen Ngoc Dav, President of Quang Ninh Federation of Labour and discussed the functioning of the Provincial Committee. The Committee is running a trade union Hotel and Vice Director of the Hotel Nguyen Thi Oanh was also present during the discussion. The Province is having Ha Long Bay which is considered as a place of heritage by the UNESCO. The bay contained palacial natural caves and beautiful islands having attractive shapes. We travelled by a special launch and found that a large number of foreign tourists are coming to see this enchanting scenery of the area.

The CITU delegation visited on 4th January Ha Long Shipyard. Tran Huu Nhu, Vice Director of the Shipyard explained the working of the medium sized shipyard. An attempt is being made to modernise it to construct bigger ships. We saw even women workers doing skilled job of construction of ship. The Vice Director was a member of union and was taking keen interest in the welfare of the workers. Nguyen Thi Hong Vice President of the union explained how the union was playing a major role in management of the shipyard. The standard of living of the workers increased substantially in the recent past.

On 5th January the delegation visited Vinh Phuc province. Phan Ba Sang, President of the Vinh Phuc Federation of Labour received us. This was a new province created recently and the Headquarters was in the stage of reorganisation. We had fruitful discussion with Bui Huu Hai, Secretary of the Provincial Committee and a

member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Both the party and the trade unions were playing remarkable role in mobilising working class and the people in the task of socialist construction.

In the afternoon we visited the office of the Me Long District Trade Union and its President, Nguyen Minh Hong, took us to Xuan Hoa Company. It was manufacturing cycles earlier but its production was uneconomic. Hence they diversified to the production of tubular furniture of high quality which received good export market. Tran Quoc Lap, Director of the company and Nguyen Duy Thien President of the union accompanied us to explain the working of the company. As a result of modernisation there was redundancy in the company but no one was retrenched. Some of the jobs were done manually to keep the workers particularly the women workers on job. The payment was not reduced despite continuation of the manual work in the unit. The delegation was presented with a big size painting of Ho Chi Minh which has been placed in the Central Headquarters of the CITU. In the evening we came back to Hanoi.

We visited the office of the National Union of Agriculture and Rural Development on 6th January 1998. Hoang Trien President of the Union received us and explained to us the efforts made by the union to improve the working and living conditions of the workers. We were told about the economic cooperation with India in sugar and tea industry in Vietnam. The wages of the agricultural and rural workers have increased substantially in the recent past. Special attention has been paid to provide housing for the rural workers and massive construction programme is being undertaken throughout the country.

The delegation visited Xuan Mai Tea company in the afternoon which was developed through Indian coopera-

tion. The Director, Do Tieu Thinh, narrated his experience in India. We visited tea plantation in the nearby area and the residence of a tea plantation worker.

On the final day we visited the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh and placed a wreath. We visited the historical museum and the residential place of Ho Chi Minh.

INCREASED COOPERATION

On the evening of 6th January, the President of VGCL gave us a farewell dinner. There was a good discussion on international trade union movement and regional cooperation on common issues. CITU attitude towards WFTU was also discussed. The President of VGCL is now the President of the WFTU and CITU agreed to cooperate with him in strengthening the World TU movement. The proposal of the Indian Trade Union movement to hold Asian Regional TU Conference on WTO issues was welcomed by the VGCL leadership. Industrywise and Regional Cooperation between CITU and VGCL was also discussed. The President of Vint Phuc Provincial Federation of Labour offered to develop special relations with one State Committee of CITU.

We found all over Vietnam great regard for the Indian people due to the solidarity expressed during their struggle against US imperialism. We were told that Ho Chi Minh was always referring to Indian people with great affection.

Vuon Van Viet, Deputy Head of the International Department, Dam Quang Cu and Pham Thu Lan of the International Department VGCL accompanied the delegation throughout our stay in Vietnam.

The visit of the CITU delegation has strengthened the ties of friendship CITU and VGCL and will go a long way to contribute in a worldwide struggle against globalisation and neo-liberalism. *

Asian Crisis: ILO Prescribes fake pain killers, not real cure

Who has not heard about the 'Asian Tigers'? Day in and day out the IMF-World Bank lobby had been advertising their ware, namely, the liberalisation and globalisation policy, using the 'Tigers' as models - South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia. "What miracle they have performed following our prescription, see?" And 'reformers' in India had been dancing to their tune.

But now comes the hour of reckoning. The "Tigers" are in deep crisis, not just a financial crisis, crisis is eating the very vitals of these economies, they are on the verge of ruin, thanks to Fund-Bank prescription. A Deputy Prime Minister of one of these countries has warned India not to repeat the same mistake that they had committed. Will our future government pay heed to the warning?

Meanwhile the International Labour Organisation (ILO) seems to be feeling a little bit embarrassed. Working class movement all over the world have a sort of relations with the ILO. Although it is dominated by the governments and employers—they together have two third representation against the one third of trade unions - it evolved a good many labour standards which, at least, serve as moral weapons in the hands of trade union movement. Moral weapons because there is little provision for their enforcement. They depend entirely on the strength of the trade union movement for their ratification and implementation by the respective countries. However, the ILO authorities had chosen to commit itself to the so-called liberalisation and globalisation policies. Now the crisis is too obvious a fact to be denied. So the ILO cannot but admit of the crisis as also disastrous consequences. But committed as it is to these policies it is embarrassing for the organisation to admit the other obvious fact

that the crisis is the inevitable consequence of those policies. Let us examine the response of the ILO authorities to this crisis.

ILO RESPONSE

The ILO Press Note issued on 9th December 1997 reads:

"Warning of the potentially grave social consequences of the financial turmoil in Asia, the Director-General of the International Labour Office (ILO) today called on states to develop effective unemployment benefit systems, facilitate worker redeployment and expand opportunities for education and skills acquisition." In a keynote address opening a three-day (9-11 December 1997) ILO Asian Regional Meeting at Bangkok, **Michel Hansenne** noted that a prolonged period of exceptionally high rates of economic growth had resulted in a reduction in poverty, strong employment growth and increasing real wages.

But, he emphasised, the sudden onset of the current economic crisis "if not quelled speedily, is likely to see strong negative impact on the real economy and hence on employment and the welfare of workers."

"Starting as the South East and East Asian economies do from a prolonged period of high growth, even a deceleration of growth would generate social tensions," he warned.

"The social consequences of a sharp increase in unemployment could, furthermore, be catastrophic because of the weakness of the existing system of social protection in most of Asia," Mr Hansenne said. "There is typically no system of unemployment benefits or mechanism for facilitating retraining and redeployment. Consequently, retrenched workers will have to fend for themselves and rely on family and other traditional social support systems."

"The need for formal systems of so

cial protection was not recognised during the period of high and steady growth and virtual full-employment,"

Hansenne said. "Perhaps the current crisis and the danger of a rise in unemployment will serve as a catalyst for change, demonstrating the need for formal mechanism to cope with the economic hazards associated with the global economy."

Hansenne called for the development of effective unemployment benefit systems and measures to facilitate worker redeployment, and for the adoption of policies aimed at reducing social inequalities including expanding opportunities for education and skill acquisition.

"It will also be important to strengthen the observance of core labour standards," **Hansenne** said, referring to the right of workers to organise and bargain collectively, abolition of forced and of child labour, and equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

"Apart from the moral imperative of eliminating forced and child labour, there is also the fact that full respect for the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively is an important bulwark against an excessive rise in inequality and a deterioration in labour standards in the wake of globalisation," he said. "The best antidote against this is a strong labour movement that is fully empowered to defend workers interest through collective bargaining."

"Globalisation will not be politically viable if it leads to a deterioration in social justice," the Director General said, adding that rising inequality, deteriorating labour welfare, and the absence of adequate social protection could breed "discontent and provoke a strong backlash against globalisation."

"But over and above these prudential consideration there is also an impor-

tant issue of democratic values," he added. "Workers are important stakeholders in the process of globalisation and are also the group that is most likely to suffer from its negative effects. As such they have a right to be heard and to influence how the process of globalisation is being managed both nationally and internationally. No effort should thus be spared in promoting greater social dialogue and industrial democracy." The current economic crisis illustrated the importance for the ILO to "review and adapt its standard-setting activity in the context of globalised economy," Hansenne said, acknowledging the contributions of governments of the Asian, Pacific and Arab regions to a global campaign launched in 1995 by the ILO to ratify core labour standards.

HIDING THE FACT?

From the above it will be amply clear that though the ILO seems to have recognised the crisis and its disastrous consequences it carefully avoids going in to the question of the cause of which the crisis is the consequence. It is difficult to hide the fact that it is the policy of liberalisation and globalisation which has led to this crisis. And being committed to these policies, it is avoiding this crucial question. The measures they are prescribing are kind of pain killers which are unable to cure the disease nor even to relieve from pain. Cure is possible when the cause has been removed. Without removing the cause, you cannot save the patient simply by palliatives.

That is why the conclusion of the 12th Asian Regional meeting of ILO held in Bangkok on 9-11 December 1997 has prescribed to accept the "Increased Labour market flexibility" as an inevitability which in real terms means increased casualisation, informalisation of service condition and deterioration in quality of employment and greater joblessness.

TIGERS IN CRISIS! A LA GLOBALISATION!

Who pays for the crisis?

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"-220% of financial establishment staff: Hong Kong: the financial sector will have to react with salary reductions, and redundancies could reach 20% in 1998... The worst is to come, a growing number of companies are ready to go bust." (AFP dispatch from Hong Kong)

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For further Imbalance..

"Asia was largely reliant on export-led growth....(now in present crisis) a greater emphasis on the growth of domestic markets through progressive improvement of wages is needed for the recovery....broadening and deepening of domestic markets and intra-Asian trade must be the main focus...However excessively depreciated currencies, crippling interest rates and restrictive fiscal and monetary policies (as prescribed by IMF) means that at present the only stimulus for a rebound is a massive export drive. This a highly risky strategy. It will further imbalance the structures of the Asian economies..." From the statement adopted in the ICFTU/Asia Pacific regional forum, 10-11 February, 1998, Singapore.

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(cont. on page 19)

Asian Crisis: ILO Prescribes fake pain killers, not real cure

Who has not heard about the Asian Tigers? Day in and day out the IMF-World Bank lobby had been advertising their ware, namely, the liberalisation and globalisation policy, using the 'Tigers' as models - South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia. "What miracle they have performed following our prescription, see?" And 'reformers' in India had been dancing to their tune.

But now comes the hour of reckoning. The "Tigers" are in deep crisis, not just a financial crisis, crisis is eating the very vitals of these economies, they are on the verge of ruin, thanks to Fund-Bank prescription. A Deputy Prime Minister of one of these countries has warned India not to repeat the same mistake that they had committed. Will our future government pay heed to the warning?

Meanwhile the International Labour Organisation (ILO) seems to be feeling a little bit embarrassed. Working class movement all over the world have a sort of relations with the ILO. Although it is dominated by the governments and employers—they together have two third representation against the one third of trade unions - it evolved a good many labour standards which, at least, serve as moral weapons in the hands of trade union movement. Moral weapons because there is little provision for their enforcement. They depend entirely on the strength of the trade union movement for their ratification and implementation by the respective countries. However, the ILO authorities had chosen to commit itself to the so-called liberalisation and globalisation policies. Now the crisis is too obvious a fact to be denied. So the ILO cannot but admit of the crisis as also disastrous consequences. But committed as it is to these policies it is embarrassing for the organisation to admit the other obvious fact

that the crisis is the inevitable consequence of those policies. Let us examine the response of the ILO authorities to this crisis.

ILO RESPONSE

The ILO Press Note issued on 9th December 1997 reads:

"Warning of the potentially grave social consequences of the financial turmoil in Asia, the Director-General of the International Labour Office (ILO) today called on states to develop effective unemployment benefit systems, facilitate worker redeployment and expand opportunities for education and skills acquisition." In a keynote address opening a three-day (9-11 December 1997) ILO Asian Regional Meeting at Bangkok, **Michel Hansenne** noted that a prolonged period of exceptionally high rates of economic growth had resulted in a reduction in poverty, strong employment growth and increasing real wages.

But, he emphasised, the sudden onset of the current economic crisis "if not quelled speedily, is likely to see strong negative impact on the real economy and hence on employment and the welfare of workers."

"Starting as the South East and East Asian economies do from a prolonged period of high growth, even a deceleration of growth would generate social tensions," he warned.

"The social consequences of a sharp increase in unemployment could, furthermore, be catastrophic because of the weakness of the existing system of social protection in most of Asia," Mr Hansenne said. "There is typically no system of unemployment benefits or mechanism for facilitating retraining and redeployment. Consequently, retrenched workers will have to fend for themselves and rely on family and other traditional social support systems."

"The need for formal systems of so

cial protection was not recognised during the period of high and steady growth and virtual full-employment," **Hansenne** said. "Perhaps the current crisis and the danger of a rise in unemployment will serve as a catalyst for change, demonstrating the need for formal mechanism to cope with the economic hazards associated with the global economy."

Hansenne called for the development of effective unemployment benefit systems and measures to facilitate worker redeployment, and for the adoption of policies aimed at reducing social inequalities including expanding opportunities for education and skill acquisition.

"It will also be important to strengthen the observance of core labour standards," **Hansenne** said, referring to the right of workers to organise and bargain collectively, abolition of forced and of child labour, and equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

"Apart from the moral imperative of eliminating forced and child labour, there is also the fact that full respect for the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively is an important bulwark against an excessive rise in inequality and a deterioration in labour standards in the wake of globalisation," he said. "The best antidote against this is a strong labour movement that is fully empowered to defend workers interest through collective bargaining."

"Globalisation will not be politically viable if it leads to a deterioration in social justice," the Director General said, adding that rising inequality, deteriorating labour welfare, and the absence of adequate social protection could breed "discontent and provoke a strong backlash against globalisation."

"But over and above these prudential consideration there is also an impor-

tant issue of democratic values," he added. "Workers are important stakeholders in the process of globalisation and are also the group that is most likely to suffer from its negative effects. As such they have a right to be heard and to influence how the process of globalisation is being managed both nationally and internationally. No effort should thus be spared in promoting greater social dialogue and industrial democracy." The current economic crisis illustrated the importance for the ILO to "review and adapt its standard-setting activity in the context of globalised economy," Hansenne said, acknowledging the contributions of governments of the Asian, Pacific and Arab regions to a global campaign launched in 1995 by the ILO to ratify core labour standards.

HIDING THE FACT?

From the above it will be amply clear that though the ILO seems to have recognised the crisis and its disastrous consequences it carefully avoids going in to the question of the cause of which the crisis is the consequence. It is difficult to hide the fact that it is the policy of liberalisation and globalisation which has led to this crisis. And being committed to these policies, it is avoiding this crucial question. The measures they are prescribing are kind of pain killers which are unable to cure the disease nor even to relieve from pain. Cure is possible when the cause has been removed. Without removing the cause, you cannot save the patient simply by palliatives.

That is why the conclusion of the 12th Asian Regional meeting of ILO held in Bangkok on 9-11 December 1997 has prescribed to accept the "Increased Labour market flexibility" as an inevitability which in real terms means increased casualisation, informalisation of service condition and deterioration in quality of employment and greater joblessness.

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And the palliatives prescribed by the said conclusion of the Bangkok meeting of ILO has been "effective employment services"—which carries little sense in the phenomenon of increasing joblessness and lay-offs as has become the scenario in the so-called Tiger economies of Asia.

HEIGHT OF HYPOCRISY

In the background of increasing casualisation of jobs and decline in quality of employment, and desperate bid of the employers to bank on reduction in employment cost to re-

main competitive, what is the conclusion of ILO meeting? It is the height of hypocrisy in recommending "improvement of occupational safety and health", that too expecting the employers to take steps in that direction. Similar hypocrisy has been betrayed by ILO conclusion in recommending in the same breath to reconcile with "increasing labour market flexibility" and "policy formulation and implementation to achieve the objectives of workers' protection."

Hence to be really helpful to the workers of the third world the ILO will have to extricate itself from its commitment to the IMF-World Bank variety of the policies of liberalisation and globalisation. But ILO is still far from it. It is still speaking in terms of "liberalisation and globalisation without tears."

Why is the ILO still reluctant to go into the cause of the crisis? As our experience shows most of the international fora right from the UN are under strong influence of the rich

ZERO DUTY ON CAPITAL GOODS IMPORT!

The domestic capital goods industry has lost orders worth Rs.5,000 crore to the overseas capital goods suppliers since last April because of Government's decision to allow core sectors like refineries and fertilizers to import several capital goods required by them at zero import duty.

The indigenous capital goods industry has obligations to pay multiple taxes such as excise duty, central sales tax, state sales tax, octroi, turn over tax and has also to bear differential financing cost of working capital unlike their foreign competitors.

The levies on the domestic capital goods industry lead to unequal competition as they increase the cost for the domestic industry by about 23-32 percent.

If the present trend continues, then the indigenous industry, which had painstakingly developed adequate capacity and capabilities for supply of state of the art equipment to the refinery sector over the years, will find itself out of the market.

Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, while moving the Finance Bill in May 1997 had assured the nation that the Government will allow zero percent customs duty only on those capital goods for refineries which are not generally produced in the country.

Moreover, he had said that the concession will be confined only to the 9th Plan period. Furthermore Chidambaram had also declared that domestic producers supplying capital goods for refinery projects will have the benefit of deemed export status.

However, in contrast to the Finance Minister's statement, in a subsequent customs notification, the Government allowed import of 144 items, out of which almost 80 percent were already being produced by the indigenous industry.

The industry's representation to the Government on the issue, however, gave even worse result.

The Government replaced the earlier list with another more

elaborate list in June 1997, which encompassed almost all items required for setting up a refinery under 45 generic categories.

The new list provided sourcing, value addition and employment to foreign countries rather than the Indian industry.

While the list of items eligible for zero duty imports were notified within a month and a half, the issue of granting deemed export status to the domestic industry was undecided till July, 1997, almost five months after the budget speech.

By this time, the large import orders had already been placed and market lost for the indigenous industry.

Moreover, the indigenous industry had been accorded deemed export status with only three benefits: special import licence/advance intermediate licence, deemed exports drawback scheme and special import licence at the rate of 6 percent of the FOR value, which is far from adequately compensating the indigenous industry, for the loss due to liberalised import.

The severe pressure in order position, production, employment and growth is already evident from the slow down in capital goods industry's growth which dropped to 6.3 percent in April-June 1997 as compared to 21 percent during the same period last financial year. In fact, this sector has shown a negative growth of 1.1 percent in June and according to industry estimates, it could widen further.

The current shop-load in the industries catering to refinery and fertilizer sector is declining and is only 50 percent, which is likely to affect almost 25,000 workforce.

The domestic capital goods industry, as an alternative has urged the Government to impose a uniform customs duty of 20 percent on all imports in line with the duty on capital goods.

(Courtsey: *The Professional Workers, January, 1998*)

countries led by the US. These countries use these fora to further their interests at the cost of the poor countries, of the third world. The US and its allies even send troops and launch military attacks on third world countries in order to dominate them in the name of the UN. As we all know at the moment Iraq is again under serious threat of such attack. The world also knows how the rich countries, particularly the US use IMF and the World Bank and other allied organisations to impose the policy of liberalisation and globalisation which ensure opening up of the vast third world for their unfettered exploitation. ILO, unfortunately has not been able to keep itself free from their influence. The trade union circles have already known that the International Labour Office proposed to collaborate with the World Trade Organisation (another hand maid of the US big business) to help the rich countries particularly the US to discriminate against poor countries in trade for the ostensible reason of non-enforcement of the labour standards. The proposal is that the ILO will issue certificate whether a country has been enforcing the core labour standard. Well, the trade unions have been persistently struggling for enforcement of the Labour Standards in each country. What business has these rich countries led by the US has on the question of enforcement of labour standards. The heart of the butcher is overflowing with compassion for the animals to be slaughtered. All the trade unions in India are opposing the WTO move and is mobilising trade unions in other countries to prevent the ILO from collaborating with the WTO to the detriment of the interests of the poor countries and their working population.

Will ILO be able to overcome its drawback and champion the real interest of workers? *

(-cont. from page 17)

packages, will marginalise local banks....Put bluntly, a giant US bank that dominates the local market may cut services when profits fall. And would the govt be able to ask that foreign bank to lend to the poor or for social sector?.....

Martin Khor, Director of Penang based 'Third World Network', a research and policy organisation commented that Asians are losing confidence on IMF programmes. He has written further that "the rich countries should not view the Asian nations (in present crisis) just as golden opportunities for taking over market share when their assets are greatly undervalued." (Barry Wain - The Wall Street Journal)

AN ICFTU COMMENT

"Several Asian Countries have been taken to the brink of economic catastrophe. Policies imposed by IMF will mean even greater hardship and misery for the people of Thailand, Korea and Indonesia. They also reflect a lack of understanding of the real causes of crisis," said Philip Jennings, General Secretary of International Federation of Commercial Clerical, Technical and Professional Employees (FIET).

"Global market is without conscience, without compassion. This market operate without regard for the long term economic and social aspiration of the individual nations" commented Bill Jordan, General Secretary, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) on the eve of last annual meeting of World Economic Forum at Davos (Jan 29-Feb 3, 1998).

"There is an urgent need to review the role of IMF and World Bank as called for by UN's Copenhagen summit for social development, so that programmes of lending to countries....are based on good governance and respect for human rights, increased employment and reduction of poverty and not austerity and deregulation:"

(The ICFTU/Asia Pacific Regional

Forum, 10-11 Feb 1998, Singapore)

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) observes: "The workers and the people of Korea cannot help but to fear and to think that the whole plan of the IMF represents interests aimed at causing the total bankruptcy of the Korean economy so as to establish a dominant position..."

"The IMF calls for a rapid liberalisation of commerce and the financial markets. The press states that this is demanded by the United States. If these measures take effect they will cause a massive bankruptcy among the financial institutions leading to a chain reaction of failures in the manufacturing sectors, provoking a veritable implosion of the Korean economy. We would like to know how the United States government and the IMF appreciate these orders." "We denounce the unjustifiable call to greater flexibility of the labour market, already deeply affecting the Korean working class, which counts 6 million workers engaged in forms of irregular work....which signifies a high level of underdevelopment"

"Unrestricted redundancies are a potential factor for social conflict....To impose by exterior forces an increased flexibility of the labour market will have negative consequences... We are ready to launch a total combat, including all out strikes, to stop the redundancies."

(KCTU letter to Govt, the IMF and USA Govt dt 17.12.97)

The correspondent of the International Herald Tribune (January 15, 1998) in Seoul notes that "the new president wants to pass a reform of the labour laws as one of the measures demanded by the IMF. But such an attempt was made just one year ago...It had provoked a strike of several weeks which forced the government to let down this draft reform.

WHAT DO INDIAN GLOBALISERS SAY? *

HARYANA

HEROIC FIGHT AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

A horrendous terror was unleashed on the workers on duty by the police and management nexus, fully aided and supported by the Government of a state ruled by a party whose leaders for the last 2 months have been assuring to give the country a "Su-raj" (means good governance). Why this ghastly act? A few months back the workers of Pashupati Spinning and Weaving Mills, Dharehera (Haryana) had been demanding a settlement on their charter. The management assured the workers that since wage negotiations were to be concluded in the nearby East India Mills, the settlement reached there would be implemented in Pashupati Mills also. Subsequent to the settlement reached in East India Mills, the management of Pashupati Mills refused to honour their commitment. The workers had to resort to agitation and go slow. Enraged, the management on 19.2.98 afternoon called in the police. The workers inside the mills were severely beaten up by the police. The bleeding and injured workers were dragged out of the factory and thrown outside the factory gate on the national highway and the gate was locked. The workers squatted in protest against this unprovoked brutal action. They were warned to leave the place, which they refused. Then, with the manager of the factory leading them, the Police resorted to reckless firing instantaneously killing 6 workers and injuring hundreds of them.

Employees of public sector Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) having nine production units and several regional offices throughout India struck work

Momentarily flabbergasted and shocked the workers ran helter skelter but reassembled again joined by some more workers. Throughout the night they squatted in front of the gate till in the early hours of the morning. The police reappeared again, this time in greater number and swooped upon the workers. The barbaric action continued. The workers were severely lathi charged, chased and beaten up. The President and the Secretary of the union were arrested, but taken inside the factory. The police did not stop there. They went to the workers colony nearby, beat up the women, children and others mercilessly, ransacked their houses and went away. 6-7 workers are untraceable and the workers feel that they must have died of beating. And all this happened in presence of the district police administration. Can there be a more naked exposure of a nexus between the management and police administration perpetrating severest repression on the workers?

This is, in varying degrees pursued throughout Haryana under the able guidance of VHP-BJP Govt. But the valiant workers of Haryana are not going to tolerate it any more. And the workers of Dharehera were determined to fight back. A joint action committee comprising workers of Hero Honda, East India and many other small and big factories in the area was formed to guide the struggle. On 21.2.1998 an industrial bundh

was observed and entire workers assembled in front of the Pashupati Mills holding a rally throughout the day. Seeing the mood of the workers, Labour Commissioner, RLC, DIG Haryana and the total district administration came to the spot. They called the joint action committee leaders for discussion. The leaders unequivocally demanded:

- 1) Arrest the manager of the factory under Cr.PC 302 to be hand-cuffed and taken to jail.
- 2) The District Police Commissioner in whose presence the brutal police action took place must be transferred forthwith.
- 3) The persons responsible for firing must be punished.
- 4) The arrested workers, including the President and Secretary kept inside the factory, must be released immediately.
- 5) The dead bodies of the workers to be immediately handed over to their family members and each be paid Rs.5 lakhs as compensation.

Ranjit Basu, Treasurer, CITU and Solanki, President Haryana State Committee of CITU visited the place on 21.2.1998 in the afternoon and expressed solidarity with the workers determined to fight the jungle raj! In a press statement the CITU also condemned the barbarous police action and demanded arrest of the culprits, suspension of the Dist. Police officials and adequate compensation to the families of those killed and injured.

STRIKE IN BEL

on 3.2.98 demanding payment of interim relief pending finalisation of wage revision. The tenure of the current wage agree-

ment in BEL alongwith many other PSUs expired on 31.12.96 and the new wage revision is overdue since 1.1.97. In the joint negotiating forum

of BEL all the unions jointly demanded payment of interim relief since the wage revision was already delayed. In the face of non-responsive attitude of the BEL management, all the negotiating unions of BEL jointly decided for strike on 3.2.98. In all the nine production units and regional offices of BEL, response to strike call was massive. Strike was

total in the Bangalore unit as well as in the corporate central office of BEL and only a few top management officials were present on the strike day. In the Hyderabad and Machhlipatnam units of BEL, more than 90% workers joined the strike. In the production centres at Taloja, Pune, Panchkula and Kotdwara, strike was successful. At Ghaziabad unit, in spite

of opposition of the HMS union, more than 60% workers participated in the strike. The staff and employees of the Regional offices, marketing and service centres spread over various parts of the country also did not join duty on the strike day. CITU congratulated the BEL workers all over the country for successful strike action.

TRAI DEBARS MTNL

Through an obnoxious judgement, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) debarred the public sector Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) to enter into cell phone service market. More disastrous is the fact that the so-called TRAI created by the govt is inspired in putting a ban on the MTNL's entry on ground of sheer technicalities at the instance and behest of the private sector operators in the cell phone sector. Such a development is a natural follow up of the policy of the so-called liberalisation, the real purpose of

which is to allow free play of multinational companies in collaboration with domestic private sector units in the most sensitive sector of the economy including the Telecom service at the cost of public sector companies. And the role of so-called "Regulatory Authorities" like TRAI created by the Govt of India to facilitate and smoothen such process of liberalisation would be to marginalise the public sector units in the field of telecom service, much to the detriment of the interest of the country as a whole. And

such development also signals the possible role of other so-called Regulatory Authorities being created by the Govt of India for other sectors. The attempt to institute a Insurance Regulatory Authority last year to facilitate privatisation of the insurance sector must be seen in this light. Condemning such retrograde order of TRAI in respect of MTNL, CITU has demanded the Govt to take concrete step to reverse the decision of TRAI invalidating MTNL's entry in cell phone sector.

IISCO: TUs DEMAND ACTION

The five major Central Trade Unions viz CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS and INTUC have in a joint letter dated 14.2.1998 to Prime Minister of India, demanded immediate action for commencement of Modernisation work in the public sector Indian Iron & Steel Co, Burnpur, West Bengal. The letter noted that during early

January '98, the matter was referred by the Union Cabinet to a Cabinet Sub-committee for finalising the decision. But unfortunately till date no decision appears to have been taken. The modernisation of IISCO has already been immensely delayed creating and adding problems and complications and further delay may lead to imminent collapse of this pioneer

steel plant. On behalf of the entire trade union movement of the country, the PM was urged to personally intervene and to facilitate immediate action for commencement of the revival/modernisation work of IISCO within PSU framework.

INTUC Against Disinvestment

Shri Gopeshwar, Vice President of INTUC, in a letter addressed to M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU had extended support to the

fight against disinvestment. The text of the letter reads: "I refer to a declaration by a National meeting of trade unions disinvestment

of PSUs, jointly sponsored. "I fully endorse the Declaration. I hope you will keep us informed of the developments."

BPCL : FIGHT AGAINST BIFURCATION

Northern Regional Convention of the workers of Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) held at New Delhi on 8.2.98 under the aegis of Bharat Petroleum Technicians' Union (CITU) resolved to intensify the fight to defeat the move of the management to divide the company in the name of creating separate "Business Units" as per recommendation of an American Consultancy Firm.

During the tenure of scam-tainted former Minister for Petroleum, Satish Sharma, the management of BPCL appointed an American firm - Arthur D Little (ADL) at a cost of several crores of rupees for recommending measures to 'revamp' BPCL. The ADL has prescribed to split the company into six so called separate 'Strategic Business Units (SBUs), each to be treated as separate profit centre. A careful scrutiny would reveal that the recommendations of ADL are all aimed at dismantling, off-loading and privatising various operations.

Different SBUs are proposed to be created for different products and services of BPCL. The danger is that though the SBUs shall not form sepa-

rate companies, for all practical purposes they are proposed to be treated as if these are independent companies. Even the service conditions of the employees of different SBUs are proposed to be regulated on the basis of the respective commercial situation of the SBUs. Thus in the post restructured scenario, instead of the company as a whole, when the separate product/service based SBUs shall have to compete, in isolation, with the powerful multinational giants like Shell, Esso, Caltex, such segments might become financially weak, may suffer loss and even may become sick and eventually face closure. It is worth noting that at a time when giant MNCs are merging to face the global competition emerging from the market economy, the prescription of the ADL and move of the management to split BPCL is definitely a suicidal step.

It is shocking to note that while the ADL has recommended creation of number of top managerial posts for each SBUs, it has prescribed restructuring (read retrenchment) workfocre for addressing the 'problem of sur-

plus workmen.' On the contrary, large-scale contracting of permanent jobs is yet another prescription of the ADL.

The BPCL workers observed one day's successful nation-wide strike on the same issue on 12.11.97. After the strike, the management called a meeting of the National Bipartite Apex Forum of the company on 12-20 December, 1997 at Mumbai which ended in vain due to the rigid stand of the management. The unions held a meeting 20.11.97 and adopted a joint resolution to carry forward the fight in phases. The Northern Regional Convention was convened in pursuance of that decision.

The representatives from different units of BPCL located in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi and leaders of Central Trade Unions and fraternal industrial unions also attended the Convention. Apart from R.S.P.Singh and Major Singh, General Secretary and President of the union respectively, the convention was addressed among others by Jibon Roy, M.P, Tapan Sen and S.Dev Roye, Secretaries of CITU.

PF Employees on Strike

The employees of the Eastern Region Provident Fund Offices embarked on a continuous strike from 6.2.98, consequent upon illegal dismissal notice served on the General Secretary, President and the Treasurer of the Regional Provident Fund Staff Association, and the arrogant and highhanded action of the RPFC.

It is reported that S K Khanna RPFC, right from his posting in the Eastern Region, started indulging in provocative and harassing action against the

employees and the Staff Association leadership and issued suspension order on some employees on flimsy grounds. On 5.2.98 dismissal notices were served on the general secretary, president and the treasurer of the Staff Association, triggering off the continuous strike.

As per report received so far the employees of the RPFC (Eastern Region) offices all over West Bengal have joined the strike *en masse* protesting the vindictive and highhanded action.

Dr. MK Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU had also written to Labour Secretary to intervene in the matter, discipline the concerned RPFC, and withdraw the vindictive action on the employees and union leaders.

Meanwhile, all the major Central Trade Unions, viz CITU, INTUC, AITUC, UTUC, TUCC etc have extended support to the striking employees and demanded intervention of the central government for ending the stalemate.

REPORTS & EVENTS

STATE BANK OFFICERS' MEET

The 20th General Council session of the All India State Bank Officers' Federation was held at the Calcutta University Centenary Auditorium from 10.12.97 to 12.12.97.

Asim Das Gupta, Finance Minister, Govt. of West Bengal, while inaugurating emphasised that the alternative Banking Policy was the only solution to save the indigenous banks in the

face of threats from the new economic policy and globalisation. "The real meaning of reforms is to move towards the people-oriented welfare, to move from unhealthy competition to healthy competition. It should be genuine reforms and not dictated by the conditionalities of the World Bank," he said.

Shantha Raju, General Secretary,

AISBOF, R.N. Godbole, the Secretary-General of PWTUC and the Chairman of AIBOC, S.R. Sen Gupta, General Secretary, AIBOC, and other addressed the conference.

The conference elected new Office Bearers for the term 1997—2000, with M. Balakrishnan (Chennai) as President and Com. Shantha Raju (Bangalore) as General Secretary.

(Report by U.P. Menon)

KVB EMPLOYEES' CONFERENCE

The Karur Vysya Bank Employees Union held its 29th Conference at Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh on 25.1.1998. C.H. Venkatachalam, Asst. Secretary, AIBEA, inaugurated.

W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU, addressed the conference as Chief Guest. The conference reelected J. Rajendran as President and V. Krishna Murthy as General Secretary. Impor

tant decisions were taken to strengthen the united struggle against the policy of opening up financial sector and the attacks on the Bank Employees.

Chennai Race Club Women Workers

While the Supreme Court considers Horse Racing as a sport, society condemns it as gambling but neither is concerned about the daily wagers who slave for a pittance at the Chennai Race Club. The administrators of the race club and those who play at the races are equally indifferent to the plight of these employees, many of whom are women. Racing was started here a hundred and fifty years ago during the British raj. Hundreds of acres of government land are used by the Club. In 1975, during the emergency, the then DMK government put an end to racing here. Soon after this, the members of the race club and the employees filed separate cases against the Tamil Nadu government in the Supreme Court. The Tamil Nadu government started a separate department for racing, and all the race club employees formed a CITU union. These efforts by the employees and the union resulted in

some of the employees being made permanent and getting pay scales on par with Tamil Nadu government employees. After the case was filed in the Supreme Court, the court appointed a 12 member committee, a custodian and a chairman. After an enquiry into the matter, the Supreme Court judgment, delivered about two years ago, justified racing as a 'sport' giving the Race Club a second life. The Tamil Nadu government obtained a stay to stop the races but has not taken any steps to acquire the properties and land belonging to the club.

There are more than 300 daily wage employees mostly women, working in the Race Club who are paid only Rs 30/- per day, with no other allowances, though many of them had been in service for 20 to 30 years. There is shocking misbehavior with women employees by those who come to gamble at the races - usually drunk

and indulging in sexual harassment and teasing. In case any woman complains to the person in charge of the race on that day, instead of taking appropriate action to help the women, often the complainant women themselves are suspended and their duty passes cancelled. It was due to such conditions that the daily wage employees approached the CITU and coordination committee of working women to intervene in the matter and to start a union. When the Coordination Committee of Working Women took up these issues with the Administration of the Race Club, they were told that these women are only part-timers in the club, with other jobs elsewhere. This is a blatant untruth as over 90% of the employees are totally dependent for their livelihood on their daily wages. Any intervention by the government is thwarted by the Race Club administration.

After the formation of the union and

its intervention, there has been a significant decrease in such harassment of the women employees. Braving

threats by the authorities the 300 women members of the CITU are continuing their agitations unitedly,

with great courage and confidence.

(Report by T A Latha)

TUTICORIN DOCK STRIKE

About 2000 dock workers at Tuticorin Port are employed under Tuticorin Stevedores' Association. Over the years CITU has waged many struggles with the demand of bringing these workers under direct employment of Tuticorin Port Trust. In this connection the Tuticorin Dock Workers Union under CITU raised an industrial dispute before the Assistant Labour Commissioner (central). To press for the demand for regularisation under Port Trust, the dock

workers irrespective of their affiliations, went on strike from 1.1.1998. The strike was total. And CITU organised massive demonstration demanding intervention of Tuticorin Port Trust management and the central ministry of surface transport for settlement on the issue.

The Chairman, Tuticorin Port Trust ultimately gave an assurance that a committee of officials would be set up to bring the dock workers under Port Trust management, and that the

committee would submit its report within three months. Subsequently, on 6-1-1998, before the ALC(C) an agreement was reached that the dock workers would be brought under the management of Tuticorin Port Trust within three to six months.

In the discussion before the ALC(C), K Ponraj and T Muniswami represented CITU besides representatives of INTUC, HMS, AITUC and DMK union.

(Reported by K Ponraj)

TIMES OF INDIA EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLE

The central trade unions viz CITU, INTUC, HMS, BMS and AITUC have extended support to the ongoing struggle of Times of India employees by a joint statement issued on 2-2-98. The statement noted with grave concern the anti labour, undemocratic and anti national activities of the management of Times of India Group against which the employees, both journalists and non journalists, are on a relentless struggle in the capital of India.

The Times of India Group is on a path of confrontation against the union's legitimate demands and refuses to come to a fair and reasonable settlement on the demands of the employees, though the earlier agreement on

benefits and allowances has expired in May '97. The management is also showing its vindictiveness in not paying the exgratia to the employees associated with the union.

As against the decision and direction of the Supreme Court, the Times of India Group is increasingly siphoning the permanent and perennial nature of jobs to contractors and making the permanent workers surplus. Women employees are being harassed; The secretary of the Bennet Coleman & Co Employees Union has been suspended with a view to browbeat the employees and weaken the union. The victimisation unleashed by the management, coupled with unfair and anti trade union activities deserve

condemnation.

The owner of the Times of India Group is already charged with serious violation of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. Now they are also flouting the provisions of various labour laws. Freedom of expression is denied to the journalists and the writings and editorial policies favour the FERA violations and illegal gains.

The five central trade unions while supporting the struggle of the employees of the Times of India Group have urged the Govt of India to effectively intervene to uphold the constitutional guarantees and trade union rights of the employees of Times of India Group.

RUSSIA

WAGE PAYMENT IS NOT THE PRIORITY

The Russian constitutional court has recently passed a ruling that the payment of company taxes takes precedence over the payment of workers' wages.

The Russian trade union movement has already challenged the court's decision. More than twenty million workers in Russia have not been paid their wages, some of them for over a

year and the unpaid wages amount to over 10 billion dollars. In order to combat this, the trade unions, besides various agitations, had also been pursuing legal action against the default-

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ing companies, under the provisions of Russian civil code. The concerned section of the Russian Civil Code stipulates that workers have a basic human right to be paid their contracted wages and the workers have a first claim on company's assets.

As a result of the trade union's initiative against non-payment of wages, more than 2000 legal suits were launched in the first nine months of 1997 against various companies and more than 104 billion roubles of unpaid wages could be recovered.

But the recent court judgment overrules the provision of Russian Civil Code on the primacy of the workers' wage payment (which may be according to the court is an unnoticed remnant of previous socialist regime and does not suit the neo-baptised capitalists).

WFTU AGAINST UN TO BOMB IRAQ

In the name of its 130 million members in all continents, the World Federation of Trade Unions on 11 February 1998, full supported the position taken by the overwhelming majority of member States of the United Nations declaring that the crisis over weapons inspection in Iraq be resolved through diplomatic means and that military measures, including US plans to bomb sites in Iraq should be avoided at all costs.

The victims of any such bombing will be the children, women and men of Iraq. Already, as a result of the eco-

nomie blockade, one million Iraqi citizens have perished, including 600,000 children. It is high time to stop this blockade which has become an instrument of mass destruction.

The implementation of UN resolutions on Iraq should be achieved through the well-established procedures and diplomatic channels. It is totally deplorable that the US Administration which fully supports the declared position of its allies in Israel not to implement the resolutions of the UN Security Council, should choose to unilaterally impose its mili-

tary measures in the name of ensuring compliance with UN resolutions. Nor has the US Administration implemented the UN General Assembly resolutions, repeatedly adopted year after year, to lift its blockade of Cuba. Moreover, no country can claim the right on behalf of the United Nations to military measures which will totally imperil the civilian population. The WFTU calls upon trade unions in all countries to act in time to avert the threatened military conflagration which threatens peace in the Gulf region and all over the world.

JAPAN

Workers Rally For Wage Rise

On January 13, the day when the Japan Federation of Employers' Associations (Nikkeiren) made public its guideline to counter 1998 spring struggle at its general meeting, workers belonging to the Joint Struggle Committee for 1998 Spring Struggle and its Tokyo organisation had a rally in front of its head office in Otemachi, Tokyo. The rally adopted a "Declaration", a gist of which follows:

The Joint Struggle Committee for Spring Struggle and its Tokyo organisation here express their strong protest to this strategy which only pursues structural reform in expense of people.

The financial circle and big business have continuously increased their profits even under dull business. Zenroren's estimate shows that biggest 437 corporations have accumulated 97 trillion yen owing to wage restraint policy, dismissal of over 100,000 workers and increased pressure on small and medium-sized companies.....However, people's anger is spreading like wild fire.....Because they are indignant over collusion among political, administrative and financial world, increased burden of 9 trillion yen on people due to higher medical services and consumption tax, and payment of

30 trillion yen to banks.

The 1998 Spring Struggle is to be fought under the worst economic crisis after the Second War, which was caused by bad politics of the Hashimoto government allied with all parties except JCP.....

Based on our demands, big wage increase, employment, decreased taxes, opposition to reverse revision of labour laws and medical service, our organisations will strive to win the struggle, through united actions, thus developing trade union movement in Japan and building a new political current.)

(From ZENROREN Newsletter)

PLEASE SEND REPORTS OF STRUGGLES & EVENTS FOR PUBLICATION IN THE WORKING CLASS BEFORE 15th OF EVERY MONTH. PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALSO WELCOME.

UNREST IN AIR FORCE OVER PAY DISPARITY

The Print-media reported extensively about the severe resentment aired by the Technical staff and officers of Indian Airforce by various means against the gross anomaly and disparity in the wages and pay scales made applicable for them by the Govt. of India in line with V Pay Commission recommendation. It is complained that the Air force personnel, particularly the 70000 strong Airmen responsible for maintenance servicing, and keeping the force - Air craft in continuous operation are being given raw deal in respect of pay scale/wages in the successive pay commission awards and the related pay revision. After the V Pay Commission award came to effect, the Technical Airmen have been relegated to lower pay scales than their civilian counterpart even within the Airforce not to speak of other wings like Army and Navy or other Govt. depts. This is despite the fact that the Airmen have to take more responsibility and undergo more hazardous service conditions than their civilian counterparts. Their work demands and also demonstrates in reality the commitment and professional efficiency of the highest order.

RESENTMENT GROWING

It is the callous attitude of the Govt. that has created so much discontent and dissatisfaction among the Airmen. The selfish orientation of the bureaucracy handling the wage-revision issue, is also no less responsible for the problem. As for example, Jr. Warrant officers of Airforce were on a higher payscale (1730-2560) than their counterpart civilians i.e., Sr. Scientific Officer (1640-2900) prior to fifth pay commission, but now the Jr. Warrant Officers have been put on a lower pay scale (5530-7780) than

the Sr. Scientific Asst. (6500-11500). There are many more instances like this.

Such a situation has created severe resentment among the Airforce personnel, getting demonstrated in various ways.

In Chandigarh, as reported in the Press, nearly 400 Airmen and members of their families gathered in sector 47 to air their grievances and a delegation from them met the Vice-President of India, who was in the city on that day.

Similar protests have been reported from Bangalore, Delhi and other places of the country. These are first such incidents, in the IAF history.

A large number of officers and airmen across the country had put up "Redressal of Grievances" to respective higher authorities.

The authorities instead of looking into the root of grievance, sought to suppress the aggrieved by authoritative means. One such official joining the protest, Wing Commander K.R.Nagesh from Bangalore, had been put under house arrest at Delhi few weeks back and he may face a Court Martial as reported in the Press. The Air Force personnel are in vitally sensitive work relating to country's security. They do not have any means to air their grievance except communicating individually in writing to their higher-ups (Redressal of Grievance procedure). And in such a situation, it becomes the responsibility of the higher authorities to take much more care about their problems and behave more sensibly, instead of resorting to repressive measures.

CITU PROTEST

The CITU has protested such an attitude of the concerned authorities as well as the Govt. of India. In a letter dated 31.1.1998 to Mulayam Singh

Yadav, Defence Minister of India, CITU General Secretary, Dr.M.K.Pandhe, has noted "The CITU is extremely distressed at reports of acute discontent in IAF, arising out of anomaly in their Pay Fixation. Although trade union functioning is not possible among combatants, we are concerned at the danger to National Security arising out of the discontent.... We are shocked to learn that combatants who are very well qualified technically and manning vital installations and equipments of Indian Airforce have received a raw deal in the pay fixation..... Similarly the operational trades of Group II (Air Defence System Operator, Radio Technicians, Air Field Safety Operators etc.) have been downgraded whereas these trades are the backbone of IAF which is an operation oriented service... The persons who have finalised the pay scales are neither conversant with the diversity and quality of personnel in Air Force nor they understand the necessity to keep the vital force without any dissidence.... Already Govt. may be considering setting right the injustice done to IAF Officers of Technical Category, but the 70,000 Airmen and JCOs may be left high and dry. Without resolving their problems the Airmen and JCOs will not be content and discontentment will continue..... Already family members have come out in support of the demands in the absence of TU rights for Airmen. We have reports that these women and their men are being harassed which is undesirable and is bound to boomerang.... Once again appealing to you not to resort to any vindictive attitude....." Also on behalf of the TUI Public Service a complaint has been lodged with ILO in the matter. *

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982=100)

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Nov'97	Dec'97	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Nov'97	Dec'97		
AP	1	Gudur	368	378	PB	45	Amritsar	320	321		
	2	Guntur	361	366		46	Ludhiana	326	329		
	3	Hyderabad	338	344	RAJ	47	Ajmer	359	364		
	4	Visakhapatnam	350	358		48	Jaipur	350	359		
	5	Warangal	359	377	TN	49	Chennai	397	405		
ASM	6	D D Tinsukia	326	330		50	Coimbatore	365	377		
	7	Guwahati	365	364		51	Coonoor	385	388		
	8	Labac-Silchar	317	315		52	Madurai	383	398		
	9	Mariani Jorhat	345	347		53	Salem	369	376		
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	351	350		54	Tiruchirapally	411	423		
BHR	11	Jamshedpur	345	358	UP	55	Agra	336	336		
	12	Jharia	305	307		56	Ghaziabad	357	353		
	13	Kodarma	311	313		57	Kanpur	354	359		
	14	Monghyr	336	340		58	Saharanpur	326	328		
	15	Noamundi	340	342		59	Varanasi	374	388		
	16	Ranchi-Hatia	353	354	WB	60	Asansol	331	334		
GUJ	17	Ahmedabad	358	364		61	Calcutta	373	374		
	18	Bhavnagar	379	381		62	Darjeeling	315	321		
	19	Rajkot	354	353		63	Durgapur	389	388		
	20	Surat	378	381		64	Haldia	391	398		
	21	Vadodra	348	352		65	Howrah	370	371		
HRY	22	Faridabad	370	371		66	Jalpaiguri	316	317		
	23	Yamunanagar	338	341		67	Raniganj	320	325		
J&K	24	Srinagar	355	353	CHD	68	Chandigarh	357	357		
KAR	25	Bangalore	370	377	DEL	69	Delhi	393	393		
	26	Belgaum	388	392	PON	70	Pondicherry	446	458		
	27	Hubli-Dharwar	374	379							
	28	Mercara	395	397			ALL INDIA	366	372		
KER	29	Alwaye	382	387			Additional Serious of Labour Bureau				
	30	Mundakayam	400	407			AP	1	Kothagudem	376	387
	31	Quilon	391	383			HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	349	351
	32	Thiruvanthapuram	424	424			RAJ	3	Bhilwara	356	360
MP	33	Balaghat	349	359			MP	4	Chhindwara	366	371
	34	Bhillai	328	337			TRI	5	Tripura	353	347
	35	Bhopal	383	398			GOA	6	Goa	422	425
	36	Indore	359	373							
	37	Jabalpur	356	371							
MHR	38	Mumbai	411	422			Government of India Ministry of Labour Labour Bureau Shimla				
	39	Nagpur	366	386							
	40	Nasik	385	395							
	41	Pune	407	414							
	42	Solapur	375	383							
ORI	43	Barbil	344	344							
	44	Rourkela	352	353							

STOP UNILATERAL FAMILY BUDGET SURVEY BY LABOUR BUREAU!

The decision of the Ministry of Labour to unilaterally introduce a new series of Consumer Price Index Numbers with 1996 as the Base year without consulting the Central Trade Unions is a step that would create resentment among the workers in the country.

The ILO has been clearly telling the Govt. that introduction of the new series should be done in consultation with Trade Unions in the country. However, this directive is not being followed in true spirit by the Govt. of India.

Despite demands by the Central Trade Unions in the country, the Govt. of India has not called any meeting of the Central Trade Unions to sort out the issues arising out of the introduction of the new series of Consumer Price Index. It is surprising to note that the officers of the Labour Bureau are directly contacting State Committees of Central Trade Unions to consult them on several issues which should have been first done with the Central Trade Unions at the National level.

The selection of the Base year which should be a normal year for the purpose of collection of family budget survey is not taken into consideration by the Govt. of India. The new centres in which the family budget survey should be conducted were selected without prior consultation with the Central Trade Unions. The methodology to be adopted for the compilation of the family budget studies also was not done in consultation with the Central TUs. In this regard, the recommendations of the Consumer Price Review Committee (Rath Committee) were callously ignored by the Govt. of India.

ILO NORMS FLOUTED

Trade Unions have been repeatedly

pointing out to the Government that the present 1982 series is being carried forward without observing the scientific norms laid down by the ILO Statisticians' Conference. Several cases of improper substitution of items for which prices are to be collected have been done unilaterally which has adversely affected the price index. The mechanism to collect prices has been extremely hollow with the result that the prices do not show the actual rise during the month. Necessary precaution in this regard pointed out by the Consumer Price Index Number - Monograph is not being implemented properly. As a result of the inferior or adulterated products being taken into consideration while collecting the prices, the workers are losing faith in the price collection machinery.

Since 1978, the Govt. has not reviewed the method of compilation of index through a Tripartite Committee with the result that the price data is not reliable and workers tend to lose because of lower index.

The unilateral step taken by the Labour Bureau to start collecting information regarding markets, items to be included in the family budget study etc. will lead to unilateral decisions to get the family budget study conducted in a bureaucratic manner throwing overboard all scientific principles of compilation of consumer price index.

The workers all over the country have a strong feeling that the price index does not reflect the actual price rise in the market. Meanwhile certain unilateral instructions given by the Index Collection authorities has also resulted in erroneous collection of data which have been strongly objected to by the Trade Unions on several occasions.

TUs DEMAND CONSULTATION

The five Central Trade Union organisations, in a joint letter, 2 months ago, have demanded that a meeting of the Central Trade Unions should be convened to discuss the proper methodology of compilation of new family budget study as well as correcting the 1982 series. The Govt., however, has not heeded these requests.

It is a well-known fact that the Govt. of India had to change the conversion factor linking 1982 and 1960 series which clearly points out defects in the 1982 series. If the 1982 series is not fully corrected then again the conversion factor will be defective and the workers will stand to lose heavily.

Therefore, the CITU demands that the Govt. of India should immediately call a meeting of the Central Trade Union organisations before approaching the State Committees of the Central TUs to suggest the markets from where they should collect the prices for family budget surveys. Unless such a meeting is called without any further delay, the faith in the price index will be lost. Because of lack of faith by the Trade Unions in the 1970 series, the Govt. could not introduce it and hence a new study had to be conducted once again. If the Govt. wants to avoid this type of situation once again, it should immediately take steps to convene such a meeting as suggested by the CITU and other Central TUs.

The CITU appeals to all the Central Trade Union organisations to come together to launch a powerful campaign all over the country against the defects in compilation of consumer price index so that the fraudulent price collection machinery is rectified by the Govt. of India restoring the confidence of the workers on the mechanism of price index.

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