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THE WORKING CLASS

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Police Brutality on Honda Workers in Gurgaon

GLOBALISATION IN MOTION...LIBERALISATION AT WORK...

MASS SCALE RETRENCHMENT BY HARYANA GOVT.

The Haryana Govt led by Congress has announced its Industrial Policy on 6th June 2005. Along with, the Govt has announced it decision to repeal the Haryana State Industrial Security Force Act (HSIF Act) 2003 on 7th June 2005. The HSIF battalion has been disbanded and by a single stroke of pen, 3500 people including 576 women worker have been thrown out of job by the Hooda Govt. Many of them were issued appointment letter in December 2004 after successful completion of completion of training.

The HSIF Karmachari Sangh protested against such mass scale termination of services and took on the streets. Sarv Karmachari Sangh, the dominant organisation of the State Govt Employees extended their support to the HSIF employees. The employees staged powerful demonstrations at various part s of the state and at Rohtak blockaded the Grant Trunk Road for several hours braving brutal lathi-charge. On the other hand, after having lost jobs many attempted suicide, some jumping in the canal and some consuming sleeping pills. One, Mukesh Kumari succumbed to death by jumping into the canal.

The trade union movement condemned the inhuman act of mass scale retrenchment by the Haryana Govt. Sarv Karmachari Sangh termed such mass retrenchment totally unjust and motivated since the state Govt. has been considering recruitment in the police force. They demanded reconsideration of the decision to dispense with the services of the HSIF personnel. CITU also denounced the atrocious decision of the Haryana Govt and extended all support to the struggle of the retrenched employees.

ORISSA GOVERMENT STIPULATES CONDITIONS OF SLAVERY

ORISSA Govt. has embarked upon fiscal austerity by contractualising govt. employment. The Finance department directed to scrap 75% vacant posts and gave a go-ahead to contractual employment in Govt jobs. A letter issued by Finance Secretary, Govt. of Orissa, on contractual employment says, "if any base level vacant post is essentially required to be filled up, the same should be made on contract basis at a consolidated salary, that too after abolition of the former post carrying a particular scale of pay...while making the contract appointment, the letter must make it clear that the appointment is valid up to end of February of that financial year and renewal of appointments can be considered only if continuance of the post is extended with finance department's concurrence."

The instruction of the finance department further stipulates that before handing over contract appointment, the authorities will ensure a written undertaking from the appointee. The model form of the written undertaking from the contractual appointee says, "I am aware that my appointment is purely temporary and on contract basis and can be terminated any time without notice and assigning any reason thereof.... Further I do hereby give an undertaking that in future I shall not claim regular scale of pay and other allowances for continuing in the said post merely on the ground that I have been given a contractual appointment and my employment have been extended from time to time." *(Hindustan Times, 17.8.2005)*

If the Govt. itself indulges in such unjust and unlawful practice, what the private employers will not do?

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2005

Business as Usual

By UNNY



It'll work if they can come up with a Governance Guarantee Scheme.

Courtesy: The Indian Express

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EDITORIAL

MAKE SEPTEMBER 29TH STRIKE A RINGING SUCCESS!

The clarion call given by the national convention of trade unions of July 9, 2005 for a country wide strike on September 29th has triggered a wave of enthusiasm all over the country, which has found a reverberating echo in the innumerable State and district level conventions held throughout the country.

The government at the centre is yet to come out with appropriate responses. Though under pressure from the Left parties the move for further disinvestment of BHEL shares has reluctantly been put on hold, the UPA Finance Minister nevertheless is on record defending it on the floor of the Parliament 'as a good economic decision'.

Since the introduction of the policies of liberalisation and globalisation in 1991, the economic polices and management of economy came under public scrutiny during every general elections held subsequently. But, the people's verdict in 2004 particularly has decisively been against the economic reforms and globalisation. It was expected from the ruling parties to look towards the sufferings of the people and grievances of the different sections of the population. That did not happen. BJP-led NDA government had followed the World Bank directives bluntly and in a headstrong manner. The 'reforms lobby' in the UPA dispensation is also carrying out the same polices in a subtle, articulated manner.

The UPA government is continuing with the same 3 major policies of NDA regime viz. * disinvestment of PSUs. * low interest regime and * propping up share market. The rural India is crying for help. Traditional industries are out, new goods are either imported or from big industrial houses. Labour laws are put on hold and there is no appellate authority. Bonus Act has become irrelevant, a majority of workers are out of their eligibility for annual bonus. Our main struggle is against these and other retrograde policy decisions, the pro-rich anti-poor bias in economic management.

The call for the September 29th strike is a testament of the combined resolve of all the forces of struggle and the prioritisation of demands in the 16 point-demands charter manifests that the powerful organised section of trade unions want to give a voice to the most weak and vulnerable sections of population.

The rulers fail to take note that lack of social justice and arrogance of politically powerful are driving people to extreme steps. The HONDA - Hooda barbaric repression witnessed in Gurgaon is only a loud manifestation of the firm resolve of the working masses of India to rise in resistance to all forms of oppression and injustice.

Let 29th September 2005 transmit a wake-up call to the UPA government!

CITU GENERAL COUNCIL CALL:

PREPARE FOR COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE

Tapan Sen

The CITU held a four-day session of its General Council on July 23-26, 2005 at Alappuzha, Kerala. The meeting emphasised the need to heighten the united struggle of the toiling people to halt the aggressive pursuit of the neoliberal economic policies by the Government of India; it called upon the working class to ensure broadest mobilisation in the campaign for countrywide general strike on 29th September 2005. Around 400 members from all over the country attended the General Council.

After hoisting of CITU flag by M K Pandhe, President, CITU and paying floral homage at the martyr's column, the session began on 23rd July with a welcome address by K Prasad, General Secretary, Alleppey District CITU.

INAUGURAL SESSION

M K Pandhe delivered the presidential address by. He dealt in detail the developments in the international arena, which is marked by rising waves of struggle by the working class and determined expression of anguish of the common people against the grievous impact of neoliberal imperialist globalisation and related policy drives. The number of General strikes in the European countries like Italy, France, Portugal, Spain etc and strike struggles in South Africa, South Korea and the countries in the Latin American region and other areas during the span of last one and half years-all directed against the onslaught on the rights, social security and livelihoods of the working people reflected the growing intolerance towards the neoliberal policy regime which is basically driven by the obsession of pampering the foreign investors at the cost of peoples' rights and livelihood as well as national interests. The aggravation of poverty, unemployment, industrial closures and sickness and sharp decline in the quality of employment worldwide mocks at the claim that the neoliberal policies will bring growth and prosperity for all, Pandhe asserted. He also pointed out that during last one and half decade long pursuit of neoliberal policies, the developing countries have experienced net outflow of resources from the developing economies to benefit the giant multinational companies of the imperialist countries, thereby mocking at the claim of the votaries of neoliberalism and also the neo-convert FDI-fanatics that the neoliberal policies will bring in resources for the developing countries for their all round developments. In the background of the rising struggles worldwide, the Indian working class movement has also to make more effective intervention against the disastrous policy regime and its political mentors through united countrywide struggle, Pandhe reiterated.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, placed the General Secretary's report in the meeting. The Report dealt mainly on the national developments since the last CITU working committee meeting held at Agartala in October 2004 and the activities during the said period. The Report pointed out that the defeat of the NDA regime and installation of the UPA government at the centre had created high expectations among the people. The dependence of the UPA dispensation on the Left Parties has led to the UPA combine making certain pro-people commitments like social security legislations for the unorganised sector and agricultural workers, employment guarantee for 100 days in a year to every poor and lower middle class household, revival of sick industries, etc. But one year of UPA regime revealed that instead of taking urgent steps for effective implementation of the pro-people commitments made in the NCMP, the UPA government was pushing through the same neoliberal policies of earlier NDA regime - through disinvestments in profit making PSUs, non-revival of sick industries, privatisation of pension and social security schemes, retrograde restructuring of the

financial sector and also other vital and strategic sector of the economy in the interest of the foreign capital etc. The peasantry is also getting a raw deal under the neoliberal policy regime as reflected in still continuing bankruptcy and suicide among the farmers in certain regions, farmers agitation for irrigation water in Rajasthan etc. The workers' rights are being trampled underfoot through deliberate non-enforcement of basic labour laws pertaining to minimum wages, social security benefits, safety and basic trade union rights throughout the country as reflected in the happenings of J&K, UP, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar and other parts of country. The State administration, in most of the places have been virtually acting as kitchen administration of the employers in the matter of labour rights, thereby giving rise to an anarchic situation in the industrial relations scenario, Majumdar asserted. In this background of growing resentment among the mass of the working people, the communal and disruptive forces have been trying to fish in troubled water despite the fact that they are also follower of the same anti-people policy regime. In this background, the Report emphasised the urgent need for widest mobilisation of the working class movement in combating the challenges arising out of the pursuit of the same neoliberal anti-people policies by the UPA Govt at the centre.

Majumdar pointed out that the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions comprising the central trade unions and the All India Employees Federations have decided to go in for countrywide general strike on 29th September 2005 to protest against the anti-people policies of the UPA regime and also to press for immediate implementation of the pro-people commitments in the NCMP. The widest mobilisation of working people in countrywide action is also crucially important in isolating the anti-national communal and disruptive forces. The CITU must gear up for making the general strike of 29th September total throughout the country, Majumdar reiterated.

FOCUS ON STURUGGLE

In all, 54 members including 8 members from the fraternal organisations took part in discussion. They laid emphasis on building widest unity at the grass root level in the struggle against globalisation. Unity effort should also embrace fraternal mass organisations to involve people from all walks of life in the united struggle. The deliberations also focused on total anarchy in the enforcement of basic labour laws throughout the country, particularly in the private sector and MNCs, being indulged in by the governments at the centre and in most of the States imposing subhuman conditions on the working people. Labour inspection mechanism has been practically dismantled in most of the states in the name of investment-friendliness and in the obsession of wooing foreign investors. Both in the organised sector and obviously in the unorganised sector, the basic labour laws pertaining to minimum wages, social security like PF, ESI etc and safety provisions are being trampled underfoot. Mass scale controctorisation is taking place even in govt sector and departments, totally in violation of the existing statute. Under the neoliberal economic regime, those in governance in collusion with employers deliberately promote non-enforcement of labour laws, as a prelude to pro-employer changes in labour laws to usher in a 'hire & fire' regime. The issue of non-enforcement of labour laws, thus, has to be taken up as one of the central demands in the forthcoming struggle.

The General Council denounced the atrocious move of the government to privatise pension and to allow FDI in pension sector. The PFRDA Bill, introduced by the government in Parliament, is aimed at dismantling whatever meagre social security rights the workers are having on date. The posture being made by the government that the PFRDA legislation will ensure providing social security coverage to the workers of the unorganised sector is nothing but an outright fraud. The legislation seeks to finally relieve the government from all its responsibility of providing minimum social security to the working people and force them to wholly purchase their own social security scheme. And by pushing through this legislation, the government seeks to shrug

off its commitment to provide social security for unorganised sector and agricultural workers as made in the NCMP. This is also aimed at diverting the social security savings of the people to the stock market for speculation. The government policy towards social security and interest rate on social security savings have also put the Employees Pension Scheme 1995 into total jeopardy and the Govt is already making a move to further reduce the already meagre benefits available under EPS 1995. W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU, explained in detail the real import of the PFRDA Bill and the government approach towards social security as a whole and called for unleashing an elaborate campaign on the issues at the grass root level. Varada Rajan also explained the retrograde move of the government to introduce a new series of price index with 2001 as the base year, computation of which suffers from many imperfections and arbitrariness leading to gross underestimation of the price movements and resultant loss to workers in dearness allowance. The Central Trade Unions jointly opposed the introduction of the new series and demanded full fledged consultations on the whole gamut of price-index calculations.

TOWARDS A CADRE POLICY

The General Council had a separate session to discuss on the cadre policy based on a paper presented by the CITU secretariat titled, "Cadre development in trade union movement". Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU, presented the discussion note, which dealt with the various aspects of cadre development in the trade union movement. It also focused on concrete initiatives to be taken up by the CITU units at all levels to equip the leadership and activists in confronting the ideological, economic and social offensives of the policy of neoliberal imperialist globalisation and also by obscurantist and fundamentalist forces and expand and consolidate its base. 28 comrades took part in the special discussion and put forward many vital suggestions enriching the note.

As the session continued, news of the barbaric police attack on the peaceful rally of the workers of Honda Motorcycles and Scooters Ltd at Gurgaon on 25th July injuring several hundreds and mass scale arrests was received. The meeting condemned the police atrocities and sent a telegram to Chief Minister Haryana demanding punishment of the concerned police officials and reinstatement of all retrenched workmen of Honda and release of all arrested workers. The General Council also passed a resolution denouncing the police atrocities at Gurgaon and condemning the Haryana government for operating in collusion with the Honda management in allowing desperate violation of labour laws and suppressing the trade union rights of the workers. The Council also decided to observe a protest day on 1st August 2005 throughout the country to denounce police repression and express solidarity with the struggling workers of Gurgaon. The General Council also adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with the struggle of the farmers of Sri Ganganagar District of Rajasthan fighting for adequate supply of irrigation water braving police atrocities and demanded release of Hetram Beniwal, President of Rajasthan State CITU, arrested in connection with that struggle. By another resolution, the meeting extended support to the struggle by construction workers at Banihal, J&K. Other resolutions adopted were: against fraudulent computation of price index resulting in reduction by 30 points in Maharashtra leading to loss of DA, in support of Cashew workers' agitation in Kerala, against non-inclusion of workers' representative in the reconstituted Coir Board, extending solidarity with the struggle of glass bangle workers of Ferozabad, UP and condemning police repression on them, against unlawful closure of M/s Korpan Ltd in Maharashtra.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary CITU summed up the four-day deliberations of the General Council and M K Pandhe delivered the concluding address. The General Council reiterated the need for vigorous effort to unite the workers at the grass root level across the affiliations in the struggle against the economic policies, against onslaught on labour rights and against the

communalist and disruptive forces.

On the concluding day i.e. on 26th July afternoon, a huge public rally was held in the Municipal Maidan of Alleppey. Around two lakhs of workers and common people converged in twelve processions from different parts of the town. Most of the processions could not enter in the meeting ground owing to paucity of space. P K Gurudasan, General Secretary, Kerala State Committee of CITU presided M K Pandhe, Chittabrata Majumdar, President and General Secretary of CITU, and V S Achuthanandan, Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly addressed the public meeting.

The following message was sent to the CITU by Mistuo Bannai, secretary general of National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZENROREN), Japan on August 3, 2005 expressing solidarity with the Honda workers' struggle in Gurgaon and denouncing the Honda management for its anti-worker acts.

The CITU congratulated ZENROREN for their response and urged upon them to take up the issue with the Japanese government and the Honda management as well, so that the legitimate rights of the Honda workers at Gurgaon are recognised and honoured by the Honda management. "REPRESENTING 1.3 million members of ZENROREN and in place of its executive committee, I wish to express our warmest fraternal solidarity to Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and all Indian workers struggling against unfair labour practices, dismissals and massive suspension at Honda Motorcycle and Scooters India (HMSI), the Indian unit of Japanese car maker Honda, and demanding their reinstatement.

"We strongly condemn the brutal action by the police on the Honda workers and their supporters at the rally in Gurgaon, Haryana state on July 25, 2005 and demand to bring the erring officials to book and release all arrested workers immediately.

"At the same time, as to the repudiation of workers' right to organise and unfair labour practices at the HMSI, which were the origin of the incidents, its holding company Japanese Honda should be called to account for. According to the British paper "The Guardian" of July 27, 2005 "Japan's ambassador to New Delhi warned that such incidents would damage India's image for investors". We, however, are of opinion that what would be damaged by the incidents is not only "India's Image" but also that of the global company Honda itself. The ZENROREN demands the parent company, Japanese Honda to instruct the HMSI management to take back all the retrenched workers unconditionally. We demand the government of Japan also to prevail upon the Honda Motor Co. Ltd to do the same.

"The Honda Motor operates overseas at many bases including five subsidiaries in India. We demand that it should do its Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) by observing international labour standards on multinational corporations enshrined in the ILO "Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy" OECD. "Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises" as well as the latter's "Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises."

"The ZENROREN expresses again its commitment to our common struggle with no frontier not to allow highhanded activity of multinationals and for social control over them. In firm solidarity with you".

STRUGGLE AGAINST HONDA-HOODA COMBINE

The bloodshed of several thousands of workers and trade union activists in Gurgaon on 25th July in the hands of the custodians of law and order is a stark and bloody manifestation of the unholy nexus between the forces of capital and the State. It is a glaring and chilling example of how the police, administration and other agencies of the State are increasingly acting as servile agents of big corporations across the country to suppress the workers' right and allow all labour laws to be trampled underfoot.

The 25th July incident took place in the process of ongoing Honda workers' agitation against utterly unlawful actions of the Honda management in the form of lock-out, retrenchment and dismissal of mass of the workers and their leaders. But on that day, on July 25, it was not only the Honda workers who were on the streets, but workers of other industries and trade union activists as well. The incident at Gurgaon is not a sudden development. It was the accumulation of the discontent among the workers in the entire area. There were trade union activists from the CITU, AITUC who were supporting the agitation and who were also beaten up along with the rest of the workers. It also generated popular support among the people. On 26th and 27th July, everyone saw the common people of Gurgaon, the relatives or workers express support for the HMSI workers. And most notable is that all the state capitals in the country, major industrial centres from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and the national capital as well witnessed spontaneous mobilisations by the working class and others against the Gurgaon blood bath. And all the trade unions had also given call to observe Protest Day on 1st August, which has been observed throughout the country through demonstrations and various other programmes.

The whole episode is being sought to be projected by the media as well as vested interests as response or reaction by the State administration and Honda management towards the workers agitation in Honda factory at Gurgaon and thus as a follow-up to that projection shabby talks of so called militant trade unionism and need for change in labour laws are being indulged in.

The fact is entirely different. It is not the demands of the workers for higher wages by the workers etc as such that sparked the trouble. Rather the Honda management itself engineered it to crush the trade union of the Honda workers in the bud. It is the unilateral acts of the Honda management one after another, in suppressing the workers and making them to work under humiliating conditions that marks the beginning.

The Honda factory at Gurgaon started production in 2001. Total workforce is around 3000 out of which around 1000 were on permanent roll. Till 2004, there was no union or any collective activity of the workers. But the managers are subjecting the workers to treatment of the middle-age babarism. As for example, in December 2004, a worker in the welding unit was kicked and slapped by a visiting Japanese manager. One manager manhandled a Sikh worker by pooling down his turban. Sexual harassment of the women workers has been almost a regular affair. In fact the workers enmasse had to pass through a long period of utterly sadist, inhuman and humiliating treatment till they decided to form a trade union.

The workers effort to form the union and get it registered and nothing else was reacted to by the management by way of dismissal of four leaders followed by suspension of 50 other activists. Till that time there was no disturbance in production. The workers protested in a collective manner and lodged complaints with the labour department against these totally unlawful and unilateral acts of management without disturbing normal production in the least.

The victimization of workers following the formation of trade union under the law of the land is a clearly unfair labour practice for which the Honda management should have been prosecuted. But the Haryana administration, which has already got bapstised as Honda administration, did not do so. Kicking a worker or manhandling a worker by pooling down his turban is an offence punishable under Criminal Procedure. But again Haryana

police who domesticated itself as Honda police did not do so. The Honda management inflicted an undeclared lock-out on 27th June turning out all the workmen and imposing an undertaking to be given by them that they will not indulge in trade union activities etc again an illegal act by Honda management but again the enforcement authority of the state remained an indulgent onlooker. This was followed by spree of suspension and retrenchment let loose by the Honda management to teach the workers a lesson.

This is the backdrop of the 25th July incident, when peaceful procession of workers have been tackled by the Honda-Police with brutal lathi-charge injuring thousands-almost all got their heads cracked. The working people have been treated as criminals because the criminals (law-breakers) took over the administration at that material time. The setting ablaze the police vehicles or pelting stones on police were all premeditated and prepaid operation carried on by King's own men to justify the police crack-down. The spontaneous protest action countrywide, complete industrial strike in Gurgaon and Dharuhera belt on 28th July 2005 in solidarity with the Honda Workers, along with pressure mounted by the Left Parties on the Central Govt led by Congress Party have ultimately made the Honda-Hooda combine in Haryana to mark a retreat. A settlement kind of thing has emerged on 30th midnight between the Chief Minister, Honda management and the Honda workers' union, which at least compelled the Honda management to agree for taking back all the workers to job. It has not been a wholly satisfactory settlement. But it definitely marks a retreat by the state government. Hooda's change of stance did not come because the ruling Congress party has had a change of heart for the workers. It was because of the pressure in Parliament by the Left parties, the pressure of coalition politics as well as the action on the ground that Hooda had to prevail on HMSI to take back the workers. But the manner in which the settlement was reached was not satisfactory. Why should the workers be required to give an individual undertaking? If at all any good conduct undertaking is required, it should be from Honda, which has violated the law of the land at every stage of its action on the workers should have been brought to book by the Govt long back. Secondly, people are in jail. Referring to them, the chief minister said that the law should take its own course. If that is so, then it is the Honda management that should be behind bars. Not only were Honda workers arrested, the CITU district president and AITUC district leaders are also in jail. There are cases against them. There is no action being taken against the police officials and district administration for the attack on workers.

The Gurgaon incident reflects as to how, under neoliberal economic regime, basically driven by the obsession to pamper the monopoly capital, both domestic and foreign, the State administration with all its wings reduced itself as domesticated agency of the employers. The experience of the construction workers of Banihal(J&K), glass-bangles workers at Ferozabad(UP), pharmacies workers at Haridwar (Uttaranchal), State Farm workers in Suratgarh and Jaitsar (Rajasthan), Pepsi workers at Kanpur (UP), only to name a few out of hundreds of such incidents confirms as to how the state administration combines with employers in Honda-Hooda style to crush the workers for profit-hunt. Where the workers could organise and resist while enlisting support of their fellow travelers, the administration could be brought back to sense, albeit temporarily. Hence there is no alternative to organise and act and resist and rally the common masses in the struggle against inhuman profit-hunt.

And the obsession to pamper the foreign capital has reached such a ridiculous proportion that the reaction of many of those in the seats of governance reflects much more anxiety over the possible annoyance of FDI than the conditions of those hundreds of injured languishing in Gurgaon hospital with little or no treatment or those hundreds of injured placed behind the bars.

The struggle at Gurgaon has drawn attention of the entire world. As the struggle continued solidarity messages poured in to the CITU headquarters from the trade unions of France, Philippines, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Japan. The Japanese trade unions denounced Honda for its anti-worker acts and conveyed their protests to the Japanese Govt and the management of Honda at Japan.

WHAT AILS COAL INDUSTRY?

M K Pandhe

Union Minister of State for Coal, Dasari Narayan Rao, recently convened a meeting of five federations working in coal industry along with chiefs of all coal companies to discuss the question of improving the production and productivity of coal mines so that all the national requirement of coal can be met indigenously. All the members of the JBCCI were invited to attend the meeting.

The representatives of trade unions pointed out how the coal industry is not doing well due to mismanagement and bad planning. They criticised the role of the Department of Coal in interfering in day-to-day functioning of the coal industry and not allowing any autonomy to the Coal India authorities. As a result there is no accountability for the inefficient operation of the mining industry. They pointed out that public sector coal industry has potential to meet all the national requirements for the next plan period and demanded the pending bill in Parliament to repeal the Coal Mines Nationalisation Act for providing privatisation of the coal mining industry should be withdrawn.

The workers' representatives assured full cooperation in increasing production and productivity provided the government does not resort to privatisation and outsourcing. They reminded the government that coal industry earlier was in the private sector and mafias and gangsters were running the mines. They reminded about the Gorakhpuri Labour camps where the workers were living as prisoners in a barbed wire compound.

INFRASTRUCTURE STATUS

The trade unions demanded that the central government should accept infrastructure status for the coal industry. Today, the power sector has been given this status but the coal industry, which supplies coal to power sector, is denied this status. The government is spending thousands of crores rupees for the development of power sector in the next plan but it is denying investment in coal industry to ensure adequate supply of raw material to the power sector.

The coal industry being a core sector of economy it should remain in public sector and united trade union in coal industry stressed that it will oppose every step of privatisation of coal industry. If the central government decided to grant infrastructure status the coal industry, the workers will do everything to ensure adequate supply of coal to the country in the forthcoming period.

The trade unions have strongly pressed the need for restructuring the coal industry and form a unitary coal company. At present the company is adding to the cost of production and making administration top heavy. Today the present profit making coal companies are paying more than Rs 1500 crore as tax to the government while BCCL and ECL have been referred to BIFR. A unitary coal company will take them out of BIFR without any delay. The profit making units can also help the loss making companies in their revival packages. The government has not yet accepted this reasonable proposal and simplify the administration of coal industry. The officials of Coal India and subsidiary companies do not support the proposal due to vested interests involved.

The CIL is today running the industry in highly bureaucratic manner. While the employees are declared surplus and manpower being reduced, the number of officers is going up every year. The management is talking about all man all jobs for the workers but the officers are doing only one job and refuse to take up additional responsibility. The officials are not prepared to do multi skill responsibility but they want to insist that workers should do the same This situation requires to be changed if the performance of the coal industry has to improve sizably.

There are number of competent officials in coal industry whose technical knowledge about the industry is unquestionable. However, their talents are not being properly utilised since sycophancy is given more importance than quality due to top-heavy bureaucracy prevalent in coal industry.

POOR UTILISATION OF EQUIPMENT

The record of utilisation and machinery is extremely poor in the coal industry. The costly equipment when remains unutilised adds to the

cost of production and resultant inefficient running of the undertaking. The poor availability of the machines is due to longer period of breakdown and delay in repairing the equipment. The maintenance of the machinery is not properly done resulting in frequent breakdowns.

According to official figures the poor availability and utilisation of the Heavy Earth Moving Machinery in coal India during April-June 2005 was as follows:

MAJOR HEMM	PERFORMANCE (IN %)	
Equipment	Availability	Utilisation
Dragline	84	74
Shovel	69	46
Dumper	63	35
Dozer	60	29
Drill	71	29

In the case of ECL, which is a sick company, during the same period utilisation of equipment despite availability was as follows: Shovel-23%; Dumper - 28%; Dozer-39% and Drill-49%. Similarly in case of BCCL, the non-utilisation of machinery stood at Shovel-18%, Dumper-22%, Dozer-19%, Drill-26%. If the utilisation of machinery is improved substantially it can contribute a great deal in overcoming the sickness of these two companies. The performance of these two companies is much below the norm even fixed by the CMPDI.

As a member of sub-committee appointed by Coal India some years ago, I found that poor availability of equipment was due to lack of adequate workshop facilities in Coal India which results in failure to repair the equipment in time. However, CIL management failed to take any step to improve the matters with the result that the situation does not show any improvement.

Instead of improving the availability and utilisation of the machinery CIL has adopted the practice of hiring equipment from outside. This has only added to the cost of production and resultant failure to ensure full utilisation of equipment and consequent addition to the production.

A very dangerous practice is observed in Coal Industry regarding the equipment. It has been observed that the management of a coal company sells equipment to contractor on the plea that it has become unusable. However, another subsidiary of coal industry takes on hire the same equipment. Despite repeatedly pointing out this malpractice by trade unions the system continues unabated resulting in great loss of resources to coal industry. However, the corrupt officials get the advantage of this malpractice in league with unscrupulous contractors.

NEGLECT OF UNDERGROUND PRODUCTION

While good quality of coal is available in underground mines the management has neglected underground production. Most of the target of coal production by CIL for the year 2005-06 would be achieved through open cast mines. The target for underground coal production for the same year stood at only 49.39 million tonnes. The management of coal industry has been arguing about low productivity of underground mines. According to the claim of the management while open cast output per man shift was 7.18 tonnes during April-June 2005 the same in case of underground mines was only 0.7 tonnes. Attempt, however, is being made to hide the realities.

Attempts to modernise the underground mines were lacking since nationalisation. Quite often choice of technology was wrong and not suitable to geo mining conditions. At times, bureaucrats and political bigwigs decided the technology without taking into consideration the requirement of the mine but on other considerations (of availability of kickbacks). There is no wonder that while Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation (MAMC) was allowed to become sick and closed down while reckless import of mining equipment was undertaken by the government.

Non-availability of equipment and manpower in underground mines led to low productivity and heavy losses to coalmines. But the managements in coal mines continue its purposeful neglect with the result that the underground coal production is unable to make progress despite its huge potential.

(This is the first part of the article by Com. M.K.Pandhe. The second part will appear in the October issue of 'The Working Class)

GURGAON - WHO IS TO TAKE LESSON?

Chittabrata Maumdar

The scar caused by the brutal atrocities in Gurgaon by Haryana Police on thousands of agitating workers of Honda Motorcycles & Scooters India Private Limited (HMSI), wholly owned by Japanese MNC, is yet quite fresh in our memory. Nationwide protests and condemnation stuffed with anger and hatred have compelled the state authority and the multinational owned company to retreat and to reinstate the retrenched workmen.

It is by now established that the happening of 25th July 2005 that shocked the entire society was the culmination of the continued deterioration of the industrial relation in HMSI and needs retrospection to understand the gamut of the capitalist design to grind the labour force and army of jobless riding on the obsession of the state power for the development and industrialisation. Already, reactions have been aired from many corners expressing the concern for the country's investment climate vis-à-vis the prospects of the overall investment and so on. Comments have been made cautioning against so-called 'rowdiness of the workers' since FDI demands indefinite industrial peace at all cost and does not like labour agitation, whatever democratic that might be.

A section, citing the Gurgaon incidence, are trying to sell the psychosis, that even the legitimate workers' movement to protect themselves and their jobs would deter the investors to invest and cause damage to the industrial growth. They try to book the workers as responsible for the outrage in Gurgaon, suppressing the facts of the rampant ongoing repression by the management of Honda Motors and Scooters India including retrenchment and un-provoked lockout. They are in a way advocating for curbing the legitimate rights of the working class to form association, right to bargain collectively and right to strike. They have vowed to justify the capitalist belief 'no major development project could happen without people's blood being spilled, that's normal'.

Attempts have also been made to divert the focus from the rising repression by the employers flouting the law of the land trampling the workers rights across the country, attributing the HMSI case as a stray and "freak" incident sparked in the unit owned by a multinational corporation. According to them the incidence is a random and not rampant. They are desperate to hide the fact that this culture of repression and anti-workers violence goes back a long time, not restricted in Haryana but being the feature across the country and has heightened in the contemporary neo-liberal regime often with patronage of the state machineries.

Arguments are forwarded attempting to acquit the Japanese MNC, holding the Haryana Police solely and wholly responsible, as if the brutal attack by the police was for some reasons alienated from the legitimate agitation against the management caused by its atrocities and repression to defend the democratic rights of the workers. Such feeble argument is an attempt to shield the Japanese company vis-à-vis foreign as well as indigenous capital, detracting the focus from the truth.

The section propagating the above arguments is devoted to appease the capital and glorify the system. They are at the same time averse of facing the reality, obstinately denying the history of class struggle and restless to re-impose the medieval style of repression on the working class.

Down the history, the man has been waging the struggle to liberate himself, as may be seen in the revolt of the slaves and serfs with limited capacity against their cruel masters. As the industrial revolution took place, the production relation changed. The necessity felt by the masters of production freed the workers from the slavery to put them in the newly set up industries. Since then the workers started gradually getting themselves organised to protect from the mounting exploitation by their employers. The workers organised the movements for economic demands including the better working and living conditions with the growing consciousness under the leadership of the trade union.

The success of the Russian Revolution led by the working class and the establishment of the first

Socialist State USSR, glorious victory of Soviet Union against fascism, emergence of the socialist countries following the defeat of Germany in the World War II, emergence of
Peoples' Republics in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba etc. followed by the liberation of handful of nations from the colonial oppression significantly changed the scenario in favour of the toiling mass. These acted as fillip to the working class movement with an unprecedented momentum.
On the opposite the capitalism suffered severely by the pre-war worldwide depression and damage due to war was looking desperately for utilisation of the unutilised scientific and technological innovations for rebuilding of their economy. To counter the fast growing enthusiasm of the toiling mass inspired by the on-march of socialism, the world capitalism was compelled to allow a few concessions to the working class. Amidst of the contradiction, the working class organised itself better and through the sustained trade union movement was able to establish its rights to a certain extent, though logically the workers also could well deserve the benefits of the unprecedented scientific invention and technological advancement, but deprived by the world capitalism.
In our country, liberated from the two centuries long colonial exploitation, emergence of large number of industrial worker, with the growing industrial development, lead to the development of trade union. The trade union movement in the country, influenced by the contemporary world order, succeeded to establish rights to form association, right to bargain collectively, right to strike etc. Also through the decade's long sustained working class movement, the workers, particularly in the organised sector, succeeded to compel the Governments to enact a couple of labour laws to protect the labour rights and interest.
Since the last quarter of the preceding century, the world capitalism started facing the renewed crises. At the instance of World Bank, IMF and WTO, the ongoing process of liberalisation and globalisation process has been rigorously trying to reverse the prevailing industrial relation so far as labour is concerned. The multinational corporations collaborated by inclined indigenous capital as its junior partner for piece of the cake, are trying to preach the culture of repression and anti-workers violence in ever increasing size in breath and length, to ensure the unbound profit by denying the earned facilities and curbing the trade union rights of the working class.
Governments, swayed by the slogan of industrialisation, and succumbed under the Fund-Bank pressure, to woo the investment, are working against the labour-interest, as evidenced by denial of registration and deregistration of the trade unions for lame excuses, non-implementation of agreements, refusal to attend, tripartite meetings convened by the governments and even treating the workers as their slave. On the other hand the authorities deliberately overlook the non-adherence of all sorts of labour laws by the employers. Attempts are already made to replace the existing labour laws in favour of employers to shelve the workers' rights to appease the capital only.
The mayhem in Gurgaon and the after-reactions are rather glimpses of ferocity of the worldwide ongoing neo-liberal process as well as revealed how the state machineries ganged with the capital repress the working class movement with all its brutality, to turn the latter into the slaves in the modern era.
As the liberalisation-globalisation process advances, and attacks on the workers and trade unions are growing, but the workers have been resisting it with mighty determination. The violence on the part of the employers to punish their workers sometimes are being retaliated in the violent mode, as seen on 25th July in Gurgaon a so-called industrial hub of the country. The Honda episode amounts to a warning to the stubborn exploiters attempting to reverse the process of history of mankind, denying the reality. If the multinationals and inland corporate continue to pursue the repressing practice unabatedly, the incidences similar to Honda bound to happen many more in number covering the whole country. The growing failure on the part of the capitalism to restrain itself from attacking even the elementary human rights of the working class aggravates the discontent and fury that leads to uproot the ruthless capitalism to establish the decisive victory of proletariat over the bourgeois.

ECONOMY: REALITY CHECKS

NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED UP 3-FOLD IN 10 YEARS
17% OF INDIA'S GRADUATE JOBLESS...

The number of jobless in India grew by more than three times in 10 years - from 13.8 million in 1991 to 44.5 million in 2001, according to recently released census figures.

What is worse, education does not seem to improve your chances of getting a job. The unemployment rate of graduates (17.2%) is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate of 10.1%.

Nearly 40% of the graduates are not productively employed. Even among technical graduates, as many as 32% are "non-workers", only lower than 39% figure for technical graduates. The Census also found over 4200 graduates had been reduced to begging or vagrancy, including 419 technical graduates.

To a large extent, these statistics are a result of the fact that a majority of female graduates-74% among the non-technical ones and 49% among those technically qualified - are not working. Among males 22.6% of all graduates are not working which includes more than 25% of male technical graduates....

(Times of India, 22-06-2005)

POWER PRIVATISATION IS FINANCIALLY UNVIABLE: PLANNING COMMISSION

At a time when public dissatisfaction over the power privatisation process is at an all time high, the Planning Commission's tenth five year plan report has found the process financially unviable....

The Commission has said that Delhi (after power sector privatisation) has been able to "tolerate" such huge distribution losses only because of the Govt subsidy and that replicating this model across the country would be economically impossible....

The Commission noted that both the Orissa and Delhi experience (of privatisation) suggests that privatisation is not a "guaranteed solution" to the problems. In Orissa, where power distribution has already been privatised, the aggregate technical and commercial losses remain over 45%, while in Delhi they are an "unsustainable" 40%, according to the Report.

(Times of India, 28-07-2005)

WORLD BANK CALLING THE SHOTS IN DELHI JAL BOARD PRIVATISATION

The citizens of Delhi are already paying the price for decisions of privatisation in Power sector. Three years later, Delhiites still face stiff hike in tariffs, deteriorating services and worsening power availability.

In the case of water, the Sonia Vihar Project was initiated by Delhi Govt after a report prepared by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC)-the international consultants on reforming Delhi's water supply, in a World Bank sponsored programme that marks the beginning of the privatisation of Delhi Jal Board and Delhi's water supply.

In a press conference hosted by "Parivartan" an NGO, it was revealed that under the garb of providing loans to Delhi Govt for its water sector reform, the World Bank has intervened at every stage..... Records obtained under Right to Information Act have indicated that the World Bank blatantly and arbitrarily intervened in awarding a

consultancy contract of Rs 7 crore to favour Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) in November 2001. PWC allegedly lost in the bidding process thrice, but the World Bank intervened every time till they were awarded the contract finally.

Present at the press conference were former Magsaysay winner Aruna Roy, SC lawyer Prashant Bhusan, Arvind Kejwani from Parivartan, and former JNU professor, Amit Bhaduri.

'All expenses are borne by the Indian Govt in terms of treating water, till supplying to various places. The World Bank provided just a tiny fragment of these expenses, that is about Rs 2.5 million'.... Added Prof Amit Bhaduri, "why should such a small insignificant loan by the World Bank be the reason for us having to comply with all their rules and demands." And while questioning the credibility of the PWC's role in reforming the water supply in Delhi, the panel members observed that "the World Bank's agenda is to protect the interests of the Private water companies at the expense of Indian public."

(Times of India, 29-07-2005)

RURAL JOB SCHEME SUFFER LEAKAGE

Over 65% beneficiaries of the Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) receive wages that are below the minimum wages set by the states, a study commissioned by the Rural Development Ministry, has said.

The study also pointed to the leakage in the supply chain. For instance in the Prakasham district of Andhra Pradesh, a Food Corporation of India schedule said, it had released 120, 313 tonnes of foodgrain. But data from the Zilla Parishad, which obtained the foodgrain, put the amount at 117,900 tonnes and the state civil supply department which distributes the foodgrains said the amount was 113,510 tonnes. This means that 5.65 per cent of the foodgrain went missing in the supply chain.

The report said that against an average wage of Rs 84 per manday for skilled workers and Rs 60.23 per manday for unskilled workers, a majority of the beneficiaries received daily wage ranging from Rs 31 to Rs 60 a day. Wages paid to women is less than the male workers. Similarly, asa against the norm of providing 5 kg foodgrain per manday, on an average 3.10 kg of rice and 4.18 kg of wheat were provided as wages, the study made by Centre for Management Development said....

(Business Standard, 03-08-2005)

10TH PLAN SECTORAL INVESTMENT TARGET CUT BY 19%

The Planning Commission has scaled down sectoral public investment targets in the tenth plan by 19% owing to Govt's inability to raise sufficient resources and low internal extra-budgetary resources (IEBR) generated by the PSUs....

The revised outlay would force the govt to downscale development programmes in various sectors. While total investment in agricultural and allied sector is revised from Rs 219,600 crore to Rs 175,700 crore, public investment in the sector has been declined by 28% at Rs 95,700 crore from the original target of Rs 175,700 crore.

...From original estimate of investing Rs 251,600 crore public money under heads of electricity, gas, water supply, Rs 174,500 crore has been set as the revised target for the sector registering a 31% decline. Similarly, public investments in manufacturing, mining and quaries, construction, trade, transportation, financial services and public administration has been significantly reduced.....

(The Economic Times, 03-08-2005)

ON PETROLEUM PRICING POLICY

Swadesh Dev Roye

Comprehending the current debate on the question of retail pricing of petroleum products is not merely a matter of arithmetical calculations aimed at addressing the steep hike in the price of crude oil in the international market, as is projected by vested interests. It is very intimately related with the policies of privatisation pursued by the successive governments at the centre. It is really a political question concerning the people and the country.

ADMINISTERED PRICING

The 'import parity pricing system', was put to practice in the year 1948 through agreement between Government of India and Burma Shell and continued till November 1976. Replacing import parity system, the Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) was put to practice as per recommendation of Oil Pricing Committee during the end of 1976; it was further strengthened during 1984. Focusing the effectiveness of APM, the Parliamentary Standing Committee noted, "APM ensured stability of prices insulating domestic market from the volatility of prices in international markets. APM also took care of regulated returns to the oil companies at reasonable levels consistent with efficiency of operations to generate sufficient resources for encouraging growth..."

However, with the opening of the hydrocarbon sector, the foreign oil cartels and the related private big businesses in the country mounted pressure on the Government to re-introduce import parity system of pricing.

The government constituted two successive study groups (i) U. Sundarajan Committee and (ii) Kelkar Committee in the year 1995 and 1996. The Kelkar (the then Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas) Committee, otherwise known as the "R" Group had 19 Members, which included the Chairmen/Managing Directors of Reliance Petroleum Ltd., Tata Petrodyne, MRPL, Hindustan Oil Exploration Ltd., Bharat Shell Ltd., Essar Properties, Jindal Drilling Ltd., Essar Group. Prescribing dismantling of APM the Committee said, "Investors would be reluctant to commit large funds in the petroleum sector if APM continues, for the simple reason that under administered pricing regime a decision of the government can influence the profitability and market shares irrespective of the efficiency with which a company operates. Therefore, investors and oil PSUs prefer a free market set up with minimum government interference in investment and operating decisions." (page 97).

CRUDE OIL PRICING

Consequent upon the dismantling of the 'Administered Pricing Mechanism', the ONGC and OIL were allowed to charge import parity prices for the crude oil produced in India. "Components like ocean freight, insurance, customs duty, ocean loss, port dues etc. are added to the Free on Board (FOB) price of the respective marker crude in the international market to calculate the import parity price of domestic crude." (PSC Report)

The two duties levied only on the public sector oil producers - ONGC and OIL - inflate the cost of indigenously produced crude oil in the country. These are cess and royalty; the former is levied by the Central Government and the latter is charged by the various State Governments. Cess is collected under section 15 of the Oil Industry (Development) Act, 1974 to finance the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) constituted in 1975 aimed at development of the Oil Industry in the country. However, the irony is that since the constitution and up to 31st March 2005 "the central Government has collected as sum of about Rs.55,966.81 crore as cess. Out of this collection, OIDB has received only Rs.902.40 crore till March, 2005. (Ibid). It is rather a case of virtual fraud on the people. The money collected for development of the oil industry was actually diverted and spent for altogether different purposes. Again yielding to the pressure of the private sector oil companies, under the liberalised regime of New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP), the cess has been abolished. Here again, the main beneficiaries are the foreign and indigenous private oil companies.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee commented, "It is highly regrettable that large

funds collected for a specific purpose i.e. to carry out oil industry developmental activities are not utilised for that purpose." It further went on to say, "there is no justification in levying cess if the amount generated from it is not being utilised for the sector and reiterate their earlier recommendation that a Price Stabilisation Fund should be created by using the money collected from cess on crude oil to bring in stabilisation in the prices of petroleum products. Besides, a part of the cess amount may also be utilised to provide subsidy on kerosene and LPG." The royalty is collected by the state governments presently at the rate of 20% of the wellhead price for onshore and shallow water offshore and 10% for offshore above 400 metres.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

As in the case of crude oil, the prices are being fixed on 'import parity basis' in the post Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) in the case petroleum products also. Now the selling price is inflated on two accounts viz., for import parity - "ocean freight, insurance, customs duty, ocean loss, port charges etc to the Free on Board (FOB) price of the respective product in the international market and then further added excise duty, freight up to depots, marketing cost/margin, state specific irrecoverable levies, delivery charges from depot to retail pump outlets, sales tax/other local levies and dealers' commission. Thus, the system artificially inflates the prices of petroleum products refined at home. The Committee strongly feel that the pricing of products on import parity basis is irrational and far removed from reality as the computations are made on assumed costs." (ibid).

The main reason for the exorbitant retail selling prices of petro-products is steep rate of various taxes and duties consisting of customs, excise and state level duties. The sum total works out to 132% of the basic price of the products in the country against Sri Lanka 37%, Thailand 24% and Pakistan 30%. The Parliamentary Committee has noted "Governments have a tendency to bank heavily on petroleum sector to mobilise revenues." It may be mentioned that according to Government source petroleum sector contributes 64% of the gross revenue of the Government through taxes and duties. It is revealing that "out of Rs.2.50 hike in petrol, the contribution of enhanced rates of excise duties has been Rs.2.20. Similarly in Rs.2.00 hike in diesel, the enhanced excise duty component has contributed Rs.1.06. The increase in prices because of global oil price is nil in case of petrol and Rs.0.70 in case of diesel. (ibid).

On the other hand uncalled for exemption on customs duty is granted by the Government in the name of incentive for export of petroleum products. "Under the scheme, the Finance Ministry forgoes customs revenue and the exporting companies benefit immensely, both by the duty concession and the exorbitant global prices for their products. "The Committee do not agree to such a concession, when huge international prices alone can take care of the profit of the exporters." (ibid). As per report in the print media, "Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar defended the incentive scheme, whose largest beneficiary RIL (Reliance Industries Ltd.), earned Rs.1,568 crore in 2004-05." (FE, 5.8.05)

MOBILISE THE PEOPLE

The far cry of loss incurred by down stream oil PSUs is rather cunningly concocted presentation. Apart from the question of tax and duty components, the other single factor, which artificially inflates the production cost of the public sector oil companies, is the 'import parity basis'. If the cost of input and conversion cost of the downstream oil PSUs is calculated on actual basis without inflating by several assumed costing factors, the profit or loss situation is bound to be different and at the same time realistic.

We must organise massive campaign to create awareness among the people as to how the import parity pricing system and heavy doses of taxes and duties levied on crude oil and petroleum products produced in our country are the actual root of the present situation. The specific recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petroleum & Natural Gas, Fourteenth Lok Sabha, Sixth Report has interalia said that the current 'maladies' in the down stream oil PSUs can be addressed by restoring the pricing norm, rationalising taxes and duties and without hiking the retail selling prices. People must unitedly mount effective pressure on the Govt to implement these recommendations.

Against Gurgaon police atrocities

PROTEST DAY OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Against the police atrocities on the workers of Gurgaon, All India Protest day was observed on 1st August 2005 demanding punishment of the concerned police officials and officials of district administration, unconditional release of all workers and trade union activists and unconditional reinstatement of all the workers of M/s Honda Motorcycles and Scooter India Ltd and recognition of their trade union rights. The call for All India Protest day was given jointly by the central trade unions.

Reports have come in of demonstrations and rallies held in almost all the state capitals and industrial centres of the country.

Haryana

At Gurgaon and Dharuheda industrial belt, besides meetings at all factory gates, convention was held at sector 14 (Gurgaon) Community centre and a massive public meeting was held at Devilal Stadium at Gurgaon, which was addressed by Gurudas Dasgupta, General Secretary AITUC and Satvir Singh, General Secretary, Haryana State CITU the Town Park Maidan at Dharuheda in the afternoon. A public rally was also held in Dharuheda Town park maidan which was participated by thousands of workers. Khem Singh, Secretary, Haryana State CITU addressed the rally. At Hissar District a procession of about 1200 workers was taken out which converged into a public meeting. Pravat Singh, President, Haryana State CITU and R C Jagga of Sarb Karmachari Sangh addressed. Repot of demonstrations and rallies wee also received from Jind, Panipat, Sonepat which were addressed by S N Solanki, Hawa Singh, Anand Jawhara and other State CITU leaders. At Faridabad, joint demonstration was organised before the DLC office by CITU, AITUC, HMS and Sarb Karmachari Sangh and BEFI.

Punjab

Rallies were held at Chandigarh, Sangrur, Jallandhar, Bhatinda, Hosierpur Malerkotla, Amritsar, Rajpura, Batala, Pathankot, Machiwara, Arson, Malout and other places.

At Chandigarh a huge procession of the industrial workers, medical representatives and UT govt employees moved through the main chawks of the city to converge into a dharna of the Honda Motors in industrial area phase-. The dharna was addressed by Raghunath Singh, General Secretary of Punjab State CITU A Swahney,General Secretary, PCMSRU, besides others. At Jallandhar, the procession was taken out under the leadership of Vijay Mishra, Working President, Punjab State CITU which converged into a rally before the office of the District Collector. In other places the rallies and demonstrations were held and were addressed by Gurmej Singh, Mohinder Kumar, Ranvir Virk, Devraj Varma, Ram Singh, Kishan Singh, Susheel Kumar-all state and districyt level leaders of CITU.

Himachal Pradesh

At the state capital at Shimla, demonstration was held by several hundreds of workers and employees at the initiative of CITU. Employees of Central Govt offices, BSNL, banks and Insurance also joined the demonstration. Reports of demonstrations were also received from Sirmour, Parwanoo and Soaln district HQ AT Solan district, Banjar Tehsil headquarter and the Kullu town in Kullu district, Jaogendranagar Tehsil HQ, Dharampur and Mandi town in Mandi district and at Bhavanagar at Kinaur district. In the demonstration held at Solan district headquarter and Mandi Town, the AITUC unions also joined.

Bihar

Thousands of workers and employees under the banner of central trade unions, Federations and Service Associations have taken out a huge protest march on 1st August from Akashbani Bhawan at Patna to Railway

Station raising slogans against the barbaric lathicharge on the peaceful workers' demonstration at Gurgaon on 25th July and the following days. Before the Railway Station a public rally was held which was presided over by Nripendra Krishna Mahato, General Secretary of TUCC, Bihar. The rally was addressed by Arun Kumar Mishra, General Secretary, Bihar State CITU and also by the leaders of AITUC, AICCTU, UTUC, UTUC-LS and the federations and employees associations who all condemned the Haryana Govt and expressed solidarity with the struggle of the Honda workers.

Chhattisgarh

Protest day was observed through processions and demonstrations in almost all the districts. At Korba district, a massive public rally was organised in Balco township jointly by CITU and AITUC. Demonstrations were organised in Kusmunda and Gevra by CITU. At Dhamtari district, at the initiative of CITU a procession was taken out from Krishi Upaz Mandi to Makai Chawk coverging into a demonstration which was participated by several hundreds of workers. At Korea District, A Joint procession was organised by CITU and AITUC in the bada Bazar area which had drawn participation of thousands of workers. Effigy of Honda management was burnt by the demonstrators. Public meetings were organised in Churcha and Pandavapura Collieries. At Durg District, a joint procession was organised by CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMKP, MPMSRU, RDIEU and others from Nelson Mandela Chawk at Bhilai to the office of the District Collector and memorandum was submitted to SDM. At the state capital, Raipur, a procession was taken out to cover the main thorughfare of the city which converged into a public meeting at Moti Bagh. Reports of demonstration and rallies were also received from Sarguja and Rajnandgaon.

Uttaranchal

Demonstrations and rallies were held at Dehradun which was addressed by Birendra Bhandari, General Secretary of Uttranchal CITU among others. At Haridwar a huge procession of workers from BHEL, Sugar Mills and other occupations was taken out in the city to converge into a massive demonstration before the office of the District Magistrate. Report of demonstration was also received from Pouri (Garwal).

West Bengal

Demonstrations and rallies were organised in almost all the districts and industrial centres.

At Kolkata a huge joint ralliy was held at Rani Rasmoni Road in the afternoon at the joint call of central trade unions and employees federations and associations. Several thousands of workers and employees from all over the city participated in the rally making it a massive mobilisation. The public meeting was presided over by Chunilal Dasgupta, Joint Convenor of 12th July Committee. The meeting was addressed by Kali Ghosh, General Secretary of West Bengal State CITU, Ranjit Guha (AITUC), Saral Dev (TUCC), Dibakar Bhattacharya (AICCTU), Ashok Ghosh (UTUC), Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS) Shibshankar Dev(12th July Committee), Pradip Biswas (BEFI), Salil Chakraborty (AIBEA) among others. The speakers, while denouncing the police brutalities of the Haryana Govt at the dictates of the Honda management, expressed solidarity with the ongoing struggle of the workers.

Delhi

At New Delhi, gate demonstrations were held in the industrial areas at the early hours of the day. Around 11-30 AM thousands of workers joined in a dharna organised in front of Jantar Mantar. The Dharna was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, Rameswar Yadav (AICCTU), R K Sharma (UTUC-LS), Mohan Lal, Sudhir Kumar and Nathu Prasad, General Secretary, President and Vice President of Delhi State CITU, Santosh Roy (AICCTU), besides others. In solidarity to workers struggle, the dharna was also addressed by Mona Das, President, JNU Students' Union, Aravindam (SFI), P K Pawar (AIDYO) and Sudhanwa Deshpande of Jana Natya Manch. The speakers, while congratulating the workers of Guragaon for their heroic struggle, demanded upon the Govt for immediate punishment

of concerned police officials and district-head of the administration at Gurgaon and withdrawal of all court cases against the workers and TU activists of Gurgaon. Workers must get all their just demands and there must not be any interference with their trade union rights, the speakers asserted. The call was given for intensifying the preparatory campaign for the countrywide General Strike on 29th September against the economic policies of the Govt and demanding implementation of the pro-people commitments. At Ghaziabad, joint demonstration was held before the District Collector's office jointly by CITU, AITUC and INTUC. At Noida dharna was held at Gol Chakkar by CITU, AITUC and HMS unions.

Rajasthan

At Chitorgarh district, massive demonstration was held before the office of district Collector by the trade unions. The demonstration was addressed by Jagadish chandra Vyas of Road and Building Workers' Union, B L Bapna of Sugar Mill Employees Union, Kaluram Suthar of Cement Workers & employees Union, Ismail Sekh of Laljhanda Auto Rickshaw Chalak Union and Iqbal Hussain of Laljhanda Zilla Shramik Ekta Union. From the demonstration, a memorandum was submitted to the District Collector.

Gujarat

Demonstration was held before the Show Room of Honda at Rupali at Ahmedabad. Reports of dharna and massive demonstration were received from Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Junagarh and Baroda. Programmes were jointly organised by CITU, AITUC, Gujarat Mazdoor Panchayat, and unions of banks, insurance and other employees organisations.

Jharkhand

Huge demonstration was held at Dhanbad jointly by the central trade unions and employees organisations on 1st August in solidarity with the struggle of Honda workers at Gurgaon. The demonstration was joined by the industrial workers and also the employees of state govt offices, banks, insurance and other service organisations.

Andhra Pradesh

At Hyderabad, a huge demonstration was organised by CITU and AITUC which was joined by thousands of workers. Effigy of Honda management was burnt in the demonstration. The protest demonstration was also held in the all the district headquarters throughout the state.

Against Jungle Raj of the employers-administration combine

25,000 STRONG DEMONSTRATION AT LUDHIANA

Ludhiana, July 31, the industrial town witnessed a massive and militant demonstration by the workers to reassert their resolve to resist the onslaught of the employers-administration combine on their rights and livelihood.

The Employers and the district administration which is operating as domestic agents of the employers' class, as is the case under the neoliberal economic regime, did their best to foil the rally. The small industrial township was converted into a police camp, blocking almost all the roads to the meeting place The employers in the cycle factories arbitrarily changed the weekly-off day from Sunday to Monday to prevent the workers to participate in the rally. But nothing could deter the workers of Ludhiana to desert the factories to join the rally enmasse. The Punjab State Govt at the dictate of the Cycle factories Owners at Ludhiana are not registering the CITU Unions and the employers have been carrying on repression on the workers with the direct support of the district administration. At the leadership of CITU workers have been carrying on struggle to resist the onslaughts. In the process of the said struggle, the demonstration was organised at Ludhiana on 31st July.

The rally was addressed by Sitaram Yechury, Polit bureau member of CPI(M). Yechury, in his address to the workers reported that he has

already taken up the matter of Union registration with the Chief Minister and he was conveyed that if the govt wants to avoid confrontation in the days to come, they must have to give registration to the CITU union without further delay. It was absolutely foolishness on the part of the Govt to obstruct registration of the union at the instance of the employers, Yechury asserted.

The rally was also addressed by Balwant Singh, President, Vijay Mishra, Working President and Raghunath Singh, General Secretary of Punjab State CITU. The rally besides resolving to intensify the struggle for trade union rights and fight back the Jungle Raj of the employers-administration combine also expressed solidarity with the workers of Gurgaon.

MARCH BY RAILWAY CATERING WORKERS (KERALA)

On 3rd August about 250 contract catering workers belonging to Railway contract catering workers Union (CITU) Kerala took out a March from Jantar Mantar to Parliament demanding job protection of 7 lakhs catering workers of Indian railways who are being rendered surplus consequent on the implementation of the new catering policy 2000/05. It is note worthy to mention here the fact that the union has earlier submitted a memorandum to Sri Lalu prasad Yadav, honourable minister for Railway on 27.06.05 for a comprehensive review of the new catering policy and maintenance of status quo as the implementation of the policy would cause displacement to 7 lakhs of catering workers all over India. Further the matter was taken up again by Com. Prakash Karat and other left leaders and hon'ble minister for agriculture Sri Sharad Pawar and as a result of the discussion they had with the Railway Minister it was agreed to order maintenance of status quo in respect of catering establishments till a comprehensive review of the catering policy is made by a joint Parliamentary Committee. But IRCTC has initiated steps for tendering out pantry cars and others refreshments rooms ignoring this assurance and hence this March was organized for compliance of the assurance. The march was flagged off by Com.Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, which was stopped at Parliament street police station and hence the workers sat down in Dharna there. Comrades Basudev Acharya, P. Karunakaran, N.N. Krishnadas, S. Ajaykumar, K. Chandran Pillai, Abdulla Kutty, C.S. Sujatha, N.K. Premachandran, S. Suresh Kurup all MPs addressed the marchers. Besides them Com. Mohanlal and Sudhir Kumar, Secretary and president Delhi CITU & T.P. Peethambaran Secretary, NCP also spoke. Com. R.G. Pillai, President, and T.K. Achuthan, General Secretary of the union led the march. Later a delegation of union leaders along with Com. Basudev Acharya and N.N. Krishnadas MPs met the railway minister Sri Lalu Prasad Yadav in his chamber at Rail Bhawan and had a detailed discussion on the issue. Managing Director of IRCTC was also present at the discussion. The Hon'ble Minister assured the delegation that in case of refreshment rooms status quo will be maintained till a review of the catering policy is made and in the case of pantry cars as the tender process is already initiated he assured all possible efforts from both Railways & IRCTC to protect job of all existing workers duly inserting a clause in the contract making it obligatory for any new incumbent to retain the existing workers on roll. To that extent the discussions was fruitful. The ensure compliances of these assurance it is necessary to get all the catering workers at all zonal railways organised and the respective CITU committees are going to take initiative in that direction.

(Report from R.G. Pillai)

Himachal Pradesh

JOINT CONVENTION DECIDES ACTION PROGRAMME

Shimla, 6th August 2005, the state level convention of all the mass organisations in the State formed "Lok Morcha" to carry on state level campaign and agitation against the policies of liberalisation and privatisation and their grievous impact on the State's economy and the common people. The Himachal State Committees of CITU, Students Federation of India, Democratic Youth Federation of India, All India Democratic Women's Association and Science Forum(Vigyan Morcha) jointly organised the convention.

Around 400 delegates from all the sponsoring mass organisations covering all the districts attended the convention held at Kalibari auditorium at Shimla. The convention was inaugurated by Rakesh Singha, Ex President, Himachal State CITU, who in his inaugural address stressed upon the urgent need for concerted action from all the mass organisations for heightening the struggle and ensuring broadest mobilisation in the united struggle against the impact of neoliberal policies on the people and the State. Kashmir Singh Thakur, General Secretary HP State CITU placed the main resolution before the convention which dealt in detail the fast deteriorating situation in the State's economy both under successive BJP and Congress regime owing to hot pursuit of the neoliberal policies by both the Govts. People from all walks of life are affected and the Govt is going to impose further burden on the people taking the plea of financial difficulties and containing fiscal deficits; State's legitimate dues and shares of revenues from Hydel projects are not being paid, Com Kashmir asserted. The Resolution has drawn a detailed Charter of demands containing demands of common people from all walks of life. Omkar Saad, General Secretary of HP State Kisan Sabha placed a detail programme of campaign through district level convention, village level meetings, door to door approach, Jathas to be organised throughout the state which should culminate in a massive rally at the State Capital on 27th October 2005. The campaign programmes should also be carried at grass root level for the countrywide general strike on 29th September called by the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions.

The convention was conducted by a presidium comprising Amar Singh Raghava (Kisan Sabha), Ravinder Kumar(CITU), Ashok Negi (SFI), Manjeet Dogra (DYFI), Satya Gloda (Janavadi Mahila Samity) and Sunder Lohia (Peoples' Science Movement). Leaders of all the mass organisations and also representatives from all the districts took part in the deliberation on the main resolution and put forth many important suggestions on the demands as well as on the programmes of mobilisation. Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, while addressing the convention congratulated the HP state Committees of all the mass organisations for this novel attempt and stressed on the urgency of reaching broadest sections of the people with the message of struggle. Concerted actions from all the mass organisations on their respective demands is the need of the hour both to compel the UPA govt and the congress govt in the state to desist from their anti-people policies and also to isolate the communal forces and prevent them from playing foul taking advantage of rising discontents among the people, Sen asserted.

The Convention also decided to campaign for making the General strike of 29th September a success along with the trade unions.

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On 29th September General Strike

JOINT STATE-LEVEL CONVENTION AT JAIPUR

Jaipur, August 7 2005, joint state level trade union convention was held to decide on statewide campaign to make the call of General Strike of 29th September a total success. The convention was organised jointly by CITU, AITUC, HMS, AICCTU and the employees federations in BSNL, Banks, Insurance, State and Central Govt employees and others. Around 400 delegates from all over the state attended the convention.

A presidium comprising Wakarul Ahad (CITU), Premji (AITUC), U C Mishra (HMS), Madan Singh Shekhawat (Central Govt Employees) Kesarlal Chaudhary(State Govt Employees) and K P Verma (BSNL).

Addressing the convention, M K Pandhe, President CITU pointed to the all round attack on the rights and livelihood of the common people by the Govt policies. He referred to the heroic united struggle by the peasantry and common people of Sriganganagar district braving the atrocities of police under BJP govt and urged upon the working class to extend active support to their struggle. Countrywide united action by all sections of people is the way to resist and defeat the anti-people economic policy regime and the General Strike of 29th September is the beginning of a new phase of struggle, Pandhe asserted. The Convention fully endorsed the call of the National Convention of Trade Union and adopted phased programme of campaign for the General Strike. On 24th August joint dharnas will be organised in all the district headquarters in the State and on 2nd September massive State level rally will be held at Jaipur. Others who spoke in the convention were Ravindra Shukla, Hazarilal Sharma of CITU, G L Dhar, D K Chhagani and Premji of AITUC, S K Vyas, Secretary General, Confederation of Central Govt Employees and Workers, U C Mishra from HMS, Harkesh Yuagalia of AICCTU, Mahesh Mishra and Ram Chandra Sharma from Insurance sector, R K Chaturvedi from BSNL, Asha Kalra from Working Women front, Ganendra Mishra (State Govt Employees), J S Shekhawat (Defence) etc.

Andhra Pradesh

JOINT CONVENTION AT HYDERABAD

An impressive state convention was held at Hyderabad on August 6, to prepare the employees and workers for the September 29th general strike. Around 1000 from public sector industries, financial sector, state & central govt. employees and units affiliated to central trade unions have attended. A resolution was passed opposing the anti worker, anti people state and central government policies. Almost all the leadership of the state & central govt employees have addressed the convention and pledged to participate in the strike. An elaborate programme of district level and industry level campaign has been undertaken from the convention. They are: Up to August 20 - Sector wise conventions, August 21-31 - District conventions, September 1-14-Industrial areas and Mandal level conventions, September 15 - Mass strike notices, September 16-28 - Gate meetings and extensive distribution of pamphlets and posters, September 29 - All India strike. As a follow up of the convention, almost all district convention dates were finalised and will be completed by the end of this month. CITU committees have planned to distribute around 6 lakhs pamphlets, as part of independent activity.

T.N: REPLICATING HONDA WORKERS' STRUGGLE FOR TU RIGHTS

" We will not allow a Honda like situation here" was the declaration of hundreds of T.U. activists from various unions in and around Chennai on 12th August. They had assembled in Tambaram, an industrial centre in the southern part of Chennai metro to express solidarity with the struggling workers of Visteon India Ltd, a subsidiary of Ford, manufacturing Auto mobile components. This company supplies OEs to Ford, Hyundai, Maruthi, Lancer and also exporting in a big way. This MNC, Visteon, has manufacturing facilities with 72 countries.

In the factory near Chennai, which has been functioning for the last 8 years there has been no Trade Union.

In 2004, workers decided to form a union and it was registered and A.Soundararajan, General Secretary of CITU state committee was elected Honorary President of the union.

Management started to intensify their anti-labour, illegal activities and went on to threaten the workers. They even went to the extent of contacting parents of workers and threatening them.

The Deputy Commissioner of Labour took up a complaint filed by the union against unfair labour practices of the management at the formative stage of a union, but the management refused to attend the conciliation on 10 different dates in a row. For the 11th time, the management representative attended and said that they will not talk to the union. And there ended the 'Intervention' of the Labour Department.

In the meanwhile, the management claimed to have reached a settlement with so called e ' workers representatives', who were neither authorised nor were part of any registered body. In this, they even included all the trainees and probationers. As 700 of the 800 regular workers were fighting the management, they included the probationers and trainees with a view to claim majority. The management forced and compelled these workers to sign individual agreements for wage increase.

Those workers, not being able to withstand the pressure, have signed the papers given by the management, and paid some wage increase. Majority of the regular workers have not signed and are withstanding the pressure and mental torture. Now there are two wages in vogue, which is discriminatory and illegal.

The state Govt and labour department is not prepared to question the unfair labour practices and violations of statutes and ensure Trade Union rights. It is now clear, that the state govt do not want the workers in MNC units to be unionised.

It is in these circumstances, a powerful protest demonstration was organised and almost all the major unions in and around Chennai, sent their representatives to the Dharna, presided over by A.Soundararajan (CITU), who is the Honorary President of the Visteon India Employees Union. T.K.Rengarajan(CITU), Leaders of LPF, AICCTU,UTUC-LS, confederation of C.G. Employees, BEFI and many other union representatives addressed the demonstration. Every representative declared that denial of T.U. Rights will not be allowed and the challenge of MNCs will be met.

ANDAMAN

FOREST WORKERS FIGHT NON-PAYMENT OF WAGES

The workers of forest deptt workers working under ANFPDC Ltd have been struggling for non-payment of wages for months together under the leadership of Vanvikash Krmachari Sangh (CITU). The workers did not get their wages from June 2005 onwards and have been strving with their family members. Despite assurances given by the authorities on several

occasion nothing has been done as yet.

These workers were affected by Tsunami in a big way and they also did commendable job in the Tsunami relief operation deployed by the Govt. Although the Govt of India have already provided Rs 10.5 crore to the A&N Administration for ANFPDC Ltd in connection with the loss of properties sustained by the employees, the same is lying unutilised and the authorities are refusing to deploy that fund for the relies of the employees making pleas on sheer technicalities, while the workers are suffering from starvation. The union has started relay hunger strike from 12.8.2005 which is still continuing. And now they have decided to go in for total stoppage of work from 26th August onwards.

HARIDWAR: PHARMACY WORKERS' STRUGGLE

The struggle of the workers of pharmacies of Divya Yoga Ashram Trust at Kankhal, Haridwar crossed 108 days on 24th August. The workers are agitating over implementation of the tripartite agreement dated 21-05-2005 which envisages payment of statutory minimum wages to the workers and reinstatement hundreds of illegally retrenched workers. The District Administration instead of taking workers on hunger strike. action against the offender management has started taking police action on the workers sitting on dharna and huger strike through frequent arrest of the hunger strikers. Undeterred by police action the workers have been carrying on dharna and hunger strike in batches. From 19th August onward again a team of five workers started indefinite hunger strike.

On 23rd August a joint convention of the trade unions and mass organisations was held before the District Magistrate's office at Haridwar in which all the trade unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC, and various other independent unions joined. The Convention decided to form a Joint Platform for Action in solidarity with the Pharmacy workers and from 24th August onwards, the workers from constituent organisations started joining the dharna along with the Pharmacy workers on hunger strike.

COMRADE BIKASH CHOWDHURI

We record with profound grief and shock the passing away of Comrade Bikash Chowdhuri, member of the Working Committee of CITU and Member, Lok Sabha, on the early hours of 1st August 2005. He was also a member of the West Bengal State Committee of CPI (M). He died after a heart attack in a hospital in Delhi.

Comrade Bikash Chowdhuri made an invaluable contribution in organising the coal workers in Bengal and was the Vice President of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India and the General Secretary of the Burdwan district Committee of CITU. He was also involved in organising the peasants in the district.

He was a member of the West Bengal legislative assembly from 1977 to 1986 and represented the Asansol constituency in the Lok Sabha for three terms since 1998.

In his death the working class movement has lost an experienced and dedicated leader. The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to the memory of Comrade Bikash Chowdhuri and convey condolences to all the bereaved.

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month May'05	Jun'05
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	498	492
	2	Guntur	506	516
	3	Hyderabad	530	533
	4	Visakhapatnam	518	529
	5	Warangal	554	561
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	448	446
	7	Guwahati	531	532
	8	Labac-Silchar	414	414
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	442	442
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	432	433
Bihar	11	Monghyr	494	496
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	470	470
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	510	514
	14	Bhavnagar	529	530
	15	Rajkot	490	493
	16	Surat	497	497
	17	Vadodra	492	496
Haryana	18	Faridabad	541	539
	19	Yamunanagar	514	510
J & K	20	Srinagar	621	625
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	501	503
	22	Jharia	433	436
	23	Kodarma	461	465
	24	Noamundi	478	478
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	487	491
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	527	525
	27	Belgaum	579	581
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	538	538
	29	Mercara	495	488
Kerala	30	Alwaye	539	540
	31	Mundakayam	511	512
	32	Quilon	538	543
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	597	609
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	459	462
	35	Bhopal	554	559
	36	Indore	533	534
	37	Jabalpur	528	531
Maharastra	38	Mumbai	589	591
	39	Nagpur	543	545
	40	Nasik	563	565
	41	Pune	574	577
	42	Solapur	531	530
Orissa	43	Barbil	476	477
	44	Rourkela	468	470
Punjab	45	Amritsar	483	481
	46	Ludhiana	497	494
Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	536	524
	48	Jaipur	484	485
Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	565	565
	50	Coimbatore	499	501
	51	Coonoor	507	508
	52	Madurai	514	503
	53	Salem	481	479
	54	Tiruchirapally	569	572
Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	509	505
	56	Ghaziabad	543	549
	57	Kanpur	505	512
	58	Saharanpur	499	496
	59	Varanasi	559	566
West Bengal	60	Asansol	503	511
	61	Darjeeling	429	434
	62	Durgapur	588	584
	63	Haldia	617	616
	64	Howrah	607	615
	65	Jalpaiguri	439	445
	66	Kolkata	572	582
	67	Raniganj	467	468
Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	600	610
Delhi	69	Delhi	640	640
Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	563	562
		ALL-INDIA	527	529

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	May 2005	June 2005
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	528	540
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	502	501
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	518	523
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	467	468
Tripura	5	Tripura	468	467
Goa	6	Goa	631	631

PSU WORKERS TO JOIN 29TH SEP. STRIKE

A national convention of central public sector workers under the auspices of Committee of Public Sector Trade unions (CPSTU) was held at Kolkata on 16th August, 2005. Around 370 trade union representatives participated in the convention. M.K. Pandhe, President CITU, placed the background note and the operative resolution was moved by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU. A presidium comprising Swadesh Dev Roye, CITU, Gaya Singh, AITUC, Jaganath Banerjee, HMS, Michael B Fernandes, JAF, Bangalore and A. Rajeshwar Rao, Coordination Committee of Hyderabad PSU Trade Unions, conducted the proceedings.

The current tactical resolve of the UPA government on disinvestments is to accomplish disinvestments to the extent of 49% in all the profit-making CPSUs and at the next earliest opportunity to go for full privatisation. It is astonishing to note that up to 49% equity-holding of the Government has been termed by the Disinvestments Department (DD) as "surplus government holding" and it is estimated at Rs. 1,19,263 crore on the basis of the market price of the equity of the listed CPSUs and net worth of the unlisted CPSUs as on 31st March, 2003.

The contribution to central Exchequer by the CPSUs by way of excise duty, customs duty, corporate tax, interest on central Government loans, dividend and other duties and taxes has gone up by Rs.19,060 crore; from Rs.62,866 crore in 2001-02 to 81,926 crore in 2002-03. The total reserve amount of the top ten CPSUs together as on March, 2005 was of the order of Rs.1,51,000 crore. The list of such CPSUs include the recently divested power giant NTPC with an amount of Rs.33,530.80 crore. This also testifies the assertion that, privatisation/disinvestments move is actually governed by the doctrine of the World Bank and the IMF and not requirements of funds by the Government as such.

The hot pursuit of anti-public sector polices pursued by the Government of the day is also affecting the service conditions and trade union rights of the CPSU employees. The World Bank has been successively publishing so called study reports depicting distorted picture about the compensation package and other service conditions of the public sector workers as well as on performance of the CPSUs.

In this backdrop, the National Convention of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) while endorsing the Declaration adopted in the National Convention of Trade Unions held on 9th July 2005 at New Delhi, called upon the public sector workers and trade unions irrespective of affiliations to go in for countrywide strike action on 29th September 2005 to press for 16 point charter of demands adopted by the 9th July '05 convention and also to protest against the anti-PSU polices of the Govt. of India and the onslaught on labour rights including the social scrutiny measures for the workers. The PSU unions would serve the strike notice on 15th September through demonstration. The CPSTU also records its emphatic protest against:

- The disastrous move of disinvestments in profit-making PSUs
- Govt's inaction to revive the sick and potentially viable PSUs within public sector framework
- Attack on social security benefits and the move to slash down and privatise pension scheme
- Discriminatory policies against the PSUs affecting their economy, efficiency and competitiveness
- Controctorisation, casualisation and outsourcing and gross underpayment to the contract workers.
- Handing over of Coal and Oil blocks to Private Sectors including MNC's

The CPSTU also decided to hold a national workshop to formulate strategy framework on the wage-pattern and other demands of the PSU workers sometimes in November/December next. The Core Group of CPSTU will meet immediately after the 29th September strike and decide on the details of the same.

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EMPOLYMENT GUARANTEE BILL PASSED, WHAT NEXT?

The Parliament of India had given its nod to the Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, with both the houses adopting the same. The Standing Committee of the Ministry of Rural Development, which considered the Bill in depth, had made several useful recommendations for making the provisions of the Bill more meaningful. The Left parties intervened to pressurise the UPA government to fine-tune the provisions in the Bill to address the concerns of the rural poor, who are victims of the worst agrarian crisis and distress witnessed in the country. The claim of this being a "historic" Bill may be a bit exaggerated but its passage is nonetheless a landmark event, given the backdrop of the class bias - tilted towards the rich and affluent - in the budgetary and legislative policy regime witnessed in Parliament, particularly in the port-liberalisation era.

The passage of the Bill is only the first - perhaps halting - step in extending employment guarantee to the unemployed youth of the country. The Bill falls short of the expectations in several respects. It addresses the concerns of only the rural households, while the commitment in the National Common Minimum Programme was to "provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment, ... for at least one able-bodied person in *every rural, urban poor and lower middle class household*".

The Standing Committee had recommended: "universal application and self targeting which means whosoever offers himself/herself for work at the prescribed wages is to be provided guaranteed employment under the provisions of the Bill". But, the amended Bill extends guaranteed employment for 100 days only to one person in every rural households. But, as against the Standing Committee recommendation of minimum wages at the rate of 75 per cent of the national floor level minimum wages (of Rs. 66 per day), which works out to only Rs. 49, the Bill now provides Rs.60, which is again marks a compromise. Again, the amended Bill now promises extension of coverage throughout the country in the next five years, whereas the original Bill had dropped the provision of time-bound extension to the whole of rural India. Similarly, the provisions for reserving one-third of the jobs to women and increasing the number of districts to be covered at the initial phase from 150 to 200 are, no doubt, welcome. The Finance Ministry had committed itself to allocation of funds required for implementation of the legislation and for timely placement thereof with the State governments.

These positive turn-arounds have been made possible only because the trade unions, mass organisations and the democratic movement - particularly the Left forces - mounted intense pressure on the UPA government.

But the moot question is whether the legislation will really take off at the ground level? The answer lies in the capacity of the trade unions and mass organisations to take the initiative to get the provisions of the law implemented without dilutions and free from the corruption that has been the bane of all poverty alleviation programmes in the country so far. As the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been assigned a pivotal role - and the State governments are also expected to chip in their efforts - in implementation of the employment guarantee schemes under the law, the pressure will have to be mounted at the State and Panchayat levels.

The trade union movement must remind itself that this is only a small relief. What is needed is a directional change in the economic policies, with emphasis on durable employment generation. Though the first budget of the UPA government had forecast that "Investment and growth will create new job opportunities for our young men and women", this is far from maturing into a reality. It was noted that the employment guarantee legislation was aimed at addressing the "need to ensure that unemployment does not take a heavy toll on the poor people".

The Standing Committee Report had also urged the Government "to bring forward a suitable legislation for urban areas also". Trade Union Campaign and struggle will have to be directed to address these tasks.

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