

AP has highest number of child labourers ^{HT-90}

HT Correspondent
Hyderabad, September 14 ^{15/9}

ANDHRA PRADESH has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of child labourers in the country. State Labour and Employment minister T Krishna Yadav informed the Assembly on Wednesday that the State had on record 16.62 lakh child labourers, highest among the states.

The Minister said that the State Government had launched an intensive drive to identify and rehabilitate all the child labourers. State and district level advisory bodies had been constituted to monitor the progress of the rehabilitation measures.

Replying during question hour, the Minister said that child labour

was widespread in the districts of Mahboobnagar, Kurnool and Prakasam. Similarly, the problem was acute in hotel industry, stone breaking units, automobile shops and in agriculture.

He said that the government had launched a package of measures including back-to-school programme throughout the State to eliminate child labour. As many as 92 schools had been set up under the auspices of the National Child Labour Rehabilitation Programme, he said.

The Minister said that stringent measures were being adopted to discourage people from employing child labour. Open courts are being conducted as part of the scheme to find the guilty establishments and punish them.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 SEP 2000

HD-1
1378

PSU strike deferred

labour & social services

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 12. The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions today decided to defer the proposed nationwide three-day strike by the central public sector workers from August 17 following a meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Responding to the appeal by the Prime Minister and other Ministers at the meeting where several issues agitating the trade unions were discussed, the committee opted to defer the proposed agitation. Apart from the outcome of the discussion, it was the consideration of the larger interests of forging broader unity and greater mobilisation of workers in the movement to defend the public sector and the workers' rights and livelihood against the policy onslaughts that prompted the leaders to defer the strike for the "time being".

The Prime Minister, who gave

the union leaders a patient hearing, was quoted as having said that he was not in favour of "indiscriminate privatisation" and closure of PSUs. He also assured the unions that he would arrange for regular structured discussions with them on all issues concerning labour and industries.

It was also agreed that the next meeting with the Prime Minister would be held in November. This would be preceded by discussions with the trade unions at the level of Labour Minister along with the Minister of Disinvestment.

It was also indicated that the question of revision of the bonus ceiling was under the Government's active consideration.

According to the trade unions, besides the "retrograde economic policies", the other issues that figured prominently during the meeting included disinvestment, privatisation and closure of PSUs, revival of sick industries, and non-payment of salaries to work-

ers of sick PSUs. Problems pertaining to wage revision in PSUs, retrograde changes in labour laws, upward revision of bonus ceilings, expansion in coverage and enhancement of minimum wages were also taken up.

The representatives of the trade unions expressed opposition to the Government's policies on these issues.

Besides the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, the Labour Minister, the Minister for Disinvestment and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission were present at the meeting. Though not part of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions, the INTUC and BMS too were invited. In a statement later, the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions congratulated the PSU workers and the Unions for their effective role in pre-strike preparatory actions and campaign which helped bring all the issues into national focus.

THE HINDU

13 AUG 2000

Eradicating child labour

By S. Mahendra Dev

INDIA HAS probably the largest number of child labourers in the world. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that every child should have a right to education. In other words, many children in India are being deprived of this right. Conventionally, a working child is defined as one in the age group of 5 to 14 who is doing labour, either paid or unpaid. The incidence of child labour in South Asia (14 per cent) is not that high as compared to that for East Africa (32.9 per cent), West Africa (24.2 per cent) and East Asia (20 per cent). The absolute numbers are, however, quite high in countries such as India. For the age group 5-14, estimates of the number of working children in India range from 15 million to 20 million in the Censuses and NSS data to 44 million according to the Operations Research Group. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) estimates child labour in the organised, unorganised and household sector in India to be over 100 million. Of course there are significant regional disparities. Andhra Pradesh has the highest incidence of child labour while Kerala has the lowest.

One can broaden the definition of child labour or child work by defining it as that of a child who is deprived of the right to education and childhood. The child population can be grouped into three categories: schoolgoing children, child labour, nowhere children (non-labour and non-school goers). According to NSS data, the last category of nowhere children forms about 35 per cent and they are potential child labourers. Therefore, the dimension of the problem should include not only the category of child labour but also the category of nowhere children. Because of the gender bias and urban bias in school education, the category of nowhere children is high in rural areas and among girls. There is a need to concentrate on these two areas to improve education and reduce child labour.

It is true that poverty is one of the main determinants of supply of child labour.

The policy prescriptions for this are to have income generating programmes for parents of the working children and improve the overall condition of the adult labour. However, the economic dependence of the families is only a part of the explanation for the persistence of child labour. Across States, there is a very weak correlation between incidence of poverty and incidence of child labour. For example, poorer States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa have lower incidence of child labour. On the other hand, States such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and

work. Field studies have shown that male members of some families spend wages on liquor and children are sent for work to earn.

The establishment of compulsory education for children is a necessary condition for the reduction and abolition of child labour. In a narrow sense, compulsory education is understood as a law making it compulsory for parents to send their own children to school and allowing for the punishment of parents who do not comply with it. As Jean Dreze says,

Child labour is a complex issue and therefore requires complementary strategies and the involvement of all sections of civil society.

Tamil Nadu have higher incidence.

Some time utilisation studies for the children suggest that most of those who are not attending school are not doing much work either. Also, the direction of child labour does not necessarily run from school labour to non-attendance. This can be the other way round in the sense that drop out children take up productive work of their own choice or through parental pressure as a 'default occupation'. A case study on Calcutta finds that two thirds of working children "work as they have nothing else to do as the schools are not very attractive and teaching conditions are poor". Thus, the schooling system is partly responsible for the persistence of child labour.

Recent field studies in Uttar Pradesh have also confirmed that factors relating to schooling are partly responsible for the persistence of the problem. While children contribute to the earnings of the family, albeit in an insignificant way, the real malaise is that there is no corresponding skill advancement of the child labour during her/his tenure of employment. Kashik Basu and Van argue for improving the conditions of adult labour for reducing the child labour. However, increase in the wages of a male member may not guarantee reduction in child

the school facilities are not satisfactory.

Child labour is a complex issue and therefore requires complementary strategies and the involvement of all sections of civil society — NGOs, human rights activists, lawyers, media, trade unions, employers' organisations, academics and so on. Some NGOs are doing good work. For example, M.V. Foundation in Hyderabad focusses on putting the children back in schools. According to the charter of the Foundation, every child out of school is considered a child labourer. The Foundation works in about 400 villages in rural Rangareddy district in Andhra Pradesh and is said to have pulled out several thousands of children for work and put them in schools in the last few years. Some overall improvements were also found in the areas worked by the foundation. Wages for adults seem to have improved with the withdrawal of children from the labour market; there has been a shift in the cropping pattern so that agriculture could be managed without child labour and adults became more organised in their work. There has been improvement in the schooling facilities. More such efforts are needed in a State such as Andhra Pradesh where large numbers of the country's child labourers are concentrated.

Finally, child labour should be eliminated by improving school facilities and the conditions of adult labour etc. However, one should not link the problem with trade. The developed countries are trying to bring the issues of labour standards and child labour under the purview of the WTO as a non-tariff barrier for trade. Forcing this issue under the WTO in the context of trade and market access has to be regarded as a motivated exercise by some developed countries. It is true that our record in eliminating the menace is not very good. However, the right institution to discuss the issues of labour standards and child labour is the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and not the WTO.

(The writer is Director, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad.)

110-5

Labour panel completes sessions

20/8

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, AUG. 19. The second National Commission on Labour today completed its three-day meeting with trade unions, representatives of employers, NGOs and Government officials in Tamil Nadu.

According to the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Ravindra Varma, about 40 organisations tendered evidence before the Commission. It has, so far, covered three States, including Tamil Nadu and the rest of the States will be covered soon. The Commission is expected to submit its report before October, 2001.

The main aim of the Commission, he said, was to acquaint itself with views of various sections of societies, including trade

unions, NGOs, managements, and bureaucrats before making final recommendations on changes in the existing labour laws. He said the existing legislations on labour had become obsolete, especially after globalisation and liberalisation. These laws needed to be amended in tune with the changing circumstances.

Mr. Varma said the Commission had appointed six study groups to make an in-depth study of the present labour legislations, conditions of workers in unorganised sector, social security schemes, women and child labour, effects of globalisation and skill development. After the receipt of the reports from these groups, the Commission will finalise its recommendations.

During its tour of three States,

he said, the Commission found that there had been a demand for an umbrella legislation for workers in the unorganised sector covering various aspects including their wage structure, hours of work, and social security schemes. At present, workers in the unorganised sector, except in a few industries, were being exploited as there were no fixed wages, hours of work and social security schemes for them.

Meanwhile, Mr. Varma said the Central Government had referred the report of the Task Force on Security to the Commission for an in-depth study. The views of the task force would be taken into consideration while drafting recommendations on social security schemes, he added.

110-5

20 AUG 2001

4-year-old married to dog

FROM SHANKAR MUKHERJEE

Haringhata (Nadia), July 13: Every dog has his day. Sanjay's happened to be Monday when Anju married him.

Four-year-old Anju was given away in marriage to the six-month-old dog in the hope that Sanjay would bring luck to the accident-prone girl who lives at Mohanpur in Nadia district, about 50 km from Calcutta.

Anju's father, Subal Karmakar, an employee of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, followed all traditional Hindu rituals at Monday's marriage. Anju's "father-in-law" and the owner of the brown dog, Barun Dutta, a neighbour, organised *boubhat* on Wednesday.

"I had to do it to ward off the evil eye. My youngest daughter is suffering from various diseases from her birth and suffered a number of accidents. One astrologer, Badal Bhattacharya, who is known to our family for years, advised me to marry my daughter off to a dog to save her life," Karmakar said.

He said that since it had to be a dog that his daughter had to wed, he felt a known dog was always

better than an unknown one. "Barun is my old friend and like our relative. He has a dog which I selected as my son-in-law," he said.

So up went a *pandal* and a decorated entrance to it, the lights shone bright, the *shehnai* sounded and, of course, the feast.

Anju was dressed in a red Benarasi sari, an *odni* draped over her tiny head, and a big garland of jasmine hung from her thin neck. One of their neighbours, Parama Karmakar, arranged the bridal dress.

Amid blowing of conchshells and much ululation, little Anju garlanded the groom dressed in a piece of blue-and-white cotton cloth.

The groom had no name till he entered the *chhadnatola*, where the marriage rites take place. When the priest asked the guardian of the groom to reveal his name and *gotro* (sub-caste), Barun was stumped. One of his quick-thinking relatives came up with the answer: he named the dog Sanjay.

After the rituals were over, the "couple" was kept in a specially-decorated room with members of both families around them.

As many as 300 guests were invited to the marriage ceremony. The CPM local committee secretary, Kamal Karmakar, was among them along with his comrades.

"I did not hesitate to spend money to please the guests despite my limited financial ability," said Subal.

The menu for the feast was rice, *murighanta*, two types of vegetable, fish curry, mutton curry, chutney, papad, curd and *rasogolla*.

The guests brought along gifts, the kinds that are seen in every man-woman marriage. One of Subal's close relatives presented a toy and a packet of chocolates.

"Nobody brought anything for the *kutta* but I have given him a silver ring," Subal's wife, Annada said.

Subal's brother-in-law, Nirmal, revealed after some hesitation: "We have given a dowry of Rs 1,000 to the owner of the *kutta*, Barun."

People are surprised that Subal, being a moderately educated person, fell for such a superstitious rite. "We went to see the fun and to eat a mouthful of meat," said Tapan Dutta, a resident.

THE TELEGRAM

14 JUL 2000

State department opposes amendment of labour laws

HC-3
17/6

Saugata Roy
Calcutta, June 16

THE COTTAGE and small scale industries department has put its foot down on the official Task Force prescriptions to amend the existing labour laws. The 20-member Task Force, led by chief secretary Manish Gupta has suggested the changes to cope with the rising phenomenon of contract employment, especially in the service sector.

The Task Force feels that "the existing provisions in various labour laws like the West Bengal Shops and Establishment Act may need to be changed or modified to favour spontaneous development of the private service sector". Gupta, in his recommendations, has urged the commerce and industry department to interact with the allied departments and hammer out modifications.

Minister for cottage and small scale industries Pralay Talukdar does not agree there is need for change. He believes there is little scope for the State to intervene and will not retard the pace of industrialisation. Karnataka has, however, brought about some changes in the labour laws, he said.

In what sounded out of sync with Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's bid to buckle militant trade unionism, Talukdar said: "Labour laws in the small scale sector remain mostly on paper and almost nothing is obligatory for the

management. They are guided by bipartite agreements that mainly depend on ground realities and the capacity of workers to bargain. It also applies to the Industrial Disputes Act and the Factories Act." He pointed out that the recent lock-out in the State-run Kangsabati Spinning Mill at Bankura would not have been possible but for indulgent labour laws.

The minister blamed local power brokers for the disorder. "These henchmen and not workers are at the root of all evils. They enjoy political affiliations and extort small entrepreneurs in the industrial estates," Talukdar said.

The labour department had earlier opposed similar relaxation in labour laws that the commerce and industry department had prescribed for the IT sector. While admitting it had a special status and the working conditions vastly differed from the conventional sector, the department refused to do away with the provisions for inspections in the IT sector. This is one condition the Union labour ministry had been insisting upon. The simplification move was finally dropped as is evident from the State IT policy that has remained largely silent on the issue.

The labour department has, however, received applications from mega department stores praying for revision of the West Bengal Shops and Establishment Act to introduce round-the-clock service in some of their mega outlets.

THE HINDUSTAN

17 JUN 2000

Delhi police unearth major child labour racket, 15 detained

By Vinay Tewari
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: In one of the biggest cases of its kind in the capital, a gang of about a 100 people is suspected to have either lured away or forcibly kidnapped over 1,000 destitute children, who were being sold to contractors for as little as Rs 500. The racket was allegedly on for about a year.

Delhi police sources said on Sunday the children were being used as forced labour in small cracker and paper-bag manufacturing units. While in most cases they were badly fed and ill-treated, even injuries were inflicted on some of them.

The south district police, who unearthed the racket last week, have already rescued over a dozen children who were being held captive in the city. They include nine children who were found from a single room in north-east Delhi's Seelampur area. All the children are between five and 11 years of age.

"The raids are still going on. But all I can say now is that the scale of this racket which we have unearthed has never been detected before," joint police commissioner (southern range) Amod Kanth said.

About 15 suspects in this racket have already been detained for questioning. The police said raids were continuing at several places and more arrests and rescue of children in forced labour was likely.

The children were barely fed and were kept con-

finied in small rooms. In Seelampur, for instance, the children were found holed-up in a small 12 sq.ft. room by a raiding team. The gang comprises mostly of drug addicts and unemployed persons indulging in petty crime.

"Most of the children have been picked-up by this loosely organised gang from the New Delhi and the Old Delhi railway stations. The gang was also kidnapping children from the three inter-state bus terminus in the capital," a police source said.

The district police formed a special squad, after investigations into a kidnapping report which had been lodged at the Lodhi Colony police station last week, revealed the larger racket behind it.

The gang was found using railway platforms and bus stations as a nodal point for luring the children away. But often, the gang was even forcibly taking away children. "Some cases of children being kidnapped from jhuggi clusters have also been reported," the source added. He said since many children had themselves run away from their home in other states, their own kidnapping never got reported to the police.

A month ago, the crime branch had also started keeping a watch on children who were involved in begging or petty trade on traffic junctions. "We suspected they were being forced to do this by a gang, specially because many were crippled or injured. That exercise is still on," a crime branch officer said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 JUN 2000

Rescued child labourers leave Delhi police in a fix

By Vinay Tewari
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: It's a problem which defies solution. The police find children are being forced into inhuman labour and rescue them. The "victims" themselves, at least a few, resent this as this was their only means of sustenance. So was it a case of doing more harm than good? Or do we have the issue all muddled up here?

Let's just take a look at what some of the children have to say. "I escaped home because I had an unhappy family life. It was an impulsive decision, just for a lark. I simply accompanied another fellow on a train," said a 12-year-old resident of Siliguri (name being withheld). For him, life had shown a slight improvement from what he was experiencing back home.

Take another case, this time of a 13-year-old boy from Gaya. Even when he had barely learnt to talk, he lost his mother. With two sisters and one brother to feed as well, his father decided it was more prudent to push him into child labour.

"He says he felt tortured...the situation was bad. Then one day, he along with his friend, simply arrived in the capital. They were picked up by hawk-eyed touts within minutes," says joint police commissioner (southern range) Amod Kanth.

Now, social scientists say the only practicable way out is stop talking about things like banning child labour. "Draconian laws just don't work. As they say, the law is an ass. We have to build up institutions, reward people who do the right thing," says Jawaharlal Nehru University's sociology professor M N Panini.

What Mr Panini is advocating is a regime which recognises people who may employ children but on condition they are imparted for-

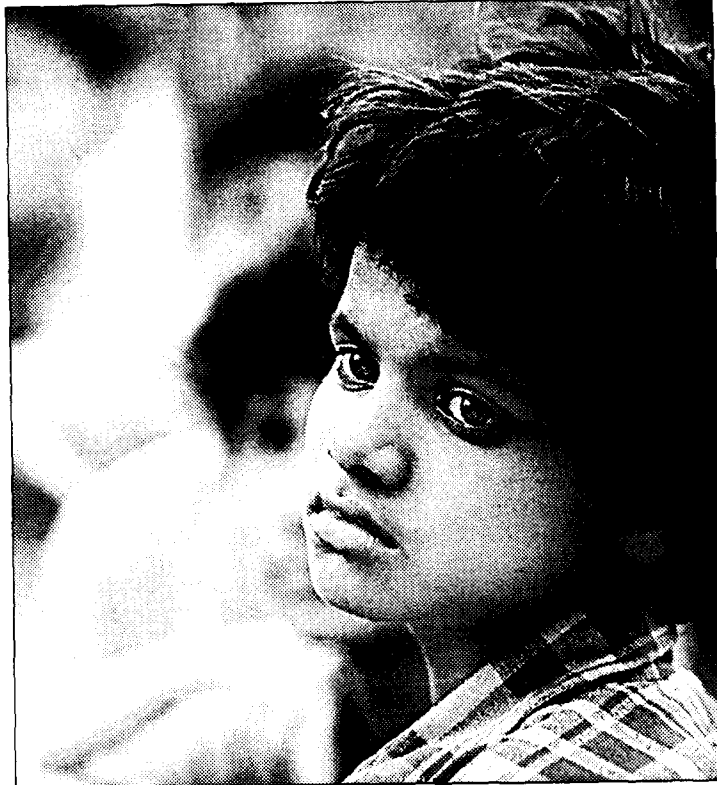
mal or non-formal education, have restricted hours of work and basic amenities are provided for.

"This is system followed by a popular south Indian restaurant chain. They do employ children but also give them a chance to study and learn. I know of a case where a waiter there ultimately became a government officer," Mr

tistics just does not indicate the number of children who go missing and often fall for touts like the ones arrested by the south district police. The number of missing children could run into several thousands in Delhi alone, an officer said.

"The same thing happened when Indra Gandhi got hundreds

Gautam Singh



Mohammed Mustakin, one of the 40 rescued children who was forcibly employed in various parts of the capital, at a press conference in the New Delhi police headquarters on Monday.

Panini says.

In fact what Mr Panini is saying is practised in many homes who employ domestic helps. But the problem is such people are in a minority. "Yes, and for this we need societal consciousness," he says.

In fact, the police say official sta-

of bonded labourers rescued in the 70s. What next? We have no answers," Panini says.

Now, with about 29 children already been rescued by the Delhi Police and more likely to be rescued, the question is will it again be a case of what next?

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 JUN 2000

Centre's decision to close Bengal PSUs embarrasses Mamata

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: Even as chief minister Jyoti Basu on Wednesday demanded that the decision to close down six public sector units be reviewed by the Prime Minister, political circles in the city are using it to beat the BJP and the Trinamul Congress, partners in the National Democratic Alliance government.



Mamata Banerjee

The decision evidently came as an embarrassment for Union railway minister Mamata Banerjee. "I did not know of this decision of the centre to close down these units. I have written to the Prime Minister to review the decision," she said.

Four of these six PSUs are in West Bengal—Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation, Weighbird India, Bharat Process and Mechanical Engineers and Rehabilitation Industries Corporation.

"You may recall that earlier I had expressed my strong objection to such a move and requested you to study the problems of these units in depth before taking this hasty decision," Basu said. Each of these units had its specific problems. They needed to be analysed separately to make them viable. "Employees are willing to extend co-operation in this."

Basu feared that the Centre would close down some more central PSUs. "Such closures will have disastrous consequences, particularly for the eastern region, throwing a large number of employees out of job."

Deputy chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya

lashed out at Mamata. Bhattacharya alleged that Mamata did not attend the cabinet meeting deliberately to wriggle out of a difficult situation.

"Mamata knew everything," Bhattacharya said, when asked how she could be held responsible as she was not present in the cabinet meeting. Bhattacharya said that nearly 25,000 workers would be jobless if the MAMC was closed down.

State industrial reconstruction minister Mrinal Banerjee said earlier the state government had informed the centre that it had given Rs 103 crore as relief concession to the Hindusthan Cables. "We wanted equity participation of Rs 100 crore in the IISCO and we offered Rs 60 crore tax relief to Jessop. But the Centre did not listen to us," the minister said.

Pradesh Congress Committee working president Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, too, was up in arms against Mamata for having allowed the centre to take the decision. Describing this as a "breach of trust, as the government had promised in Parliament that the PSUs would not be closed down," Das Munshi said "voters in Calcutta will surely indicate in the CMC polls what they think about the decision."

According to him, the decision to close down the Rehabilitation Industries Corporation in particular, would hit the people in the city hard, as a large number of former refugee families were involved in the RIC. "They live all over the city, from Jadavpur to Tallah," he said. According to him, the onus was now on Mamata and two other ministers from West Bengal, Ajit Panja and Tapan Sikdar, to prevail upon the centre and reverse the decision.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 JUN 2000

Indians show lack of consensus at ILO conference

Deepak Razdan
New Delhi, June 23

INDIA WAS "divided" at the recent conference of the International Labour Organisation when members of the Indian delegation voted differently on a resolution recommending sanctions against the Government of Myanmar on the issue of forced labour in that country.

The Indian delegates representing the government and trade unions voted against the resolution while the delegates representing Indian employers voted for the resolution.

The resolution was, however, adopted with 257 votes in its favour and 41 votes against. There were 47 abstentions. The Indian Government and the trade unions held the view that sanctions were an unjust solution and so they opposed the move. The employers, on the other hand, supported the view that the practice of forced labour in Myanmar was too uncivilised to be taken lightly.

An ILO inquiry panel, in its report, stated that the Myanmar Government has been "requisitioning" men for army and for road building and other developmental activities.

Interestingly, India also came under the ILO scrutiny at the just-concluded meet on the issue of

"forced labour" for high incidence of child labour, bonded labour and child prostitution.

Though India could not deny that existence of bonded labour and child prostitution in the country, the Indian team did assure participating countries that there were national laws prohibiting the two forms of evil. It was stated that child labour continued to be "an economic and social problem" but all child labour could not be "treated as forced labour."

The Indian delegation, last year, had enthusiastically supported the adoption of a convention against child labour but even after a year, the government has not been able to ratify the convention.

The 1999 ILO meet identified the worst forms of child labour as child slavery, child prostitution, use of children in drug traf-

ficking, and children engaged in work which could harm safety, health and morals.

India has been dragging its feet on enacting a comprehensive legislation on prohibition of child labour.

The legislation would fix a minimum age of 14 years for admission to employment. India would be able to ratify an ILO convention concerning minimum age for employment only after "achieving satisfactory compliance" of the legislation.

24/6
HC-9

Votes of the India delegation were divided over the resolution recommending sanctions against Myanmar on the issue of forced labour

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 JUN 2000

Contract labour law to be widened

Jay Raina
New Delhi, June 25

IN A major back-up initiative for the ongoing economic liberalisation, the government is all set to enact a new legislation on contract labour to widen the scope of such type of employment.

The new legislation would have a direct bearing on over 40-50 million contract labourers across the country. It will replace the existing Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.

Once the proposed legislation comes into force, the prevailing legal requirements for the abolition of any contract labour arrangement will go. It would mean denial of automatic absorption of contract labourers as permanent employees in their work places, once the link between them and the contractor gets snapped.

Highlights

- Opening up of contract labour system to new sectors.
- Abolition of automatic absorption by the principal employer once the link between the contractor and worker is snapped.
- Penal provisions to be softened.
- Added provisions for safety-net for contract labour.
- The law to undo the impact of judgments, including those by the Supreme Court
- The new law to be in accordance with the ongoing economic liberalisation.

The draft legislation, already cleared by a committee of secretaries headed by Cabinet Secretary

Prabhat Kumar, will also provide for engagement of contract labour in what is at present termed as jobs of "perennial" nature such as security, watch and ward, scavenging, cleaning, sweeping etc.

Top government sources told *The Hindustan Times* that under the proposed law, registration of the employer in cases where he employs contract labour would be mandatory.

The draft proposal is based on suggestions from various trade unions, SCOPE and employers' organisations such as FICCI & CII to exempt certain categories of establishments from the purview of the existing law.

"The aim is to meet the challenges of the emerging competitive environment to provide flexibility in outsourcing certain types of activities to specialised outfits," the sources explained.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JUN 2000

5/17
29/5

ILO slams India for child labour cover-up

labour by S. Securi

BAPPA MAJUMDAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, May 28. — The International Labour Organisation has criticised India for trying to hide the truth about the country's child labourers, mostly engaged in hazardous occupations.

At a recently ILO meeting in Phuket, Thailand, the Indian labour ministry had challenged claims by rights bodies that millions of Indian children were engaged in the worst forms of child labour. The ministry report said: "There are some NGOs who ... (think) all non-schoolgoing children are essentially working children. Their estimates ... range from pure guesswork to over-gener-

alisation from small samples."

But ILO officials punched a hole in the argument, citing how the report had used statistics from an Operation Research Group Survey of 1983-84 and from the 1991 census, thus presenting vastly reduced figures. The report is sketchy and unrealistic, India was told.

The ORGS report claims there are only 44 million child labourers in India. ILO findings say the correct figure is 120 million — the worst in Asia — with Andhra Pradesh having the largest number, followed by Gujarat, Haryana and West Bengal.

The Indian report had said: "India has ratified ILO conventions and abolished bonded

labour. If any child, whether or not bonded, is found working in hazardous employment, the employer is prosecuted."

"The report is devoid of truth," an Asia Pacific Regional Organisation delegate to the meeting, Mr Ramen Pandey, told **The Statesman**.

India has officially banned child labour in hazardous work such as carpet weaving, bidi-making, and in match/cracker units and tanneries — yet most Indian child labourers work in these industries, he said.

The Indian report, though, made one admission: "Despite the national laws and international conventions, the existence of a sizeable child population among sex workers is an inescapable reality."

THE STATESMAN
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THE STATESMAN

29 MAY 1991

29 MAY 1991

HD-16

PM to inaugurate labour meet ^{137A}

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 12. To disprove the general feeling that the apex tripartite mechanism in the labour sector comprising the employers, workers and the trade union representatives, and the Labour Ministry is gradually losing importance, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has agreed to inaugurate the next session of the Indian Labour Conference (ILC) here. The Union Labour Minister, Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya, said the Prime Minister's gesture is an attempt to demonstrate the Government's commitment towards the cause of labour.

The dwindling interest of the Government and policy-makers in labour issues and the simultaneous weakening of the trade movement are being witnessed over the years.

The fact that labour is a State subject figuring on the Concurrent List and, therefore, a low priority matter with the Centre has always been a cause of concern for both workers and employers.

ILC sessions in the recent past have witnessed walk-outs by angry trade union members either due to inaction by the Government on several of their previous recommendations or poor representation from the Government side.

However, the Prime Minister's presence for the 36th session of ILC here on Friday, is expected not only to pacify but also give hope to all those disillusioned with the Government efforts in the labour sector.

The national-level apex tripar-

tite conference is slated for in-depth discussions on industrial sickness, workers' participation in industry and workers' education, among other issues.

While the issue of industrial sickness has assumed a great significance with the economic reforms making redeployment of both capital and labour from unproductive to productive uses necessary, the education of workers and upgrading of their skills too has become equally important in the process of economic re-orientation.

To take a holistic view of labour problems and the industry in the new economic scenario and also to take stock of the programmes and policies of the Government, the Labour Secretaries of State Governments, representatives of all Central trade unions, employers' organisations and business houses like the FICCI, ASSOCHAM, CII, besides Union Secretaries of all important Central Ministries like Finance, Commerce, Textiles, Railways, Industry, Chemicals and Fertilizers, will assemble for two days for the crucial meet.

As a run-up to the April 14 ILC meeting, the State Labour Secretaries will also convene a separate meeting tomorrow to discuss the amendments to the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. This meeting will be inaugurated and chaired by the Union Labour Minister.

The meeting will discuss the 2000-2001 action plan for rehabilitation of released labourers under the Centrally-sponsored scheme besides reviewing the

progress in implementation of the National Child Labour Projects (NCLPs) in different States.

The amendments to the 1948 Act include a proposal to reduce the period of revision of minimum rate of wages from five years to two years.

The Labour Minister's Conference way back in 1980 and again in 1987 had suggested that the minimum wages should be reviewed at least once in two years or on a rise of 50 points in the Consumer Price Index, whichever is earliest.

Payment of wages to workers at revised rates during the pendency of wage disputes and deletion of the provision for fixing different rates of wages for adults, adolescents and children as it encourages employment of children are some of the other amendments proposed to the Act.

While the States have unanimously agreed to a majority of the proposed amendments, there has been a difference regarding payment of wage in cash or kind.

On the advice of the Cabinet Secretary, the matter was discussed last April by a Committee of Secretaries who suggested a study for assessing the ground reality.

The study was subsequently carried out in four States and it indicated that both employers and the workers preferred payment of wages partially in cash and partially in kind.

It was also found that in certain States, the payment of wages was entirely in kind particularly during harvest operations.

137A

13 APR 2001

Labour meet to focus on industrial sickness

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 13

THE 36TH Indian Labour Conference (ILC) opening here tomorrow will focus on industrial sickness and the possible replacement of the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) found ineffective in dealing with the critical problem.

The two-day conference will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and will be attended by representatives of industry, trade unions, Central Ministries and State Governments. The conference enables the Government to formulate its stand on major labour issues and assumes importance in the wake of on-going economic reforms.

Labour Minister Satyanarayana Jatiya told newsmen here that the issue of industrial sickness had become significant since reforms required redeployment of capital and labour from unproductive to productive uses. The problem of non-payment of wages and other statutory dues to workers had become gigantic and the BIFR could not deal with the issue satis-

factorily. The Government was seriously reviewing BIFR's role to deal with sickness and revival of companies.

The Government was of the view that industrial sickness should not be "willful" and those guilty of defaulting or diverting funds to cause sickness should be punished. The Labour Ministry wanted Section 22 of the Sick Industrial Companies Act (SICA) granting immunity from punitive action to be reviewed.

Dr Jatiya said the Government had taken several measures to avoid sickness in the Central PSUs. There was Plan assistance for restructuring of the PSUs to enable modernisation, technological upgradation as well as for protection of jobs.

The Group of Ministers formed by the Cabinet on the demand of the PSU unions to reduce the periodicity of wage agreements from 10 years to five, had met for two days and would continue its work for some more time before giving a view.

The ILC would also debate the issue of workers' participation in decision-making processes.

HT Correspondent

14 APR 2000

PM asks TUs to back reforms

Labour of S. ... 51-8 15/1
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 14. — Trade unions should become "partners in the reform process", Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said here today as he opened the 36th session of the Indian Labour Conference at Vigyan Bhavan.

Mr Vajpayee urged the unions to lend a "positive and supportive" hand to the economic reforms process initiated by the government.

"If there are any shortcomings in this process, you are welcome to bring them to our attention. We value your suggestions and constructive criticism, because all of us are wedded to the interests of the country and the common man."

The Prime Minister said his government is willing to open dialogue with trade unions who have been opposing liberalisation.

"Change, urgent change, radical change is the need of the hour. We need it to make the Indian economy and industry domestically vibrant and globally competitive." He clarified that by "change" he didn't mean a shrinking of what orga-

nised labour has gained through decades of hard struggle. What he meant was these benefits should reach the unorganised sector too and a framework should be evolved to create more investment and generate jobs.

Mr Vajpayee said the second National Labour Commission constituted in October 1997 will update the laws for organised labour and create

EMPLOYERS' PAT

NEW DELHI, April 14. — The Prime Minister was in for a surprise today when he came to Vigyan Bhavan to open the labour conference. A representative of employers' associations congratulated the government for holding the conference on a public holiday, today being the 109th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar.

Welcoming Mr Vajpayee, Mr Anil Doshi cited how holidays lower productivity.

— SNS

umbrella legislation for unorganised sector. Mr Vajpayee's emphasis on the unorganised sector was linked to his government's ambitious plan to create 10 million jobs a year through employment generation schemes.

He said 30 million of the country's 360-million

strong work force are in the organised sector. He spoke of the hardships faced by workers in the unorganised agricultural sector, hoping for a consensus on minimum wages for farmhand.

He urged the labour ministers and state governments to pave the way for an agricultural workers Bill to be worked out and tabled in Parliament and state legislatures.

THE STATESMAN

15 APR 2000

PM tells TUs to accept reforms

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 14

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee today urged trade unions to adopt "a positive and supportive attitude" towards economic reforms, even as he assured them that the Government was committed to protecting workers' interests.

Inaugurating the 36th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) at Vigyan Bhawan, the Prime Minister stressed the need to accelerate changes in labour laws. The nation could not reap the benefits of economic reforms unless "we reform labour laws and the administrative machinery that implements them," he said.

The Prime Minister told the conference, attended by trade union and industry representatives: "Our Government is committed to broadening, deepening and accelerating the scope of internal reforms to increase the prosperity of all Indians, especially the poorest and the most deprived".

He said the Government was following a "cautious and carefully calibrated policy towards globalisation" to protect interests of industrial and farm workers. "Protection and promotion of interests of labour is an integral part of our philosophy," he said.

Mr Vajpayee asked the unions to be partners in the reform process, saying: "More employment and more productive employment have been the goals of our strategy. We have resolved to create one crore additional jobs each year."

The past five decades showed that existing laws had contributed to the welfare of organised labour. But they had proved inadequate for un-

Vajpayee's recipe

- Trade unions must be 'partners' in liberalisation process.
- Reform labour laws and administrative machinery to reap benefits of economic liberalisation.
- Group of Ministers to make recommendations on wage-related matters for PSUs.
- New legislative climate for investments, particularly in small industries and service sectors, which can generate employment.
- Need to spread benefits to unorganised sector.
- Employer and worker representatives should help National Labour Commission prepare recommendations for the Government.

organised labour, he said.

Legislative and administrative "rigidities" were also hurdles to new investments, without which faster growth was not possible.

He attributed industrial sickness to the greed and incompetence of private managements. "However, we cannot ignore the fact that improper employment planning and inflexibility in labour deployment in the face of changing market conditions has also contributed to it," he said.

The Prime Minister assured that problems of employees of Central Public Sector Undertakings would be satisfactorily resolved. To restructure and revive PSUs he had reconstituted the Group of Ministers, which would make recommenda-

tions on wage-related matters.

He stressed the need for a new legislative climate for investments, particularly in small industries and service sectors that had potential to generate employment. He said there was a need for change but that did not mean "shrinkage" of what the organised labour had gained through decades of struggle. Rather, the benefits of the changes must be spread to the unorganised sector.

Mr Vajpayee regretted the delay in enacting law to provide agricultural workers with minimum wages, protection in service conditions and social security. He said representatives of employers and workers should help the National Labour Commission prepare comprehensive recommendations for the Government.

Labour Minister Satyanarayan Jatiya said the Government was committed to tripartism and that the Prime Minister had asked the Labour Ministry be involved in policy formation on workers in other Ministries and departments.

Mr Hasubhai Dave, general secretary, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh opposed the hire and fire policy and asked the Government to check retrenchment. He opposed disinvestment in PSUs and sought changes in the Minimum Wages and Bonus Acts. He also called for a new institution to replace the BIFR.

Mr Arvind Doshi spoke for employers and said a rigid labour policy was hindering growth. He said checks on rationalisation of labour force should go. The second Labour Commission was welcome but the Government must implement its recommendations. In place of abolishing contract labour, there was a need to regulate it. And the number of holidays for the workforce needed to be reduced, he said.

15 APR 2000

ASSURANCE TO EMPLOYEES OF PSUs

PM seeks labour support for reforms

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today had special words for trade unions, doled out promises to public sector employees and, in general, gave a pro-labour speech while inaugurating the 36th session of the Indian Labour Conference here.

He assured the employees of Central Public Sector Undertakings that their problems would be satisfactorily resolved in the ongoing challenge to restructure and revive sick PSUs. The Government had reconstituted the Group of Ministers for making recommendations on wage-related matters and safeguarding the interests of workers in the sick units.

Mr. Vajpayee cited many reasons for industrial sickness, including the greed and incompetence of many private managements and improper em-

ployment, planning and inflexibility in labour deployment in the face of changing market conditions. "Vast productive resources worth crores are lying idle in sick industrial units across the country at a time when we cannot afford to waste a single investible rupee," he told delegates attending the two-day conference.

Turning to trade unions, the Prime Minister urged them to adopt a positive and supportive attitude to economic reforms. "We would like you to be partners in the reform process since labour, capital, management, society and the state are tied to each other by the bonds of harmony and not of contradiction and conflict."

He suggested the creation of a new policy and a legislative climate conducive to new investments. Mr. Vajpayee said the Government was committed to "broadening, deepening and accelerating the scope of internal

reforms to increase the prosperity of all citizens".

"At the same time, we are following a cautious and carefully calibrated policy towards globalisation, so that we can best protect and promote our national interests, including the interests of our farmers and workers."

Mr. Vajpayee said the existing laws had contributed a lot to the welfare of the organised labour but not as much to the unorganised sector. "We have also seen that legislative and administrative rigidities have often become hurdles in the path of new investments, without which faster growth is not possible."

He said the inauguration of the conference today was significant as it coincided with the birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar — remembered not only for his contribution to the framing of the Constitution but also for his association with the labour movement.

THE HINDU

15 APR 2000

Combating child labour

By Dipak Basu

THE VICTORY of the so-called developing countries at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in stopping the inclusion of labour standards in trade issues is hollow, as the problem of exploitations of labour, especially child labour, even slavery, is getting worse in the developing countries. In some areas of India, Ghana, Indonesia and Senegal, according to the recent International Labour Organisation (ILO) survey, 25 per cent of the children are workers. The percentage reaches 40 in Senegal if seasonal labourers are taken into account. In Ghana, more than 75 per cent of the working children aged 10-14 are female. About 73 million children aged 10 to 14 were workers in 1995, representing 13.2 per cent of all the children in the age group around the world. There are about 250 million child workers aged 5 to 14 in the world, without taking into account those who work with their families in domestic activities.

The greatest numbers are in Asia, 44.6 millions; followed by Africa, 23.6 millions; and Latin America, 5.1 millions. The percentage of workers in the 10 to 14 age group, is 41.3 in Kenya, 31.4 in Senegal, 30.1 in Bangladesh, 25.8 in Nigeria, 24 in Turkey, 20.5 in Ivory Coast, 17.7 in Pakistan, 16.1 in Brazil, 14.4 in India, 11.6 in China, 11.2 in Egypt, 6.7 in Mexico, 4.5 in Argentina, 1.8 in Portugal and 0.4 in Italy. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. No reliable figures for workers under 10 are available, though their numbers are significant. In central and eastern Europe, the difficulties connected with the transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy has led to a substantial increase in child labour. The same is true of the United States, where the growth of the service sector, the rapid increase in the supply of part-time jobs and the search for a more flexible workforce have contributed to the expansion of the child labour market.

The largest group of working children is the unpaid family workers. A high proportion of the children give their wages to their parents or the relatives they live with. Rural children work more than urban children. Labour by children is con-

sidered essential to maintain the economic level of the household, either in the form of work for wages, or help in household enterprises or chores that free adults for economic activity elsewhere. In India and many other countries, children work in industries involving hazardous processes. They do not study as their parents are also illiterate and do not see the need to send them to school. High cost of education is another factor. With the Government moving away from the education sector to be replaced by the private sector, as part of the structural adjustment programme initiated by the IMF-

Girls working as domestic servants away from their homes, sometimes in various West Asian countries, are frequent victims of physical, mental and sexual abuse. The ILO report on child labour (December, 1999) mentioned categorically about 'forced prostitution' of girls. "The AIDS epidemic is a contributing factor to this trend, as adults see the use of children for sexual purposes as the best means of preventing infection. The full extent of the problem is unknown, but in Thailand an estimated 25,000 to 8,00,000 underage children are working in the sex trade. The *laissez faire* attitude

ry education for children in Sri Lanka has reduced the percentage of child labour to about 5 per cent of the total labour force.

The arguments of the developing countries that inclusion of labour rights and environmental issues are meant to stop their exports to the developed countries do not cut much ice. Developing countries suffer much more when they open up imports which results in growing unemployment as domestic industries and agriculture are unable to compete. The acceptance of a new product-based patent system will also ruin many industries, particularly drugs and pharmaceuticals. These will make developing countries technologically dependent on the developed world. When a developing country accepts a loan from the World Bank for a project, it forfeits its rights to buy materials from domestic sources or to employ domestic contractors. Anti-dumping measures are being used against the developing countries to take away their comparative advantages.

However, most developing countries while gladly accepting this unequal treaty of the WTO are opposed to the inclusion of labour rights and environmental issues which are meant to benefit their poor workers and children. For example, all 4,000 victims of the disaster in the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal were very poor slum dwellers. Legislation is there, but implementation is absent.

If the developing countries face trade sanctions through the WTO, they will be forced to implement fundamental human rights of the workers and children. Progressive measures sometime come out of reactionary set-ups. Legislation implemented after the long campaigns of Lord Wilberforce against the slave trade or of Abraham Lincoln against slavery in the southern United States are some of the examples. The WTO is an oppressive and reactionary organisation no doubt, but inclusion of labour rights, which may help to abolish child labour and slavery, is a progressive act indeed.

(The writer is Professor in International Economics, Nagasaki University, Japan)

If the developing countries face trade sanctions through the WTO, they will be forced to implement fundamental human rights of the workers and children. Progressive measures sometimes come out of reactionary set-ups.

of the authorities in charge of national and international tourism is also largely responsible for the current situation."

There is little child labour in Kerala. The reasons are not hard to find. Due to continuous efforts of enlightened Governments in Kerala, there is almost universal literacy, extensive social services and a population fully aware of its rights. The Governments in Kerala have implemented full-scale land reforms (only one other State in India, West Bengal, has implemented land reforms) which have absorbed landless agricultural labourers. New schools were opened everywhere, trade unions were encouraged and the minimum wage laws were implemented. Enrolment in schools is free and the free noon-meal scheme encourages poor families to send their children to school. The minimum wage, which is higher than anywhere in India, allows parents to survive without their children having to work. Anyone who has not enrolled his son or daughter in school comes under pressure from other villagers. There are extensive facilities for adult education. In this way every inhabitant in Kerala gets used to reading newspapers and takes an active interest in protecting his/her rights. Similarly imposition of compulsory

Centre to amend 1926 Trade Union Act

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 7. — The Centre today decided to amend the 1926 Trade Union Act to make unions more democratic and accountable.

The amendment Bill was ready to be introduced in the ongoing session of the Parliament, the Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said after a Cabinet meeting here this evening.

By enhancing the number of employees needed to form a trade union and have it registered to ten per cent of the workforce, instead of the current requirement of seven persons, the amendment seeks to reduce the number of trade unions.

According to official sources, the amendment would seek to end multiplicity of trade unions and streamline their functioning. Annual elections and auditing of annual accounts will also be made mandatory to make the unions more accountable.

The proposed amendment to the 75-year-old Act hopes to limit the number of outside members in the executive body to one-third, subject to a maximum of five. At present, 50 per cent outsiders are allowed.

So far very few amendments have been carried out in the outmoded Act.

■ Another report on page 11

THE STATESMAN

- 8 MAR 2 000

TUs fume at change in Act

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 8. — Most trade unions, including the BJP-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, are against making the Trade Union Act more stringent to ensure that 10 per cent of the work force of any unit be enrolled by the union before registration.

BMS secretary Mr K Lakshmana Reddy said though he had not seen the exact proposals, the government's intention to "clip the wings" of trade unions couldn't be justified. He said he would like the government to stick to the recommendation of the Ramanujam committee on this which favoured either 10 per cent or 7 members, whichever is less, for the purpose of registration for a union in any industrial unit.

Mr Reddy said the BMS did not support the government on many issues like disinvestment, entry of multinationals and even Mr Bill Clinton's visit. He said the BMS weighed every issue on merit, worked for the working class and the country's interests.

On being told that the secretary of the Centre for Indian Trade Unions and CPI-M Rajya Sabha member Mr Jibon Roy had written to the Prime Minister giving vent to similar sentiments in the wake of Mr Mahajan's announcement yesterday, Mr Reddy said the BMS did not do that since it wanted to first see the proposals which were yet to be made public.

THE STATESMAN

- 9 MAR 2 000

Dunlop's Sahaganj factory reopens

HT Correspondent
Sahaganj, March 11

SHOUTING OF slogans, bursting of crackers, blowing of conch shells and a general atmosphere of festivity marked the reopening of Dunlop India Ltd's Sahaganj factory today.

The factory gates, which remained closed for the past 36 months, were opened at 8 am when hundreds of workers entered the premises. Green and violet colours were sprinkled in an advanced celebration of Holi.

Dunlop's president, M D Shukla, raised the company flag an hour later. He read out a message faxed by company chairman M R Chhabaria from USA that promised to take the company to greater glory.

Shukla later addressed the workers, asking them to maintain quality of their products at any cost so that the company may regain its lost market share.

Speaking to reporters soon after the gates were reopened, Shukla said, "My team will need another three to four days to figure out the state of the machinery and the time needed for reconditioning the plant. But I believe we can start production in four weeks' time."

Sunil Malakar, joint secretary of the INTUC-affiliated Dunlop Rubber Factory Labour Union, said after taking a look at the machinery inside the factory, "The situation is bad, the machinery is

old and in bad condition but I believe we can make them work."

Shukla said that about Rs 35 crore worth of orders were already with the company, mostly from the original equipment manufacturers. Dunlop, he added, will be working on a monthly target of Rs 33 crore-plus turnover, at around 50 per cent capacity.

There have been some new recruitments too. Shukla claimed that he has already built a 76-member management team that includes old Dunlop hands and new recruits. "Another 10-12 management staff are supposed to report for duty from today," he added. The total wage bill will be around Rs 5 crore a month. Dunlop had a turnover of Rs 65 crore per month at the time when it was operating at full capacity.

About Ambattur, Shukla said that one of the boilers had been fired and workers have been paid their salaries for the first month.

Dipankar Roy, general secretary of the CITU-affiliated Dunlop Workers Union, however, contested this claim. "I spoke to the leaders of the Ambattur union yesterday. They did not mention any salary payments," he said.

Shukla said Chhabaria's contribution of Rs 20 crore towards the reopening of Dunlop would be brought in as equity. "Money is not a problem. If I need more I will get that from the promoter," he said.

Another report and photograph on Page 5

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 MAR 2000

Trade unions to fight against globalisation, liberalisation

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 28

WORLD TRADE unions will launch a joint battle to fight the adverse impact of liberalisation and globalisation in developed and developing countries.

This was resolved by the 14th World Trade Union Congress which concluded its four-day deliberations here today. Organised by the World Federation of Trade Unions, the conference was attended by 421 delegates and observers from 64 nations.

AITUC general secretary K.L. Mahendra, who was also general secretary of the preparatory committee of the congress, said in India, a countrywide general strike would be observed against globalisation and privatisation policies on May 11. Trade Unions of SAARC nations like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka had also agreed to hold demonstrations that day. The Pakistani trade unions, which could not attend the congress due to India's denial of visa to their delegates, would be informed of the

plan of action. WFTU general secretary Alexander Zharikov said the large attendance of delegates from around the world at the congress showed trade unions' concern for globalisation.

They were worried as to who took the world's vital decisions and "for whom". The workers faced uncertainty everywhere. Liberalisation and economic reforms had only increased unem-

World Trade Union Congress

ployment and poverty.

The congress was attended by the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, the Permanent Congress of Trade Union Unity of Latin America, the General Confederation of Trade Unions of CIS countries and the All China Federation of Trade Unions as well as the International Centre for Trade Union Rights.

The conference adopted a resolution for immediate lifting of eco-

nomie blockade against Cuba, Iraq, Iran and Libya and sanctions against China, Sudan, Yugoslavia, India and Pakistan and payment of compensation to all those who suffered because of "these illegal and arbitrary measures by big military powers."

The congress has called for implementation of the United Nations Declaration for a new international economic order which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1974, upholding international economic cooperation based on equality of rights of all countries, an end to unequal trade and economic exchanges.

The unions felt that the current drive for neo-liberal globalisation undermined national sovereignty and economic independence of the countries and reintroduced element of neo-colonialism.

There was increase in mass poverty despite the tremendous development of productive forces and this constituted the greatest threat to the stability and security of nations and peoples at the present time.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 MAR 2000

Govt, unions differ on impact of strike

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 2

THE GOVERNMENT and the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) today made conflicting claims on the success of the day long nation-wide strike organised by public sector employees, who are seeking five-yearly wage agreements

While the CPSTU comprising AITUC, CITU, HMS and other bodies claimed that 75 per cent of the total employees were on strike, the Government compiled reports to show that the strike was partial and had no effect in central and western India.

CITU general secretary M. K. Pandhe told newsmen that there was no progress in wage talks in the public sector for last three-and-a-half years over the Department of Public Enterprises' guideline that the agreements should be for 10 years. The demand for five-yearly agreements was supported by all central trade unions, he said.

AITUC general secretary K. L. Mahendra said yesterday the unions had made a "reasonable offer" to the Government that if there was assurance on reducing the periodicity of the agreements from 10 to five years, the strike could be called off. He said the unions' suggestion was not accepted. In a ballot, he said, over 90 per cent public sector employees had consented for an indefinite strike.

HMS secretary R. A. Mital said the government's insistence for 10-year agreements was surprising when it was not clear how long it would keep the units with it. There were frequent announcements to privatise or sell-off the units. Mr Mital said the indefinite strike could take up to a month to organise.

CPSTU leaders said they would raise their



Trade unionists shouting slogans while on a strike in favour of five-yearly wage agreements in Calcutta on Wednesday. Photo: AFP

demands at the forthcoming Standing Labour Committee (SLC) meeting on Feb. 9. The unions were ready for talks. They said all the five federations of the port and dockworkers, who had been called for talks, were boycotting them since the Government had invited a union which had opposed the workers' recent strike. The unions would observe Feb. 16 as a protest day for this.

The union leaders said they were not opposed to privatisation but did not want the existing public sector units to be sold off. The existing

units could act as regulators. The unions wanted the process of privatisation to be transparent. Also, it was "ridiculous" to sell off the units to raise funds to meet the Government's financial deficit. The non-payment of wages in many units was also a major issue. INTUC and BMS did not join the strike.

The Government said there was virtually nil or little impact in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Dhanbad, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Jabalpur and Nagpur. However, the strike had a big impact in Calcutta and Chennai.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 FEB 2000

Citu pleads innocent, Intuc is divided

BY SUMANTA RAY CHAUDHURI

Sahaganj, Feb. 7: Union and party activists on Monday traded allegations and shouted slogans at the Dunlop unit here, which remained shut even as the company lifted the suspension of work notice from its Ambattur facility.

Workers blocked GT Road and Bandel railway station. Some squatted on railway tracks between 10 am and 2.30 pm and disrupted services on the Howrah-Burdwan main line and Bandel Katwa section.

A huge police contingent headed by additional superintendent of police R. Shivkumar manned the Sahaganj gates and did not allow things to get out of hand. Officiating district magistrate Trinath

The general secretary of the Citu-affiliated Dunlop Workers' Union, Mr Dipankar Roy, said the management move was clearly a ploy to hold the union responsible for the closure. He said Citu had offered to cooperate with any reopening move at the January 6 meeting, but demanded that Dunlop clear workers' arrears and initiate discussions on this soon after the factory resumed production.

But his counterpart in the Intuc-affiliated Dunlop Rubber Factory Labour Union, Mr Ranjit Neogy, felt Citu could have raised its arrears demand after the reopening. This "anti-labour move" had further compounded the 4,100 Sahaganj workers' woes.

But Mr Subrata Mukherjee did not agree.

■ Continued from Page 9

He said the management had just been looking for an excuse to avoid the reopening. He will go on a fast-unto-death from Tuesday in front of Dunlop House.

Nagarik Manch joint convener Bidyut Raut, meanwhile, accused Citu of "betraying" the workers because of "political motives." The Trinamul Congress agreed, saying Citu was the sole reason for the continued closure. The party has called a 12-hour Sahaganj bandh and a relay hunger strike from Tuesday. The Citu union, too, will agitate in front of Dunlop House. The Intuc and Citu unions took the same route with memorandums for the district magistrate. Things did not go out of hand, though the Intuc union hurled a few bricks.

Citu union members presented the district magistrate with the minutes of the January 6 meeting. He didn't understand what had prevented the reopening and has written to Dunlop asking for reasons.

The Citu union alleged that a group of 25 Intuc supporters had attacked the home of Citu union vice-president Deepak Majumdar on Monday evening. No one was injured.

□ Turn to Page 10

AA-10 2/7

Staff packed off to Ambattur

Dunlop should be sued, says Basu

9-Labour & S. Security

SF 1 9/2

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Feb. 8. — Dunlop bosses today transferred the entire management and maintenance engineering staff of both their Sahagunj unit and Calcutta head office to Ambattur, even as Mr Jyoti Basu said the company should be prosecuted for falsifying minutes of its meeting with the workers.

The stand-off between the management and workers continued, with neither side willing to concede any ground.

Dunlop assistant vice-president (industrial relations), Mr Bibek Sensharma, said his president, Mr MD Shukla — now in Chennai — had ordered the en masse transfers because the reopening of the Sahagunj unit remained uncertain, PTI reported.

The company had yesterday revoked the suspension-of-work notice served on its Ambattur factory two years ago, and the unit is scheduled to re-open soon.

The Sahagunj and head office staff have been ordered to shift to Chennai immediately. After this, Dunlop's West Bengal unit and offices will have no one but a few orderlies left.

Mr Sensharma today said there was no question of re-opening the Sahagunj factory unless the Citu-affiliated Dunlop Workers' Union signs the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January.

But at Writers' Buildings, Mr Jyoti Basu told reporters that the minutes did not include the unions' version. It contained only what the management had to say, and Dunlop should be prosecuted for falsifying the minutes.

"It is a criminal offence to falsify documents. They should be prosecuted".

Later, two senior officials of the company met with the chief secretary, Mr Manish Gupta, and placed details of their Rs 20 crore plan before him. Mr Gupta asked them to reopen the Sahagunj factory — he said he could see no problems in it since all parties wanted the unit re-opened.

The chief secretary told Dunlop's representatives the company's continued closure was creating law and order problems in Hooghly. The government, he said, would like to meet with the company president, Mr Shukla.

■ See DUNLOP; page 3

DUNLOP:

(Continued from page 1)

Citu leaders and the Dunlop management are likely to hold a meeting tomorrow.

Intuc: Leader of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, began an indefinite fast before Intuc's Free School Street office after news came in from Sahagunj that the factory hadn't opened today.

Intuc leaders attacked Citu for not cooperating to have the unit reopened. "Closing down factories to sell off the land to promoters for multistoreyed buildings may well be repeated at Sahagunj," they warned. Intuc will march to Dunlop's headquarters tomorrow.

Mamata magic wand: Miss Mamata Banerjee claimed in Midnapore today she knew how to get the Sahagunj factory to reopen. "Let the government admit it is incapable of reopening the factory and then see what we can do," she said.

THE STATESMAN

9 FEB 2000

Basu to meet Dunlop bosses

571 10/2/55
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Feb. 9. — Mr Jyoti Basu will hold talks with the Dunlop management tomorrow on reopening the company's Sahagunj factory.

Earlier, the chief minister had summoned the company's president, Mr MD Shukla. But Mr Shukla has a meeting scheduled with the Tamil Nadu chief minister in Chennai and will not be able to meet Mr Basu tomorrow. Mr Karunanidhi is visiting the company's Ambattur unit which reopened today.

However, Mr Shukla has deputed a senior executive, Mr PK Sharma, to hold talks with the West Bengal government on the Sahagunj unit. Mr Basu had told reporters at Writers' Buildings this morning that the state government was keen on holding talks with the company president.

The Intuc leader, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, met the chief minister today and sought his intervention to reopen the Sahagunj factory. After the meeting, he called off his indefinite fast he had begun in front of the company's Free School Street office since morning.

Intuc members will march to the Dunlop office tomorrow in protest against the delay in reopening the Dunlop unit.

Criticising Citu for its non-cooperation, Mr Mukherjee said its refusal to sign the minutes should not have held up reopening, as it was not an agreement.

Intuc leaders warned that the practice of closing down factories and then selling off the land to promoters may well be repeated at Sahagunj.

THE STATESMAN

10 FEB 2000

Basu-Dunlop meeting revives hope

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Feb. 10. — A senior Dunlop official emerged from a meeting with Mr Jyoti Basu today to announce "positive results" could be expected at Sahagunj in the next few days.

The official described the meeting as "fruitful." But he did not give any date for reopening of the unit.

(Mr Bibek Sensharma, Dunlop assistant vice president (industrial relations), told *The Statesman* from Chennai that the date of reopening — or whether the Sahagunj unit would be reopened at all — would be decided after a meeting with the trade unions tomorrow.)

"Some additions would have to be made in the minutes of the last meeting between the management and the unions," Mr Prem Sharma, Dunlop's senior vice-president, said. He insisted, however, that the minutes would, in essence, remain the same.

At a press conference, Citu state general secretary, Mr Chittabrata Majumdar, said Mr Basu's intervention in the impasse had worked. He understood that the unions'

version would be included in the minutes, paving the way for Citu to sign it.

Citu, to which the Dunlop Workers' Union is affiliated, has been refusing to sign the minutes of the 6 January meeting between the workers and management. The union's views have not been included in the draft, it says. On Tuesday, the chief minister had charged Dunlop with "falsifying" the minutes, a "criminal offence" for which he felt the company should be "prosecuted."

Edit: Decadent signs, page 8

Both Mr Sharma and Mr Majumdar announced the Dunlop management would meet Citu representatives tomorrow. The management will meet with representatives of the Congress-affiliated Intuc on 12 February, Mr Majumdar said.

No trade union representatives were present at Mr Basu's two-hour meeting with Mr Sharma at the chief minister's Salt Lake home today.

After the meeting, Mr Sharma told reporters Dunlop

would have to review its finances before re-opening the Sahagunj factory, because the company had lost important government orders during the period the unit has been shut.

From Chennai, Mr Sensharma said Mr Basu's allegation about the company having falsified minutes of its meeting with the workers did not figure in the talks the chief minister had had with Mr Sharma today. Dunlop president, Mr MD Shukla, had been informed of the developments, Mr Sensharma said.

SNS also spoke with Mr Shukla in Chennai.

Mr Shukla clarified that Dunlop had every intention of reopening its Sahagunj unit — the transfer on Tuesday of 15 senior managers and maintenance engineers from Calcutta to Ambattur was only in order to get the Tamil Nadu unit back on rails.

"The gates of the Sahagunj unit are still closed. So we thought that we could utilise our senior staff members there (in Calcutta) to start the holding up operations in Ambattur until the revival schemes by the BIFR is cleared. This would

■ See DUNLOP: page 4

Explaining why Citu has refused to sign the "doctored" draft minutes, Mr Majumdar said: "Once we sign a document, we abide by its contents. Unlike any other union we cannot sign whatever we are asked to and then violate the agreed terms."

According to Mr Majumdar, Dunlop had launched a vilification campaign against Citu and tried to create the impression that the union — and not the management — was responsible for the Sahagunj factory not reopening on 7 February.

"The truth is exactly the opposite. Citu has been demanding from day one that the suspension of work unilaterally imposed by the management be lifted immediately."

The management had "doctored" the draft minutes of the 6 January meeting. Mr Majumdar said: "The most objectionable element in the modified draft was that arrears payments would not be discussed, but would be considered in the second year of operation."

Citu cannot accept such conditions, though it wants the factory to reopen immediately, he said.

DUNLOP:

(Continued from page 1)

ensure that the transition from the start-up operations to actual day-to-day running of the unit would be smooth".

Dunlop reopened its Ambattur factory yesterday. Mr Shukla made a formal reopening today.

Mr Shukla said he was too busy to go to Calcutta to meet Mr Basu immediately. "Now that the Ambattur unit has been reopened, I have to concentrate my attention here. I cannot leave the place now".

In his Calcutta press conference, Mr Chittabrata Majumdar described the fixing of the meeting between Citu and the Dunlop management for tomorrow as a positive step. He hoped the Sahagunj factory would reopen soon.

The Citu leader attributed today's breakthrough to intervention by Mr Basu. Citu leaders, Mr Majumdar said, had met the chief minister before he spoke with the Dunlop representative, and clarified their stand regarding the signing of the draft minutes.

Mr Majumdar spelt out the three points Citu wants included in the draft minutes:

- The notice of suspension of must work be lifted immediately, and
- all arrears including wages, bonus, medical allowance etc and payments during suspension of work be paid.
- The time of payment can be discussed after the factory reopens.

THE STATESMAN

11 FEB 2000

DUNLOP IMPASSE

Citu does disservice to workers

It is tragic that the Citu leadership, which claims to be custodians of the working class, prolonged the suffering of 4,000 workers of Dunlop's Sahagunj unit by delaying signing minutes of the 6 January meeting between the management and unions. They did a great disservice to the Sahagunj workers who are still not sure whether the Dunlop management will fulfil its promise to reopen the factory by 11 March. However much the Marxists might claim that the delay was to protect workers' interest, the fact is this provided management the opportunity to include two new significant clauses in the minutes: that the union's demand for arrears was not a pre-condition for its signature and that the unions will ensure that there is no loss of output over any issue once Sahagunj opens. This is an undertaking of good behaviour whereas the 6 January minutes merely stated that arrears would be discussed after the unit reopened. Why did Citu withhold signature despite being forewarned that delay would provide an excuse to prolong the impasse? Obviously the objective of Citu's strategy was to secure partisan gains and impress everyone with its clout. It ended up betraying its irrelevance. Because Sahagunj is yet to reopen even though Citu signed the minutes and Jyoti Basu made a high-profile intervention on the understanding that the factory would reopen "next week". The Dunlop management's snub is directed both at Jyoti Basu and Citu. The message is that if Citu can play politics, two can play that game. The snub worked.

Contrast this with Ambattur's smooth reopening on schedule. It showcases a different political culture. The overriding concern for the DMK Government, specially Karunanidhi, was to extend all help so that no time was lost in reopening the factory. The objective was to resume production and end the Ambattur workers' suffering. Politicising the reopening issue was not on the DMK's agenda. Although the Chhabrias are largely to blame for creating the Dunlop mess, West Bengal Marxists have contributed significantly to prolonging the agony. For well over a year finance minister Asim Dasgupta and labour minister Shanti Ghatak, wasted time fighting political and personal battles to decide who would be the troubleshooter. Asim poached on Ghatak's territory, issuing baseless statements about MRF wanting to take over Dunlop. Jyoti Basu is no less to blame. He did not respond to Subrata Mukherjee's appeals to intervene two months after Dunlop suspended production. Had he done so, the impasse would not have lasted this long. Some Marxists have even broached the idea of selling Sahagunj's 800 acres of prime land to realtors to help Chhabrias invest in Dunlop's revival. The so-called protectors of the working class are becoming its worst exploiters.

THE STATESMAN

19 FEB 2000

Social restructuring essential for economic growth, says ILO chief

Deepak Razdan
New Delhi, February 20

ILO DIRECTOR-General Juan Somavia, who presented his vision of "decent work" before the world last year, today admits that the dream was not going to "happen" tomorrow. The world must therefore attend to the more immediate challenge of raising a "social floor" that helps people face globalisation with fewer worries, he said.

On his first visit to India, Mr Somavia agreed that the framework that he had presented of work conditions was large-hearted but it had to stay as the ultimate goal. People everywhere wanted work that would provide for the health and education of the family, security in old age and respect for human rights at work.

It was essential today to "arrange" the policies that eventually would enable workers worldwide to work with equity, freedom and human dignity. There were no fixed standards of decent work and people everywhere knew what the concept meant in terms of their lives, Mr

Somavia believes. The world, particularly the developing countries, had to urgently realise that economic development cannot be achieved without social justice. The on-going process of globalisation has been creating uncertainties across the world, the ILO was propagating therefore that economic restructuring must not treat social concerns as additional cost but sound investment, he says.

Sharing his impressions after meeting the Indian Prime Minister, trade union leaders and employers' representatives, Mr Somavia felt that "things" were happening in India. What he felt happy about was that a "social dialogue" was on in the country. This exchange of views, he felt, could provide insurance against the "ill-effects" of economic change being ushered in the country.

India, he noted, could take the advantage of economic reforms carried out elsewhere. There were many lessons to be learnt from others' experiences. There was no doubt that the public sector enterprises that were undergoing restructuring, had played a leading role in nation-

building. Therefore, the importance of the social dialogue was all the more important, the ILO Director-General added.

Mr Somavia felt that the developing countries could not look towards free movement of labour compared to free movement of capital. The developed countries themselves were a worried lot. The middle-class in these countries today had lower standards of living. Globalisation had brought job-insecurity to them too, he said.

What ILO was telling the world was there must be "socially-responsive" restructuring and the best way to ensure that was through dialogue, he said.

Mr Somavia said his concept of decent work conditions appeared difficult at present. But it would happen one day. Fifteen years back, there was little talk of child labour emancipation -- though India had made some beginnings. Today, the world had unanimously committed itself to facing the social evil squarely and for the beginning, was all set to eliminate the "worst forms" of child labour.