

Regulate BPO sector, says CITU

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IN AN effort to make a presence in the BPO sector, the CPI(M)-backed trade union CITU is once again making an issue of "the poor working conditions in call centres" following the murder of call centre employee Pratibha Shetty in Bangalore Friday.

"We have earlier raised the issue of poor working conditions in call centres which have to be regularised," CITU pres-

ident M K Pandhe said.

A meeting of CITU office bearers has been scheduled for Monday and the matter will be taken up with the government, Pandhe said. Among the suggestions that CITU will give the government is on how to control office to home transfers of employees. CITU has also been against putting women workers on late duty.

Despite their efforts, trade unions have not been able to make any headway in unionising BPO workers, mainly due

to a lukewarm response from the workers themselves. In discussions with Labour Ministry officials, they have drawn attention to working conditions in call centres and the incidence of stress-related cases to highlight the need for regulating the BPO sector. "We want the government to pay greater attention to the working conditions in call centres and their impact on employees. The government should seriously consider regulating those conditions," Pandhe said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

TUs to launch nationwide protests

Special Correspondent

12/11
from group

NEW DELHI: The central trade unions have decided to hold nationwide protests on January 20 against the government's "unilateral" notification of fixing 8.5 per cent interest rate on the Employees Provident Fund (EPF).

Describing the decision as "outrageous," trade union representatives, who met here on Wednesday, said the matter would also be taken up with Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram when they meet him on Thursday for pre-budget discussions. They called upon the working masses to rise in protest against the decision and hold a massive demonstration in the work places to seek reversal of the policy. Efforts were on to develop the broadest possible united action to force the government to reverse the unilateral decision, a joint statement issued by the trade unions said. "This notification came despite the categorical assurance made by the Prime Minister in the 40th Indian Labour Conference to consider the demand of the trade unions for restoration of the interest rate on EPF at 9.5 per cent and a review of the announcement on reduction in the rate made by the Labour Minister in this regard. Such a unilateral approach of the Government is violative of the commitment made by the United Progressive Alliance in their national common minimum programme on dealing with labour matters based on consensus," the statement said.

It was signed by the All-India Trade Union Congress, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), UTUC - (LS), the Trade Union Coordination Centre and the All-India Central Council of Trade Union. The Congress-backed Indian National Trade Union Congress did not sign the statement.

The unions also demanded increase in the interest rate on the Special Deposit Scheme of the government in which a major part of the EPF accumulation was being parked.

The CITU described as "shocking" the UPA Government's rejection of the united demand from all trade unions in the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the EPF to retain the rate of interest at 9.5 per cent.

In a statement here on Wednesday, CITU secretary Dipankar Mukherjee said that the recently-held Indian Conference all trade unions unanimously demanded the Prime Minister to raise the interest rate to 9.5 per cent.

Pressure from trade unions makes Left oppose pension Bill

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 DECEMBER

THE Manmohan Singh government's plans to introduce the Pension Fund Bill in the winter session of Parliament suffered a major setback on Sunday when Left parties jointly decided to oppose it. Returning to their 'scrap the Bill' stand, all four Left parties, including the CPM, ruled out extending support to the legislation.

The development is a big blow to the government's efforts as it had nearly succeeded in getting the CPM support the Bill. West Bengal chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya was a willing ally of the government. But faced with stiff resistance from Left-backed trade unions, CITU and AITUC, Left parties on Sunday changed tack and said privatisation of pension funds was

not acceptable. As the pension Bill is a money Bill, any forward movement would depend on its ability to organise the required numbers.

Apart from the 61-member Left, 36 members of the Samajwadi Party are also opposed to the proposed legislation. The Left's argument is that the government was bringing the new scheme to abdicate social responsibility and divert the money from pension fund to the stock market. The Left sees the new scheme as the last nail on the social security coffin and feels it would divide pensioners into two categories.

Trade unions have also been pointing out that several parameters of the new pension system notified by the NDA government remained intact under the UPA regime. This included the defined contribution-based mandatory tier scheme, where the new entrant to central government will make a monthly contribution of 10% of salary and DA, which will be matched by the Central government at the time of exit.

They said the new system would lead to switching over to defined contributions from defined benefits concept, shifting to personal and social insurance schemes from social assistance schemes and diverting social security funds from the debt market to equity market.



Kalam salve for quake-hit Kashmir

9. President Sr. S 28/11

Press Trust of India

URUSA (LoC), Nov. 27. — Sharing their grief, President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam today distributed relief cheques to 25 earthquake victims here, saying the whole nation was behind them in their hour of distress. Winding up his two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, Dr Kalam also shared light moments with the quake-affected children amid pouring rains and near-freezing temperature.

Dr Kalam, the first President to visit Urusa, the last village on the Line of Control, handed over cheques of varied amounts to the quake-battered residents of Urusa and Uri after settlement of their cases by Lok Adalats.

Official sources said 3000 claims were settled by the Adalats and Rs 10 crore had been given to the victims in ten days.

Addressing the children orphaned by the killer quake and adults, the President lauded their courage in overcoming their problems wrought by the temblor. "I laud the courage of the people of Uri and Urusa in defeating their problems. I will suggest that you master the problem rather than the problem being your master," Dr Kalam said.

He assured the victims that people of the entire country shared their grief and were behind them in their hour of distress.

On the occasion, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad told the President that his government intended to send 300 orphaned children outside the state for higher studies.

"We have already tied up with the Maharashtra government for admission of 300 orphans for studies in Pune," Mr Azad added.

The chief minister's remarks came when the President was asked by a student what he intended to do for the children orphaned by the quake. The CM said the government would bear all expenditure for studies of the children till their graduation.

The state government had



President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam talks with earthquake victims in Urusa, located along the LoC, on Sunday. — AFP

instructed the Social Welfare Department to collect the bio-data of students and make necessary arrangements for sending them to Maharashtra, he said.

"We have to treat orphans as our own children with the definite goal of building up their career in the same spirit as parents endeavour for their kids," Mr Azad said.

The President said he met 120 kids in an orphanage run by the army in Srinagar yesterday, adding: "They have been taken

care of. Nobody will be left out".

He suggested giving five computers each to 16 schools in Uri and five each to four schools in Urusa. Dr Kalam said trained teachers from outside the state would be deputed to train students in computer education. Asking students to concentrate on education, he advised them "to try for excellence, build self-confidence, defeat problems, work and take care of yourself, build good habits and never let success go to your heads".

THE STATESMAN

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At Narayanan's funeral, VIPs were the common man, woman

VRINDA GOPINATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 10

DID the late former President KR Narayanan live to see his own glory? Perhaps, yes, living a fruitful, indefatigable life till 86 years of age, but what would have warmed his heart at his farewell at Kapurthala House, where he was lying in state all day, was the groups of "little people", gathered in the lawns, who had come to pay their last respects.

As starred generals and lieutenants, naval commanders and air marshals in ceremonial gear, former prime ministers, the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and his Cabinet, politicians and bureaucrats, ambassadors and emissaries marched down with wreaths and laurels, it was the clutch of ordinary people, the unexceptional, faceless swarm of humankind, who hailed from Kottayam, in Kerala, to Bareilly in UP, from Kerala House and Malayali Samaj workers, who came with pride and ardour.

Johnson, a cook, his wife Ponnu, a typist; Alphonso Saji, a lab technician, and her husband, Fr Solomon, a priest, all residents of Delhi, have come to say "goodbye" to a "father figure" they never met but who they admired and adored from afar. As Dalits, who have converted to Christianity, they are proud and possessive of Narayanan, for he showed them they could reach for the sky.

Says a visibly moved Ponnu: "We never met Narayanan Sir, but he made us proud that someone who came from a



Narayanan's wife Usha flanked by daughters Amrita and Chitra at Kapurthala House on Thursday. Express photo by Ravi Batra

background as ours could move so high in life." Her group nods in agreement; Fr Solomon sums it up with, "After Dr Ambedkar, it is KR Narayanan."

Similarly, Dr Shafique Ali,

'We never met Narayanan Sir, but he made us proud that someone who came from a background as ours could move so high in life'

an Ayurveda doctor from Bareilly, and his wife Mehjabi, do not know what drove them to make the 200-km trek to Delhi, except to acknowledge "Narayanansaab's national service, progressive ideals and touching humanism".

The late President was both a lauded hero and a distinguished victim of his background — remember the diplomatic disconcert when the French media headlines blazed 'An Untouchable at Elysee' when he was on an official visit to Paris, and which visibly upset him? Perhaps, it was his way of putting down the humiliation, for Narayanan soon became an ardent devotee of the religious sect, Santhigiri Ashram, the late, acclaimed writer OV Vijayan was also a member, under Sree Karunakara Guru, of Kerala.

Not surprisingly, it was the Ashramites the Prime Minister's Office got in touch with yesterday, as the late President wanted his spiritual companions to perform his last rites. Three saffron-swathed Ashramites took the plane this morning from

Thiruvananthapuram, and arrived at Kapurthala House to make the funeral preparations, aided by members of the Delhi chapter — of chanting prayers and offering flowers (Santhigiri believes in both burial and cremation though in the President's case, it was the family which decided on a full Hindu cremation ceremony).

And, so, as family and friends gathered around the departed leader, in the vast hall of Kapurthala House, Ashramites prayed and chanted for the soul of the late President. Outside, battalions of servicemen in uniform, the Army, Navy and Air Force, marched and clicked to position, to lead their former Commander to his cortege, on his last, glorious journey. Their steps were as unflinching as of the late President.

‘সক্রিয়’ রাষ্ট্রপতি ?

রাষ্ট্রপতি কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার ‘রবার স্ট্যাম্প’ রূপেই বিরাজ করিবেন, এমন কথা কোথাও বলা নাই। তিনি দেশের প্রথম নাগরিক। ইচ্ছা করিলে মন্ত্রিসভাকে তিনি সুচিন্তিত পরামর্শ অবশ্যই দিতে পারেন। কিন্তু ভারতের সংবিধান পরোক্ষ ভাবে নির্বাচিত কোনও রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানকে সার্বভৌম ক্ষমতা দেয় নাই। সে ক্ষমতা দেওয়া হইয়াছে সরাসরি জনসাধারণের দ্বারা নির্বাচিত আইনসভা এবং সেই সভায় গরিষ্ঠতার সূত্রে নিযুক্ত কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভাকে। শাসনপ্রণালী বিষয়ে রাষ্ট্রপতির যতই শুভবুদ্ধিজাত সংস্কার-ভাবনা থাকুক, তাঁহাকে সংবিধান-নির্দিষ্ট এক্টিয়ারের মধ্যে থাকিয়াই তাহা প্রকাশ করিতে হইবে। ইহা রাষ্ট্রপতির পদমর্যাদার সঙ্গেও সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ। দুর্ভাগ্যবশত, সব রাষ্ট্রপতি সর্বদা তাহা স্মরণে রাখেন না। দেশের বর্তমান রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আবদুল কালামেরও তাহা মনে থাকে না। ভাল মানুষ ও ছাত্রদরদি বলিয়া পরিচিত এই অরাজনীতিক মাঝে মাঝে এমন কথা বলিয়া থাকেন যাহাতে সরকার বিব্রত হয়। মৃত্যুদণ্ডিত বন্দিদের দণ্ড মকুবের প্রশ্নে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রককে তাঁহার পরামর্শ-সম্বলিত পত্রাঘাতটি ইহার দৃষ্টান্ত।

সংবিধানে রাষ্ট্রপতিকে এ ধরনের দণ্ডিতদের মার্জনা করার ক্ষমতা দেওয়া হইয়াছে। কিন্তু অন্য সব ক্ষমতার মতো রাষ্ট্রপতির এই বিশেষ ক্ষমতাও কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার অনুমোদন-নির্ভর। বর্তমানে ফাঁসির সাজা প্রাপ্ত ৪৫ জন অপরাধীর ক্ষমার আবেদন রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে জমা রহিয়াছে। রাষ্ট্রপতি স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রককে অনুরোধ করিয়াছেন, যেন শাস্তি দিবার আগে মানবিকতা ও সহানুভূতির সহিত প্রতিটি অপরাধীর বিষয় বিবেচনা করা হয় এবং অপরাধীর বয়স, শারীরিক-মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য, পারিবারিক অবস্থা এবং কারাগারে তাহার আচরণকে হিসাবের মধ্যে ধরা হয়। রাষ্ট্রপতি নিশ্চয় জানেন, মৃত্যুদণ্ড কোনও সাধারণ অপরাধীকে দেওয়া হয় না। কেবল জঘন্যতম অপরাধের বেলাতেই অনুতাপহীন সেই সব অপরাধীকে এই সাজা দেওয়া হয়, যাহারা বাঁচিয়া থাকিলে সমাজের সমূহ ক্ষতির আশঙ্কা থাকে। বিচারপতির দীর্ঘ ও পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ বিবেচনার পরই কেবল অনেক দ্বিধা এবং অনিচ্ছার সঙ্গেই দেশের আইন অনুযায়ী এই দণ্ড দিয়া থাকেন। অপরাধীর বয়স, শারীরিক-মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য, পারিবারিক অবস্থা এবং বন্দিব্রতকালীন আচরণ তাঁহারাও বিবেচনার মধ্যে রাখেন। এ জনাই এ দেশে অপরাধের সংখ্যা উত্তরোত্তর বাড়িতে থাকিলেও মৃত্যুদণ্ডের সংখ্যা উত্তরোত্তর হ্রাস পাইতেছে। এতটাই যে, মৃত্যুদণ্ড কার্যকর করার জন্য অপরিহার্য ফাঁসুড়ে খুঁজিয়া পাওয়াই ক্রমে দূর হইয়া উঠিতেছে। তৎসঙ্গেও মৃত্যুদণ্ডের আবশ্যিকতা লইয়া বিতর্ক তোলা যাইতেই পারে। এ ধরনের চরম শাস্তির পক্ষে-বিপক্ষে আলোচনা বা জনমত গঠনও গণতন্ত্রে একটি প্রয়োজনীয় অনুশীলন বলিয়া মান্য হইতে পারে। মার্জনা ভিক্ষার আবেদনকে মানবির দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি হইতে বিবেচনা করার পরামর্শ স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রককে দিয়া এ পি জে আবদুল কালামও হয়তো ঠিক সেই কাজটিই করিতে চাহিয়াছেন।

এবং ভুল করিয়াছেন। রাষ্ট্রপতি এই বিতর্কের সূচনা করিতে পারেন না। বস্তুত, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার অভিপ্রায়ের বাহিরে রাষ্ট্রপতির নিজস্ব কোনও অভিপ্রায় তিনি প্রকাশ করিতে পারেন না। রাষ্ট্রপতি নিযুক্ত হইবার পর তিনি আর কোনও ব্যক্তিমাত্র নহেন, তাই তাঁহার কোনও ব্যক্তিগত মত বা অভিরুচি প্রকাশের নৈতিক অধিকার থাকিতে পারে না। তাঁহার প্রবল ব্যক্তিগত অপছন্দের বিলও সংসদে অনুমোদিত হইবার পর তিনি মাত্র এক বার তাহা পুনর্বিবেচনার জন্য ফিরাইয়া দিতে পারেন। সেই বিল পুনরায় অর্পিত হইলে তাহাতে স্বাক্ষর না দিয়া তাঁহার উপায়ান্তর নাই। সংবিধান রাষ্ট্রপতির হাত-পা এতটাই বাঁধিয়া দিয়াছে। সংসদ ত্রিশঙ্কু হইলে কিংবা শাসক গোষ্ঠী পরিষদীয় গরিষ্ঠতা হারাইলেই কেবল রাষ্ট্রপতি সরকার বরখাস্ত করায় কিংবা বিকল্প সরকার গঠনে জনপ্রতিনিধিদের আমন্ত্রণ জানাইবার সময় আপন বিচার-বুদ্ধি প্রয়োগ করিতে পারেন, সক্রিয়তা দেখাইতে পারেন। এ ছাড়া আর কোনও ক্ষেত্রেই তাঁহাকে সংবিধান নিজস্ব অভিমত, বিবেচনাবোধ কিংবা অভিপ্রায় ব্যক্ত বা প্রয়োগ করার অধিকার দেয় নাই। সংবিধানের শাসন কার্যকর রাখিতে এই সংযম কঠোরভাবে পালন করা দরকার। কেননা এই সংযমের উপরই নির্ভর করে ভারতের গণতান্ত্রিক শাসনপ্রণালীর ভারসাম্য।

21/11/2015

Left denounces Centre's policies

Congress should remember that it cannot run government without Left support: Bardhan

Staff Reporter
11/10/88

NEW DELHI: The 38th session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, first to be held in Delhi after Independence, saw fire-works on Saturday as senior Left leaders A.B. Bardhan and Gurudas Dasgupta denounced the economic and foreign policies of the United Progressive Alliance Government and warned that it should adhere to the Common Minimum Programme.

While criticising disinvestment in profit-making public sector undertakings and tinkering with the sensitive insurance and banking sectors, the leaders said they were not opposed to foreign direct investment as long as it generated employment in new sectors.

Addressing a large gathering on the Ramliha grounds, where delegates from 10 countries were also felicitated, Communist Party of India general secretary Bardhan said while the Left parties knew that with just 61 seats in the Lok Sabha they could not implement a socialist agenda, they wanted the Congress to remember that it could not run the government without Left support.

Retaining character

The Left wanted the private, joint and government sectors to grow and supported FDI in new



GRAND WELCOME: CPI leader and AITUC general secretary Gurudas Dasgupta welcoming a delegate from Pakistan, Durrani, during a rally on the Ramliha Grounds to mark the 38th session of AITUC in New Delhi on Saturday. — PHOTO: V. SUBERSHAN

sectors where it generated employment, brought in new technology and led to creation of more permanent assets. "FDI is coming in China but the country has not deserted socialism or its freedom. We want India also to retain its character."

The Left did not want FDI in cable.

cent of its population still lived below the poverty line and most of the poor were the African Americans, who had been brought as slaves. The recent hurricane in New Orleans demonstrated how the U.S. continued to ignore them.

Pointing out that the per capita detention rate in the U.S. prisons was the highest, Mr. Bardhan said people were also being taken there from Iraq and Afghanistan as prisoners of war and ill-treated. While a "new Hitler regime" had been formed, the UPA regime was still following the National Democratic Alliance Government's policy of treating the U.S. as a "natural ally."

Warning that the U.S. was now eyeing Iran, which pursued a peaceful nuclear programme, Mr. Bardhan said it was sad that while Teheran always supported New Delhi's cause in the Organisation of Islamic Countries vis-à-vis Pakistan, India voted against it on the nuclear issue.

The CPI leader accused the King of Nepal of taking a bloody route to the throne and destroying the multiparty system.

"He throttled democracy, tried to malign the political parties and blamed Maoists. But now the King should be shown his place. This is the era of democracies and the days of monarchy are gone."

It was good that the political parties in Nepal were united in their fight for the restoration of democracy.

Respect for local laws

AITUC general secretary Gurudas Dasgupta said while the party was not opposed to foreign companies coming to India, it wanted them to respect local laws and the rights of workers.

He regretted that the UPA Government was following in the footsteps of the NDA regime, which was ousted for its anti-farmer and anti-labour policies. "This is a capitalist government running on World Trade Organisation and World Bank guidelines. They want to reduce the provident fund rate now and do not want to allow union activity in the information technology sector and application of Industrial Disputes Act in units employing less than 300 people."

Pointing out that the government had brought down corporate tax from 35 to 30 per cent and reduced income tax on those drawing over Rs. 10 lakhs, Mr. Dasgupta said there was an urgent need to increase taxes on the rich, landlords, high-rise building owners, private hospitals and schools and to curb tax evasion and defaults on loans to generate more revenue for fuelling India's growth.

'Keep agriculture out of WTO'

Organisation's terms are making farmers vulnerable to exploitation, says expert

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: Hundreds of farmers participating in a convention against "anti-farmer" policies of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at Madhorajpura village near here on Thursday demanded that agriculture be kept out of the WTO purview and steps be taken to protect food security and livelihood of the poor threatened by the policies of developed countries.

The day-long convention was

organised as part of the "make trade fair" (MTF) campaign in the run-up to the WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong next month. The farmers, farm labourers and small traders expressed their concern over the likelihood of reduction in agricultural subsidy through the Agreement on Agriculture to which India will be a signatory.

The convention was organised jointly by the Kisan Seva Samiti Mahasangh, Swadeshi Jagaran Manch and the Centre

for Community Economics and Development Consultants' Society (CECOEDECON). It urged the Central Government to take an independent stand while signing the terms of WTO agreement and protect the interests of small and marginal farmers.

The former Bharatiya Janata Party leader, K.N. Govindacharya, addressing the convention, said no cost-benefit analysis of India's involvement in the WTO during the last dec-

ade had been undertaken by the Government. He said no compromise on farmers' interests should be made in the Hong Kong meet.

Suman Sahai, expert associated with Gene Campaign, pointed out that the WTO terms were affecting the domestic policies and making farmers vulnerable to exploitation. She called for giving freedom to farmers to decide their crop pattern and utilise indigenous knowledge in farming.

TUs warn against 'anti-labour' Bill

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 24. — Six Central trade unions — AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, UTUC and UTUC-LS — today warned the UPA government against any attempt to approve the “anti-labour” small and medium enterprises development Bill 2005 ahead of the Winter session of Parliament next month.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, they said any move to bring the Bill on the sly would tantamount to violation of the Common Minimum Programme. The letter signed by CPI MP and AITUC leader Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, Mr Girish Awasthi (BMS), Mr WR Varadarajan (CITU), Mr RA Mital (HMS), Mr Abani Roy (MP and UTUC leader) and Mr RS Sharma (UTUC-LS) sought the Prime Minister’s intervention and “necessary measures” to evolve a consensus on the Bill before its approval by the Cabinet.

The leaders said the Bill, introduced in Lok Sabha in May, envisages major changes in crucial labour laws “to the disadvantage of labour” and without any consultation with Central trade unions. The Bill seeks to exempt small and medium enterprises from the obligation of labour laws on working conditions and security of workers and improvement in their working conditions. “The provisions, together with the altered definition of small and medium scale enterprises, are such that a large section of the workforce would be thrown to the mercy of the employers,” the letter argued.

Centre turns down plea by Nanavati

'Disclosure of correspondence
will injure public cause'

Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD: The Centre has turned down the G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah Commission's request to furnish a copy of the correspondence between the former President, K.R. Narayanan, and the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on the Gujarat riots.

Jugal Kishor, Under-Secretary in the Union Department of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, filed an affidavit before the Commission here on Friday stating the disclosure of the contents of the President's letter to Mr. Vajpayee could lead to "injury to public cause."

The Centre was of the "considered view and satisfied" that the disclosure of the letter would "certainly cause injury to the public interest and that the public interest will suffer thereby."

The affidavit said the Government was not claiming privilege on grounds of expediency or to avoid any embarrassment or inconvenient situation or because of any apprehension that the document, if produced, would defeat the case of the State.

The Government also decided not to permit anyone to produce the document or give evidence on the basis of the correspondence under Sections 123 and 124 of the Indian Evidence Act.

Reacting to the Centre's stand, Mukul Sinha, advocate for

the riot victims, said he would move the Commission before October 22 for a direction to the Prime Minister's Office to produce the President's letter.

"Oddest ever decision"

Describing it as the "oddest ever political decision," Dr. Sinha said the UPA Government was "exposed" by its stand. Apparently it was "directly protecting" Mr. Vajpayee and the BJP Government in the State. While the President's office did not reject the request and only sought time to consult the Centre, a "lower authority" took the stand not to disclose the letter.

The controversy over Mr. Narayanan's letter began after he disclosed in a media interview that he had asked Mr. Vajpayee to intervene and call out the Army in the affected areas to bring the situation under control.

While the President's Secretariat claimed special privilege under the Constitution over the contents of the correspondence, Dr. Sinha quoting a Supreme Court judgment told the Commission that the privilege enjoyed by the President was not absolute unless the matter related to national security or external affairs. The Commission directed the President's Secretariat to produce the letter, for which it earlier sought a fortnight's time to consult the Centre.

চাপ বাড়াতে শ্রমিক ধর্মঘটে সায় সিপিএমের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩১ জুলাই: কথ্য না-শুনলে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে যে আর স্বস্তিতে থাকতে দেওয়া হবে না, আজ তা বুঝিয়ে দিলেন বামপন্থীরা।

কাল জ্যোতি বসুর মন্তব্যে যদি মনমোহন সিংহেরা সেই স্বস্তি খুঁজে থাকেন, আজ তাকে সম্পূর্ণ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে সিপিএম পলিটব্যুরো। পলিটব্যুরোর বৈঠকের পরে সরকারের উপরে চাপের নতুন পথের কথা ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। এক বিবৃতিতে জানানো হয়েছে, ২৯ সেপ্টেম্বর শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নগুলির ডাকা সাধারণ ধর্মঘটকে পুরোদমে সমর্থন করছে সিপিএম। অর্থাৎ, সরকারের উপর চাপ বাড়ানোর কৌশল হিসাবে শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নের ডাকা সাধারণ ধর্মঘটকে কার্যত নিজেদের কর্মসূচিতে পরিণত করল তারা।

সিপিএম বাম শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নের ডাকা ধর্মঘটের পাশে থাকবে এটা প্রত্যাশিতই। কিন্তু গত কয়েক বছর দেখা গিয়েছে, শেষ মুহুর্তে কিছুটা দায়সারা ভাবে সেই সমর্থনের কথা জানানো হয়েছে। কিন্তু এ বারে চিত্রটা একেবারেই

আলাদা। প্রায় দু'মাস আগে জোর গলায় সমর্থন জানানোই শুধু নয়, ধর্মঘট সফল করতে সিপিএম নিজেদের সমস্ত ইউনিটকে কোমর বাঁধতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে।

এই ধর্মঘট হবে মূলত কয়েকটি অর্থনৈতিক বিষয়ের ভিত্তিতে। সেখানে অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রের কর্মচারীদের জন্য আইন থেকে শুরু করে প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডে সুদের হার, ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কার, পেনশন সংস্কার, কাজের অধিকার-সহ মোট ১৬ দফা

দাবি রয়েছে। দাবিগুলির অধিকাংশই পি চিদম্বরমের মন্ত্রক সংক্রান্ত। বাম শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নগুলি সরকারকে এই সংকেতই দিতে চাইছে যে, এ ভাবে উদার অর্থনীতির পথে হটতে থাকলে তারা চূড়ান্ত সংঘাতের পথে যাবে। সিপিএমও আজ স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছে, এই ক্ষেত্রে তারা শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গে একমত।



হাসিমুখ, কিন্তু সুর কড়া। দিল্লিতে কারাট। - পি টি আই

পলিটব্যুরোর বৈঠকের পরে দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট যে দু'টি ক্ষেত্রে নিজেদের আপত্তির কথা আরও এক বার জানিয়েছেন, তার মধ্যেও রয়েছে একটি অর্থনৈতিক বিষয়। তিনি স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন, নবরত্ন সংস্থার বিলগ্নিকরণ নিয়ে দল কটুর অবস্থান থেকে এক চুলও নড়বে না। কারাটের বক্তব্য, “ভেল নিয়ে দেশের বদলে পাঁচ শতাংশ বিলগ্নিকরণের যে আপস-সুত্রটির দেওয়া হয়েছে তা আমাদের পক্ষে মানা সম্ভব নয়। প্রক্টা কত শতাংশ বিলগ্নিকরণ করা হবে তা নিয়ে নয়। আমাদের নীতিগত অবস্থান হল, নবরত্ন রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত সংস্থার বিলগ্নিকরণ করা চলবে না।”

ইউপিএ-বাম সমন্বয় কমিটি বয়কট করার যে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে, তা বজায় রাখা হবে বলেও এ দিন জানানো হয়েছে। কারণ, প্রকাশের কথায়, “কিছুই তো বদলায়নি।”

চিদম্বরমের উপরে চাপ তৈরির পাশাপাশি প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের মার্কিন সফর নিয়েও সংসদে সরব হবে সিপিএম। কারাট আজ তা স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

শ্রমিক ধর্মঘটে সায় সিপিএমের

প্রথম পাতার পর

বলেছেন, “আমাদের কৌশলগত এবং নিরাপত্তা সংক্রান্ত প্রশ্নে ভারত-মার্কিন এই চুক্তি কেন ক্ষতিকর তা বলা হবে। পরমাণু ক্ষেত্রে পারস্পরিক বিনিময়ের কোনও কাঠামো তৈরি করা হলে, তার ফলে আমাদের দেশের পরমাণু দফতর যেন দুর্বল না-হয়ে যায়। সেটাই এখানে দেখা জরুরি।”

এই নিয়ে আর এক বাম দল ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকও উন্মাদ প্রকাশ করেছে। দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস আজ লখনউয়ে সংবাদ সংস্থাকে বলেছেন, “ক্ষমতায় থাকাকালীন এনডিএ আমেরিকার খুবই ঘনিষ্ঠ হয়ে

উঠেছিল। মার্কিন সাম্রাজ্যবাদী নীতিও সমর্থন করেছিল তারা। দুর্ভাগ্যজনক ভাবে ইউপিএ সরকারও একই পথ নিয়েছে।”

তবে এই প্রসঙ্গে সংসদে নিজেদের মত তুলে ধরলেও তা নিয়ে সংঘর্ষের রাস্তায় যাবে না সিপিএম। সংসদে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিবৃতি দেওয়ার পর প্রবীণ সিপিএম নেতা জ্যোতি বসু বলেছিলেন, ওই বিবৃতি ‘মোটের উপর ঠিক আছে।’ আজ কারাটকে এ বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি প্রসঙ্গটি এড়িয়ে গিয়ে উপস্থিত সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, “আপনারা আজ কাউকে কটুরপন্থী বানান, আবার কালকে নরমপন্থী!”

000... AMED... 224... PATEL...

Genesis of Honda dispute in question Gurgaon unrest a blip, not blemish, says industry

Krishna Kant & Vinod Mahanta
NEW DELHI 26 JULY

IN the melee and storm, few are sure about how the trouble started. There are contradictory versions about the genesis of the labour trouble at Honda Motorcycle and Scooters India (HMSI) plant in Manesar. While the company said it's a pure case of labour indiscipline, industry sources have a different story to tell.

One version said the dispute started over wage disagreement between the workers and the management, with the workers demanding equalisation of wages with their counterparts in neighbouring Hero Honda. HMSI said the company gave a 30% across-the-board hike and promised to a further raise in future. Workers, however, found it insufficient and went on a strike starting first week of June.

Another version said trouble began in December 2004 when

there was an altercation in the plant between a manager and an assembly line worker in the plant, something which was denied by the company. This enraged workers and prompted them to establish a union at the plant. This alarmed the management and the company allegedly dismissed four of the potential union leaders. This created a stand-off between the two parties. As the unrest spread among workers, the company further suspended 50 workers.

According to HMSI, trouble started when the workers refused to resume duties unless the company agreed to reinstate their suspension and dismissed colleagues. "We instituted a third-party enquiry and said the reinstatement will be considered only after the findings of the enquiry are out," said Vivek Vishwanath, head of HR at HMSI. This led to a deadlock.

The company had resumed partial production with the help of casual workers and supervisory

staff. For fear of reprisals from striking workers, casual workers and supervisory staff were living and working inside factory premises. "Only trucks are coming and moving out of the factory," said a source close to the development.

Unconfirmed reports said more than 90 employees had been retrenched a month and a half back following non-payment of dues by the company and the lock-up of the factory. A subsequent hunger strike led to the death of one worker.

Our Delhi Bureau
26 JULY

LABOUR unrest at Honda might have its shock value but don't expect many multinationals to rewrite their investment plans. In sharp contrast to Japanese companies, most of the Americans and Europeans seem to be firm on their investment plans, unfazed by the violence in Gurgaon. Japanese might be talking big-time about the impact on FDI inflows into India, but the rest of the world doesn't seem to agree.

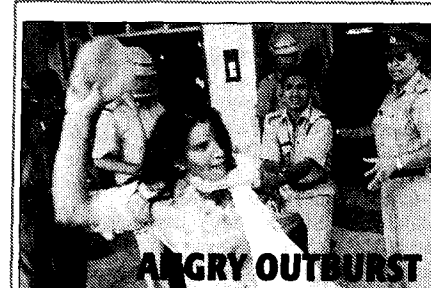
Americans, Europeans and even Koreans ET talked to were unanimous in confirming that their investment plans would not be impacted at all by the Gurgaon incident. Repurcussions, if any, could be around image issues and that too mainly for Gurgaon, without any spill-over effect on the rest of the country. "It is an isolated incident. We don't see any changes in our investment plans planned earlier," said Nokia India head Sanjeev Sharma.

Nokia has recently announced mega plans to manufacture mobile phone handsets and infrastructure equipment, which is expected to roll out by the first half of the next year. "Though it is an unfortunate incident, it is not indicative of the situation across India," he added.

"This is a one-off thing, a temporary aberration," said P Balendran, VP, GM India. "Investment decisions are based on market potential so an isolated incident will not hit sentiment. Though flexible labour laws are important and investors do look at that as well," he pointed out.

The American Chamber of Commerce in India is even more vehement in denying any negative impact on India's image. "I don't think its going to affect the country's image. Speaking about workers laws I'd say that India needs to get calibrated liberalisation even in the field of labour laws," opined Armit Kiran Singh, chairman, American Chamber.

"Its unfortunate is what I'd say. I think its an isolated issue. But I don't think it will have an impact on India's image," said Shyam Uttamsingh, Honeywell International. According to a senior executive at LG Electronics India: "In our case we have empowered local management to handle labour issues and have not faced such a problem in India. It doesn't affect our perception of India as an investment destination." A minority, however, expected the issue to have local ramifications. "It's not good for the investment and industrial climate of Gurgaon.



Mixed reactions from chambers

THE violent clash between the police and the workers in Gurgaon has drawn mixed reactions from the chambers. While CII expressed anguish, Assocham asserted the 'unfortunate incident would not adversely affect FDI inflows'. PHDCCI expressed concern over the damage done to the image of the country which might discourage the potential investors.

CII expressed deep concern and felt the incident it came at a time when the industry was becoming globally competitive and strained industrial relations would slow down the process of growth and development. Also, since Gurgaon is the preferred base for industry in general and overseas, the State should quickly find a solution to the problem, it asserted.

Assocham president Mahindra K Sanghi described the incident as 'unfortunate' yet asserted the incident would not adversely affect the inflow of FDI in the country. At the same time, he urged the district administration to work towards maintaining the law and order. Assocham also called for flexibility in the labour laws as India is now a liberalised and open economy.

Such incidents 'gravely undermine the business environment and confidence of potential investors in the country,' felt PHDCCI president, K N Memani. He expressed concern over the damage done to the image of the country which might discourage the potential investors.

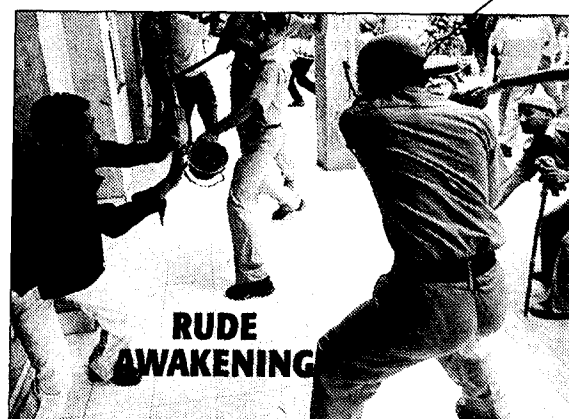
Japan electronics sector escapes backlash in India

Vivek Sinha & Sudipto Dey
NEW DELHI 26 JULY

WHILE Japanese auto companies have had some issues in industrial relations in India, their counterparts in the electronics sector have had a relatively smooth sailing. This despite having laid off workers. They include brands like Sony, Daikin, Hitachi and Matsushita, which have over the last two-three years curtailed or shut local production in the country.

Most Japanese electronics giants have been either trimming or halting manufacturing operations in India in lieu of import or local sourcing. First, it was airconditioner-maker Daikin which stopped manufacturing. This was followed by Hitachi, which consolidated its manufacturing operations by shutting down one of its plants out of two and shifted part-production to an OEM supplier.

Over a period, Matsushita



Electric — owner of Panasonic brand — has gradually cut down production in India. The most recent being its decision to discontinue production of audio products. Sony Electronics India in August last year shut down its colour television manufacturing factory at Dharuhera in Haryana, which had on roll more than 300 employees. Retirement benefits and three-

months salary were part of the lay-off package.

However, none of these created labour unrest or hogged media attention as in the case of Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India (HMSI). The Honda factory at Gurgaon, before labour-management dispute arose, has been running at full capacity, and there has been no question of curtailing output.



Labour discord likely to dent India's FDI image

Shubhreet Oberoi & Diya Seth
NEW DELHI 26 JULY

THE labour dispute at Honda Motorcycles & Scooters, India has snowballed into not just a law and order problem in Gurgaon but also into a major political controversy nationally. ET caught up with Y Enoki, the ambassador of Japan at a business meeting in the capital on Tuesday for his views on the issue. Excerpts:

How do you react to the incident at the Honda factory on Monday?

I can't make general comments about Monday's incident without full background information about the company's internal affairs. My initial reaction is that a peaceful, satisfactory solution should be arrived at between the labour unions and the Honda management.

Do you think this incident will affect Japanese investments in India?

Well, it is disadvantageous for India's image as an FDI destination. However, this needs to be treated as an isolated incident. Labour problems occur everywhere, including the US and Europe, so it is not fair to generalise the impact on FDI as a whole.

Does the embassy intend to take up the matter with the Indian government?

This isn't a matter requiring intervention through diplomatic channels. Local remedial action is the first step that needs to be taken in consultation with the management and the workers. The embassy has no role to play in this.

Do you think the issue has been unnecessarily politicised?

In my opinion too much politicising should be avoided at all costs, as no satisfactory solution can come from it.

Where do you see India and Japan's relations heading in the future?

India and Japan are comple-



Japan for talks to settle dispute

Our Delhi Bureau
26 JULY

JAPAN favours peaceful resolution of the labour unrest at the Honda Motorcycles and Scooters unit in Haryana which led to a major clash between police and the workers, leaving scores of people injured. The issue should be settled through dialogue, a senior official at the Japanese embassy told ET. We have all sympathy for the workers, he said while explaining that the Japanese embassy was still analysing the various factors related to the issue.

"We have no other concrete comment at this stage," he added. Views of Japanese embassy are in line with the call from HMSI.

mentary to each other, as both countries have a lot in common. Both Japanese and Indian companies stress highly on creativity, quality management ("kaizen"). Both cultures are different but can learn a great deal from each other. Japanese manufacturing culture focuses on finger and the eyes.

বিলাম্বিকরণে দেরি

পার্শ্বসারথি সেনগুপ্ত •
নয়াদিল্লি

১৪ জুলাই: বিলাম্বিকরণ প্রসঙ্গে এ
বার উক্টো চাপ!

ভেল-সহ রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার
বিলাম্বিকরণে ইউপিএ সরকার কেন
টিলেমি করছে, এই প্রশ্ন তুলেছে বিভিন্ন
বণিক সংগঠন। তাদের মতে, বাম
দলগুলির অনড় মনোভাব বদলানো
জরুরি। কিন্তু সরকারেরও উচিত দৃঢ়
ভাবে বিলাম্বিকরণের পথে এগনো।
শরিকি রাজনীতির নামা বাধা-বিপত্তি
পেরিয়েই সরকারকে এগোতে হবে।
বামদের পুরোপুরি 'খোপিয়ে' তোলা
উচিত নয়। তবে বামদের তুষ্টি রাখার
ভাগিদে বিলাম্বিকরণের পথ থেকে সরে
আসা সরকারের পক্ষে অনুচিত হবে
বলে সতর্ক করেছে বণিক সংগঠনগুলি।
সি আই আই-এর ডিরেক্টর

জেনারেল এন শ্রীনিবাসন মনে করেন,
ভেলের বিলাম্বিকরণের ক্ষেত্রে সরকার
যা সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, তা অবশ্যই
রূপায়িত হওয়া উচিত। তাঁর কথায়,
“বিলাম্বিকরণের ফলে সংস্থার
বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা বাড়বে। যেখানে
বিলাম্বিকরণের ফলে সম্পদ আহরিত
হতে পারে, সে সব ক্ষেত্রে অবশ্যই
এগনো উচিত সরকারের। এটা
অর্থনীতির স্বার্থেই জরুরি।”

সি আই আই-কর্তা শরিকি
রাজনীতির বাস্তব দিকগুলি অস্বীকার
করেননি। মানছেন, সরকারের মধ্যে
এক শরিকের সঙ্গে অন্য শরিক বা
সমর্থকের মতপার্থক্য দেখা দিতেই
পারে। শ্রীনিবাসনের দাওয়াই হল,
ইউপিএ সরকার বামদের সঙ্গে
আলাপ-আলোচনা চালান, মতৈক্য
উপনীত হওয়ার চেষ্টা করুক। কিন্তু
সরকারকে লক্ষ্যে অবিচল থাকতে

কেন পাল্টা চাপ বিলাম্বিকরণের

হবে। অর্থাৎ, বিলাম্বিকরণ বেল কেলও
কারণেই থেমে না যাক।

অ্যান্ডোচেমের সেক্রেটারি
জেনারেল ডি এস রাওয়ালেরও মত,
ইউপিএ-নেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধী বামদের
বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করুন যে, তারা বেল
যুক্তি মেনে চলে। বামদের বোঝানো
হোক, ভেলের মতো লাভজনক সংস্থার
১০ শতাংশ শেয়ার বেচলেও নিয়ন্ত্রণ
সরকারের হাতের বাইরে চলে যাবে
না। ফলে, বামদের অনড় মনোভাব
ছাড়ার সময় এসেছে।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গে বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের
সরকার যে ভাবে ক্ষতিতে চলা রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব
সংস্থা একের পর এক বিক্রি করছে, তা
ইউপিএ সরকারের মতে হতে পারে
বলেও বণিকসভার কর্তাদের কারও
কারও ধারণা। বেল, ফিকি-র
সেক্রেটারি জেনারেল অমিত মিত্রের
সাক্ষ কথায়, “ভেলের উদাহরণ দিয়ে না-

লাভজনক সংস্থার আংশিক
বিলাম্বিকরণের ক্ষেত্রে বাধা পাচ্ছে
ইউপিএ সরকার। কিন্তু জাতীয় মূলতম
অভিন্ন কর্মসূচি মেনে জলাভজনক
রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাগুলি বিক্রি করতে
অসুবিধা কোথায় সরকারের? এটা ঠিক
যে, জলাভজনক সংস্থার জন্য ক্রেতা
পাওয়া সহজ নয়। আবার এই সব
সংস্থার জমি বা পড়ে থাকা যন্ত্রপাতি
বেচেও সরকারের ভাল টাকা মিলবে।”

এই প্রসঙ্গে একাধিক উদাহরণও
দিয়েছেন অমিতবাবু। যেমন, দিল্লির
উপকণ্ঠে গাজিয়াবাদে ‘সরকারি’
সাইকেল কারখানার বিস্তার জমি
এমনই পড়ে রয়েছে। রাজধানী তথা
বৃহত্তর দিল্লি জুড়ে আবাসন নির্মাণের
রমরমার বাজারে এই জমির দাম বহু
কোটি টাকা। এই জমি বেচে সংগৃহীত
অর্থ এই ধরনের সংস্থার পুনরুজ্জীবনের

কাজেই লাগতে পারে। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের
ঐতিহাসিকী অঞ্চল রুগণ একটি সংস্থার
দৃষ্টান্তও দিয়েছেন অমিতবাবু।
দেওয়ালে পিঠ ঠেকে যাওয়া ‘সুলেখা’
যুরে দাঁড়াতে পারছে জমি বেচেই।
ফিকির সেক্রেটারি জেনারেল মনে
করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার
কমবেশি ১৭টি রুগণ সংস্থা বিক্রি
করছে। ফিকির মতে, বামদের বোঝা
উচিত যে, বিলাম্বিকরণের মাধ্যমে
সংগৃহীত অর্থ শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবা,
সেচ-সহ সামাজিক উন্নয়নের নানা
খাতেই কাজে লাগবে। কর্মসংস্থানেরও
সুযোগ হবে। এ দিকে, কেন্দ্রীয় ভারী
শিল্প মন্ত্রক ব্রিজ অ্যান্ড রুফ, ক্যালকটা
টায়ারস ও অ্যান্ড ইউজ ইউজ
পুনরুজ্জীবনে উদ্যোগী হয়েছে। অ্যান্ড
ইউজের ইলেকট্রিক্যাল-সহ দুটি
জলাভজনক ইউনিট বেচে টাকা সংস্থার
চা-প্রস্তুতকারী ইউনিটে টালা হবে।

Trade unions plan strike

Protest against economic policies

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A national convention of trade unions on Saturday decided to hold a nationwide general strike on September 29 to protest against the Government's economic policies. Over 700 unions representing various sections of economy attended the convention.

The unions said the policies were proving to be a disaster for the working class and the common man. Stating that the "working people and the toiling masses of the country cannot countenance this all-round drift towards disaster," a declaration adopted at the meeting said the Government should "immediately effect a directional change in its economic policies."

The declaration said that despite its professed commitment to a strong and effective public sector, the Government had started the process of privatisation of profit-making public sector undertakings through disinvestment.

It said that the Finance Minister's justification for such a move as being necessary for mobilising resources for social sector expenditure and for rehabilitation of sick PSUs was "reprehensible."

"It indicates a mindset to abdicate the Government responsibility for raising resources, through budgetary and taxation measures, to finance schemes

aimed at welfare of the people."

Listing the various "failures" of the Government, it noted that in the name of dismantling the Inspector Raj, the Government had virtually abandoned its responsibility to enforce various labour legislations and had allowed employers to trample upon every rule and law.

"Proliferation of contracting, sub-contracting and outsourcing has reached such dimensions that the threat of totally obliterating permanency and security of jobs looms large before the working people."

The Government, it pointed out, was "stubbornly refusing" to constitute the Sixth Pay commission long after expiry of the period of operation for the Fifth Pay Commission and to amend the Bonus Act, though the present provisions of the legislation with income ceilings for eligibility and calculation of bonus have led to an overwhelming majority of workers to be outside its purview.

The meeting was attended, among others, by CITU general secretary Chittabrata Majumdar, AITUC general secretary Gurudas Dasgupta, and Umraomal Purohit of HMS.

The strike will be preceded by demonstrations in all workplaces and industrial centres between August 27 and September 7 and observance of a National Mobilisation Day on September 15.

THE HINDU

India set to outsource knowledge, says CII

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 8. – India is all set to move from being the most preferred business process outsourcing (BPO) destination to a knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) destination, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has said.

KPO would grow at 46 per cent to reach a staggering US \$17 billion by 2010, a CII paper showed. Besides, the study pointed out, the growth of services sector would be 8 per cent plus and its contribution to India's GDP would be over 51 per cent, affirming that India's transition from being a BPO destination to a KPO destination is imminent.

According to the CII paper "India In The New Knowledge Economy", areas with significant potential for KPO include pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and ICT, besides legal support, intellectual property research and design and development for automotive and aerospace industries. India stands to gain from its inherent strengths in the healthcare sector, pharmaceutical and biotech sector and ICT sector, the paper adds.

According to the paper, India could emerge as a global KPO hub as the business requires specialised knowledge in respective verticals and the country's large number of engineering and technical institutes are geared to address the manpower demand.

The paper states that by 2012, the healthcare sector could account for 7 per cent to 8 per cent of GDP and provide direct and indirect employment to around 9 million people. India spends US \$22.7 billion on healthcare and the sector is the largest service industry in terms of revenue and the second largest after education in terms of employment.

Asserting that India could be an emerging healthcare hub, the CII paper states: "India has the opportunity to provide the best of the western and eastern healthcare systems." With Indian systems of medicine "staging a comeback", doctors in the West are increasingly prescribing Indian systems of medicine. The paper has observed that more than 70 per cent of the American population prefer a natural approach to health, and spend around US \$25 billion on non-traditional medical therapies and products, thus making India one of their most preferred destinations because of ayurveda, yoga and siddha.

Moreover, India has a proven modern healthcare system with over 60,000 cardiac surgeries done per year that matches international standards. Multi-organ transplants like renal, liver, heart, bone marrow transplants are successfully performed at one-tenth the cost, and patients from over 55 countries come to India for treatment. With India possessing cost advantage over many countries, the growth potential of the sector is immense, and also offers huge potential for investments in the sector over the next 10 years. The sector would require around US \$22-31 billion in the next 10 years.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry too has practically achieved self-sufficiency and global recognition as a low cost producer of high-quality bulk drugs and formulations. The paper states that with Indian companies now offering custom synthesis services at 30 per cent to 50 per cent cost savings compared to global costs, and with clinical trials costing about \$25 million as compared to \$300 to \$350 million, India could become the most preferred destination for outsourcing. The Indian biotechnology sector too is now on an upswing, and is expected to earn US \$5 billion annual revenue by 2010. Listing the sector's advantage the paper observes that India offers excellent network of research laboratories, well-developed base industries, rich bio-diversity, extensive clinical trial opportunities and trained manpower and knowledge base, which makes it an automatic base for KPO.

09 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

CII for greater ^{9-primin} India-Japan trade ^{Group}

Indian exports is heavily 'skewed' ⁴⁰⁻¹³

Special Correspondent ^{25/1}

NEW DELHI: Ahead of the high-profile visit of the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, to India on April 28, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has called for greater bilateral cooperation in the private sector and in various economic fields between the two Asian giants.

According to a CII paper titled 'India-Japan: The Road Ahead', although 45 per cent of Japan's international trade is with Asia, India's share is a meagre one per cent while China retains the largest share at 34 per cent of the Asian market.

The paper has observed that as a destination of exports also, Japan's share has been steadily declining. "It was the second largest destination of India's exports in the early Nineties, next only to the United States. It has almost halved to 2.68 per cent of India's total exports in 2003-04 from six per cent in 1996-97."

The share of India-Japan trade in India's total trade has also come down from 5.7 per cent in 1996-97 to 3.08 per cent in 2003-04.

The paper has, however, pointed out that assuming India's total trade maintains a cumulative aggregate growth rate (CAGR) of 14.29 per cent, India-Japan trade will have to grow at a CAGR of 27.3 per cent to achieve a six per cent share in India's total trade by 2010.

Besides, the CII paper has also observed that India's export basket for Japan is heavily "skewed." The top four categories constituted more than 50 per cent of the exports in 2003-04 and the next six categories

accounted for 21 per cent of the total exports to Japan. India's top 10 export commodities to Japan are natural cultured pearls, gems and jewellery, fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates, ores, slag and ash, mineral fuels, minerals oils, organic chemicals, cotton, clothing accessories, nuclear reactors, opticals and photographic accessories.

Slowdown impact

The paper attributes the slide in bilateral trade from 1997 onwards to the slowdown of the global economy and in part due to the slowdown of the Japanese economy.

"Things should certainly improve, now that Japan's economy shows clear signs of recovery."

For a significant step-up in trade, the paper has recommended for exports to Japan such commodities as edible fruits and nuts, cereals, oilseeds, mineral fuels, mineral oils, organic chemicals, pharmaceutical products, plastics and articles thereof, articles of leather, saddlery and harness, footwear, gaiters and iron and steel.

On Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) to India, the paper has said that the sectors attracting maximum Japanese investment are transportation, telecommunications, fuel, chemicals, trading and electrical equipment.

The sectors identified for future collaboration include information technology (IT), biotechnology, human resource development, agriculture, financial sector, tourism and environment.

25 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Chambers hail trade policy

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. The Foreign Trade Policy announced by the government today has been welcomed by the apex chambers for attempting to tackle the ground level problems of the exporters.

Hailing it as "a stupendous effort" at addressing the concerns of exporters, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry President, Onkar S. Kanwar, said the document addressed some of the holistic issues and fine-tuned the nuts and bolts of the trade policy. Like other chambers, he congratulated the Commerce Minister, Kamal Nath, on extending the Duty Entitlement Pass-book (DEPB) scheme until a new scheme is put in place. Similarly, the minister's announcement that the Prime Minister had directed that all proceedings for recovery of tax on benefits derived under the DEPB scheme would be held in abeyance till a new scheme enforced was commended.

The proposal to set up an Inter State trade Council pragmat-

ic, the chambers said, while suggesting that the Council should act like an empowered committee whose recommendations should be mandatory.

O. P. Garg, President, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said creation of the council would help active involvement of States in developing export-related infrastructure and removing taxes and local levies imposed on inputs for export production.

Welcoming other provisions of the policy, Mr. Garg said the package announced for marine products would help this sector which had been hit by imposition of anti-dumping duty in the U.S. and Tsunami. The relaxation of export obligation under EPCG for minor ports including ICD and CFS would help to modernise port operations and addressing the issue of congestion at major gateway ports.

However, the delay in announcing the reimbursement of cost disability factors, which had been admitted in the Report submitted by the Committee on Procedure Simplification and Reduction of Transaction

Cost, has dampened the enthusiasm of the exporting community, Mr. Garg said, adding that the lack of any package for textiles, pharmaceutical and auto-component sectors, which have the potential to achieve export to the tune of \$70 billion by 2015, was a cause of concern.

Y. C. Deveshwar, President (designate), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has said the main thrust of the trade policy was on bringing in a much larger cross section of the Indian population into the export arena. It would generate all round growth in the economy.

The renewed emphasis on facilitating low cost import of capital goods for agriculture, retail, SMEs, marine products, poultry, dairy, and handlooms, would enhance export competitiveness in these employment intensive sectors.

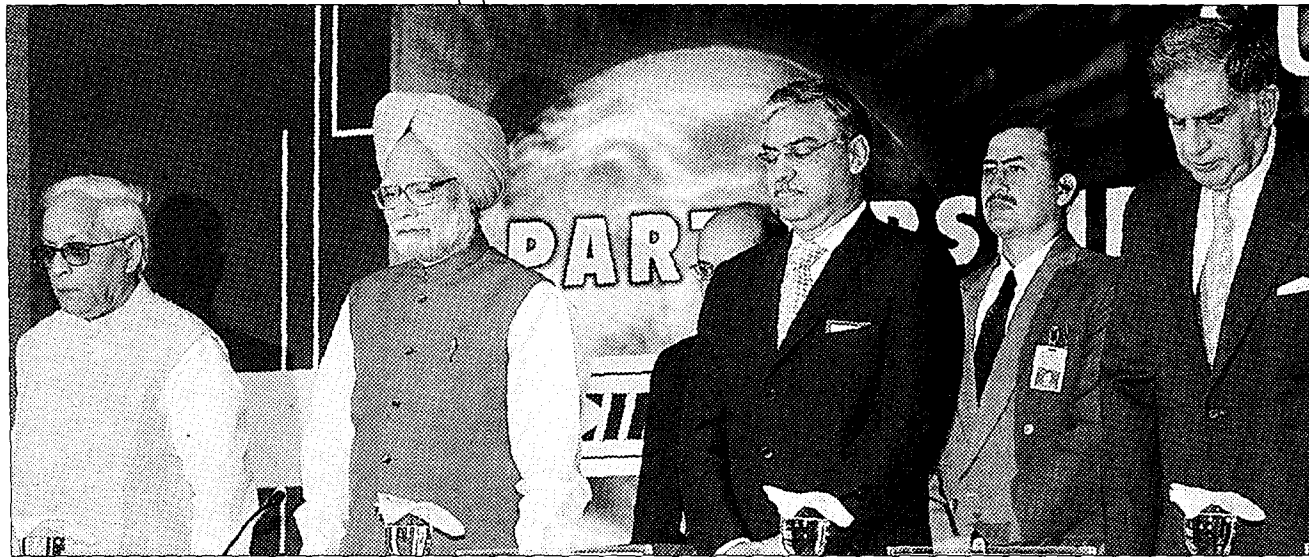
The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India president, Mahendra K. Sanghi, complimented the Commerce and Industry Minister for presenting an employment friendly, WTO compatible foreign trade policy.

09 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Government scraps Press Note 18

18/11 11/11 2. P. M. Singh



ASHOK NATH DEY/HT

Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, CII president Sunil Munjal and Tata Group head Ratan Tata at the inauguration of the Partnership Summit in Kolkata on Wednesday.

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, January 12

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh on Wednesday announced the scrapping of Press Note 18, sending a clear message to the global business community that the reforms are on course, unhindered by the pressures of running a coalition government with Left support. More importantly, it reiterated that India Inc was in combat mode, ready to joust with MNCs on its own terms.

Under Press Note 18, it was mandatory on foreign investors to seek permission of their Indian joint venture partner before setting up an enterprise manufacturing the same or competitive products. Moreover, there was to be a five-year sunset period before the foreign partner could launch competitive

products. These provisions were aimed at protecting the domestic industry from unfair competition and prepare itself to adjust to global environment.

Inaugurating the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Partnership in Kolkata, the Prime Minister acknowledged that Press Note 18 was a source of discomfort. "I am happy to inform you that we will be doing away with the restrictive provisions of Press Note 18 for all future joint ventures with foreign partners," he stated.

Singh said Press Note 18 was a regulatory provision that had outlived its purpose. "As I listened to the tales of success of Indian firms in the global marketplace and the words of optimism at a recent meet of Manufacturing Competitiveness Council, I was convinced that measures like

Press Note 18 are an anachronism today, having outlived their purpose," he said.

To allay the fears of the domestic industry, Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath clarified that the changes in Press Note 18 would not apply to existing joint ventures. "Future joint ventures were advised to include a conflict of interest clause in their agreement in order to protect interests of the parties concerned.

It will now apply only for the same field and not similar or allied fields. Also the onus of proof that the new joint venture would adversely affect would lay equally with the foreign and domestic partners.

Till now the onus of proof was only with the foreign partner, Nath said. Later in the day, the government issued an official notification

giving effect to the Prime Minister's announcement.

Prior to the scrapping, Press Note 18 did not apply to sick or defunct joint ventures, joint ventures where either of the partners has less than three per cent stake and to venture capital funds registered with SEBI. Even for existing joint ventures where Press Note 18 still applies, it would be in modified form, he said.

Explaining the reasons for withdrawing Press Note 18 on future joint ventures, Nath said, "A perception has grown that Press Note 18 is standing in the way of foreign direct investment. I do not entirely agree with this view. However, since the government wishes to make crystal clear its intention of facilitating FDI it has been decided to substantially modify the applicability of Press Note 18."

Tata pledges Rs 700 cr investment in Bengal

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, January 12

THE TATA IRON and Steel Company (Tisco) is setting up a merchant coke oven plant at Haldia at an investment of Rs 700 crore. Hooghly Met Coke and Power Company Ltd, the proposed joint venture will produce 8 lakh tonnes of coke and 60 megawatt of power, Tisco managing director B. Muthuraman said.

An agreement was signed between Muthuraman West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation managing director Gopal Krishna in the presence of chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee and Tata Group head Ratan Tata at the Partnership Summit.

The first phase of the project, to be commissioned within 24 months, would cost Rs 700 crore, Muthuraman said. The JV company will be formed shortly and the plant, once set up, will produce merchant coke adapting hit recovery (HR) route.

The company will also generate 60 mw of electricity by using the heat of hot flue gas from the coke oven and the power generated by the company will be sold to the West Bengal State Electricity Board.

The plant will supply high quality metallurgical coke to outside clients apart from catering to Tisco's own requirements.

Buddha's Rs 200-cr proposal

WEST BENGAL government has put forward proposals worth Rs 200 crore to commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath.

The projects relate to the Calcutta Leather Complex, setting up a centre for facilitating export of vegetables and flowers, creating industrial clusters and forming a regulatory market for the north eastern region, commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath said at an award presentation function organised by Engineering Export Promotion Council.

"Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has put forward proposals worth Rs 200 crore which will be considered by the commerce ministry," Nath told reporters on the sidelines of the function.

HTC, Kolkata

India-Britain trade below potential: Hewitt

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Jan. 12. — Ms Patricia Hewitt, UK secretary of state for trade & industry, said here today that "trade between India and UK is good but not good enough".

Speaking at a session on Indo-British relations, at the 11th CII Partnership Summit, Ms Hewitt said: "In the last decade the relationship between India and the UK has grown rapidly. Both countries are hungry for more. The purpose of the Joint Economic & Trade Committee (JETCO) declaration proposed to be signed tomorrow is to improve our bilateral trade and investment relationships."

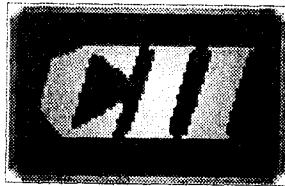
Ms Hewitt said that India is increasingly becoming attractive to UK companies as a high-value added partner in industry, and she hoped to see many more joint ventures in the future.

Inviting India to partner with the UK in the area of science and technology, the minister said that, "today economies are knowledge driven and we need to invest in skills and innovate. We need to ensure that we continue to hike investment in education. Britain is just one one per cent of the population of the world but produces 12 per cent of globally cited scientists."

Mr Kamal Nath, minister for commerce and industry, said: "A trade volume of

£3.5 billion is not exactly what can be called the unleashing of true trading potential of India and UK. He stressed the need for a paradigm shift to increase this level of trade and investments between the two countries in not just manufacturing but in many other ways."

Earlier, Ms Hewitt said at the Writers' Buildings: "It is a paradox that the Communist government is gradually learning to be business friendly. They are looking after the poorest of the poor and at the same time they have developed business inclination."



PARTNERSHIP
SUMMIT 2005

Ms Hewitt also admired Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and said that he is a practical visionary and is working hard for transforming the fortunes of the people of West Bengal.

Sir Digby Jones, director general, Confederation of British Industry, UK, said that, "there are many areas where India and the UK can work together. One such area is agriculture, where India can bring in its production strengths and the UK its strengths in technology."

কলকাতায় আবার পার্টনারশিপ সামিট, আসছেন ব্রিটিশ শিল্পমন্ত্রী

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: ১৯৯৭ সালে পার্টনারশিপ সামিটে কলকাতায় এসেছিলেন তৎকালীন ব্রিটিশ প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন মেজর। সৌরভের শতরান ছাড়া তাঁর ভাল লাগার তালিকায় তৎকালীন ভারতের খুব বেশি কিছু ছিল না। এবং সমালোচনার তালিকায় শীর্ষে ছিল অবশ্যই ভারতের সংস্কারের শৈশবের লাল ফিতের ফাঁস। আর ওই বৈঠকেই জ্যোতিবাবুরা বিনিয়োগ ভিক্ষার বুলি খুলে ধরেছিলেন।

আট বছর বাদে কলকাতায় বণিকসভা সি আই আই আবার বসিয়েছে পার্টনারশিপ সামিট। এ বার আসছেন ব্রিটেনের শিল্পমন্ত্রী-সহ ২৬টি দেশের প্রতিনিধিরা। আর অনুষ্ঠানের শুরু দিনে মৌ নয়, সহি হচ্ছে টাটাদের ৭০০ কোটি টাকার প্রকল্পের চুক্তি।

প্রকল্পের ঠিকানা রাজ্যের নতুন শিল্পনগরী হলদিয়া। রাশ থাকবে টাটাদের হাতেই। সহিয়ের মধ্যে থাকবেন রতন টাটা। তার আগেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের ভাষণে বামপন্থীদের সহযোগিতার উল্লেখ প্রেক্ষিত তৈরি করেই রাখবে ধরে নেওয়া যায়। স্বাভাবিক কারণেই এতগুলি প্রতীকের সন্ধ্যাবহার করতে চেয়েছেন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য।

গত ১১ বছর ধরে সি আই আই 'পার্টনারশিপ সামিট' শীর্ষক যে সম্মেলন করে আসছে, তার প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য সংশ্লিষ্ট রাজ্যকে শিল্পমহলে তুলে ধরা। শুধু দেশের নয়, বিদেশের শিল্প প্রতিনিধিরাও হাজির থাকেন বার্ষিক এই সম্মেলন মালায়। এ বছরের সম্মেলনে যেমন হাজির থাকবেন ইংল্যান্ডের শিল্পমন্ত্রী প্যাট্রিসিয়া হিউইট, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের বাণিজ্য

কমিশনের নিটার ম্যাডেলসন, কনফেডারেশন অব ব্রিটিশ ইন্ডাস্ট্রি-র ডিগবি জেনস। এ ছাড়াও উপস্থিত থাকবেন মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, চীন, ফ্রান্স, ইজরায়েল-সহ ২৬টি দেশের প্রতিনিধিরা।

ঠিক যেমন আট বছর আগে নেতাজি ইন্ডোর স্টেডিয়ামে হাজির ছিলেন ইংল্যান্ডের তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন মেজর। মঞ্চে ছিলেন প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী এইচ ডি দেবগৌড়া এবং রাজ্যের তৎকালীন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী জ্যোতি বসু। জ্যোতিবাবু শিল্পমহলে আবেদন রেখেছিলেন, সরকারের রং দেখে বিনিয়োগকারীরা যেন পিছিয়ে না যান। গত চার বছর ধরে বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যও অহর্নিশি সে কথা প্রচার করে চলেছেন। আট বছরে নিশ্চিত ভাবেই যে রাজ্যের ভাবমূর্তিতে পালিশ লেগেছে, মঙ্গলবার তা এককথায় মেনে নিলেন টিস্কোর ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর বি মুথুরামন।

রাজ্যের শিল্পসচিব সব্যসচী সেন বললেন, ১৯৯৪ সালে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের নতুন শিল্পনীতি প্রণয়নের পরে ঠিক তিন বছরে মাথায় অনুষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল ১৯৯৭ সালের সম্মেলন। ফলে স্বাভাবিক কারণেই প্রশাসনের মন ও শরীর যে একতারা বাঁধা ছিল না। কিন্তু গত কয়েক বছরের প্রচেষ্টা ও বিনিয়োগকারী-সামিথ্যের পরে চিত্র বদলিয়েছে বলে তাঁর দাবি। এই সম্মেলনের সুযোগ নিয়ে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, শিল্পমন্ত্রী ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রী-সহ অনেকেই বেশ কয়েকটি দেশের বিনিয়োগকারীদের সঙ্গে একান্ত আলোচনায় বসবেন।

তাই এ রাজ্য সম্বন্ধে লগ্নিকারীদের ধারণা যে বদলাচ্ছে তার সবচেয়ে বড় প্রমাণ অনুষ্ঠানের

গোড়াতেই পেশ করতে চান মুখ্যমন্ত্রী। প্রায় বছরখানেক ধরে হলদিয়ায় এই কোক ওভেন কারখানায় টাটাদের লগ্নির আকর্ষণের জন্য আলোচনা চালাচ্ছিলেন শিল্পোন্নয়ন নিগমের কর্তারা। টিস্কো সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, বন্ধ্যা হলদিয়া সার কারখানার জমিতে এই প্রকল্প গড়ার পরিকল্পনা হয়েছে। প্রকল্পের জন্য ৩০০ একর জমি চেয়েছিলেন টিস্কো কর্তৃপক্ষ। প্রকল্পটি গড়তে যে সংস্থা গঠন করা হয়েছে, তাতে নিগমের ৪ শতাংশ প্রতীকী অংশীদারিত্ব থাকবে।

তবু এ সম্মেলনে ভাবমূর্তি সম্বন্ধে প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে প্রথম পশ্চিমে সফরে গিয়ে মনমোহন সিংহ টের পেয়েছিলেন সেই সংশয়ের হিমশৈলের চূড়াটুকু। ভারতে আর্থিক সংস্কারের পথিকৃৎ মনমোহন কী করে বামপন্থীদের সাহায্যে সরকার চালিয়ে সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়া বজায় রাখবেন, সে প্রশ্নে জর্জরিত হয়েছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। এক অর্থে তা ছিল তাঁর নিজের ভাবমূর্তি টিকিয়ে রাখার প্রশ্নও।

কয়েক মাসের মধ্যেই অনুষ্ঠিত হচ্ছে তিনদিনের এই সম্মেলন। বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে মনমোহনের সম্পর্কের আলোছায়া নিয়ে যারা সন্দিদ্ধ, পশ্চিমী শিল্পপ্রতিনিধিরা বাম দুর্গে বসেই তা যাচাই করে নিতে পারেন। ফলে বুদ্ধবাবুর কাছে ভাবমূর্তির প্রশ্ন এ বার বহুমাত্রিক হয়ে দাঁড়াতে পারে। তিনি শিল্প-বন্ধু, বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের এ পরিচয়ে কেউ সংশয় প্রকাশ করবেন না। কিন্তু বামপন্থীরা মনমোহনের সত্যিকারের সহযোগীর ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারেন, তা প্রমাণের দায়িত্বও বর্ততে পারে তাঁর কাঁধে।

TUs, NGOs to oppose amended patent law

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 3

TRADE UNIONS and NGOs have formed a joint action committee to oppose the amended Indian patent law, which they said would deprive the common man of cheap medicines. Committee members CITU president M.K. Pandhe, former Planning Commission member S.P. Shukla, environmentalist Vandana Shiva and National Working Group on Patent Laws convener B.K. Keayla announced a campaign against the new law, starting with a demonstration in Delhi on Wednesday.

The committee questioned the government's arguments to amend the law and said the Ordinance would benefit only multinationals.

The government had tried to create an erroneous impression that the amendment was necessary because the textile quota regime was coming to an end.

Abani Roy, RSP leader, one of the Left parties supporting the government from outside, said the Left would oppose the Ordinance when it comes up for enactment in the shape of a Bill in the Budget session of Parliament. "We'll demand that the Bill be referred to a standing committee", he said.

The committee said the amended law would promote monopolies controlled by multinationals. The country would see a sharp rise in the prices of drugs granted patent after January 1 this year and were

UNITED IN OPPOSITION

- Trade unions and NGOs have teamed up to oppose the amended Indian patent law
- They fear it would deprive the common man of cheap drugs while benefiting multinational companies
- The RSP said the Left parties would oppose the Ordinance when it comes up for enactment in Parliament

being produced in the country.

The ability of the Indian industry to innovate new processes for patented drugs would be destroyed, thereby handing over the Indian drug industry to the MNCs. The government's claim that 97 per cent of the drugs were off-patent was not correct. This was borne out by the fact that over 300,000 patent applications were being filed every year in the US and China.

"This will completely distort the market and we would be flooded with patented products in the near future and they'll be governed by monopolistic prices", the committee said. Shiva said the Ordinance was a "legal tsunami" that would make costly farm seeds even costlier.

Shukla said experience of the past decade showed the earlier 1970 Act was better, since the country could produce anti-AIDS medicine at 1/30th the international cost.