



UNION POWER

NTUI

A monthly bulletin of the New Trade Union Initiative
SPECIAL ISSUE

October 2011

Contents

EDITORIAL

AFFILIATE REPORTS 2

Madras HC dismisses stay order on minimum wages for garment industry

Trade Unions Solidarity for Maruti Workers

Hunger Strike by contract Multipurpose Female Health workers in Ludhiana

Second Delegate Conference of NTUI Punjab

Meeting of Garment workers unions

Supreme Court rejects Siemens Union's appeal on Unfair Labour Practices

Printed and Published by Ashim Roy for the New Trade Union Initiative, B-137, Dayanand Colony, First Floor, Lajpat Nagar – IV, New Delhi – 110024
Phone: 011-26214538/ 26486931
Fax: 011-26486931
Email: secretariat@ntui.org.in

CAMPAIGN NEWS 4

CAMPAIGN FOR RIGHT TO FOOD

CAMPAIGN ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

CAMPAIGN ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

CAMPAIGN ON TRADE

NEWS UPDATES 7

LEGAL NOTES 10

INTERNATIONAL NEWS 11

GAFWU participates in UE Young Activists Convergence in Pittsburgh

Strike at Honeywell's US plant

Strike by Student Exchange workers at Hershey's

Accor continues violation of trade union rights at Canada hotels

Agricultural workers in UK oppose the Public Bodies Bill

Zenroren calls for shift away from Nukes

Myanmar allows trade unions for the first time since 1962

Thousands in Greece protest against Austerity Bill

FIOM-CGIL strike at FIAT

British TU take public sector pensions dispute to HC

Occupy Wall Street spreads across the world

Sri Lankan workers protest against COLA

PRESS STATEMENTS 16

NTUI demands Immediate Release of Com. Prafulla Chakraborty

EDITORIAL

The struggle of workers at Maruti Suzuki's Manesar plant has exposed the blatant complicity of the state in facilitating capital to extract huge profit margins by abuse of contract labour laws, relentlessly exploitative work conditions and above all by the suppression of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of association and democratic right to collective bargaining. The Government of Haryana has allowed the flagrant violation of democratic rights of the workers including the illegal lockout imposed by the Maruti Suzuki management at the Manesar plant while it has rejected the application for registration of the union on flimsy grounds.

With the signing of the tripartite settlement that included a 'good conduct bond' on 1 October 2011, the Maruti Suzuki management agreed to take back all workers except the 44 regular workers who were summarily dismissed. But two days later when workers came to the factory gate to rejoin work, the management refused to allow the contract workers into the factory, who supported the illegally locked out regular workers of the Maruti Suzuki Manesar Plant, to resume work, in complete violation of their own agreement. Also in a bid to speed up production, Maruti Suzuki has introduced a brutal work regime at its Manesar plant which includes a punitive system of fines for lateness and absences for the regular workers who joined work. The Maruti Suzuki management has also got away with the imposition of the 'no work no pay' norm along with an additional day's wage cut on the workers as a punitive fine for the actions. In a clear demonstration of its readiness to unleash violence on behalf of Maruti Suzuki, the Government of Haryana deployed 1,500 police on 14 October to break a week-long occupation by the regular workers of the Manesar plant. The class action against the workers struggle of the Maruti Suzuki management was clear from the fact that they were ready to let the company slip in the light of the united solidarity action of all Suzuki workers in Manesar. Even the local community support in the industrial belt of Gurgaon-Dharuhera – Manesar could not force the Government of Haryana to enforce the

principle of no victimisation against any worker and to reinstate all workers.

The unwillingness of the Government of Haryana to protect workers' rights is evident in the lack of recognition of the unfair labour practices committed by the Maruti Suzuki management. There is also no recognition that workers have collectively lost over Rs 10 crores in wages through the length of the illegal lockout imposed by the Maruti Suzuki management.

Unfortunately, the erstwhile leadership of the Maruti Suzuki Employees Union had no strategy for mobilising the working class as an independent political force to defeat the line-up of the state government, police and judiciary supporting Maruti Suzuki. The three rounds of industrial action and then the 'golden handshake' to the leadership to break the spine of the struggle has reinforced the unequal balance of force. That the remaining workers remain united in their demand for an independent union and reinstatement and regularisation of contract workers is reflective of the depth of militancy amongst the working class that must be defended and advanced.

At this moment, except for few nationwide actions, the trade union movement has shown a lack of shared understanding and effective strategy to make the workers' struggle at Maruti Suzuki a decisive militant trade union battle to change the orientation of the labour policies of companies and government. In order to move forward and build support for the Maruti Suzuki workers, the trade union movement needs to build coordination both in this industrial belt and at the national level. The struggle of workers of Maruti Suzuki is a part of our common struggle for decent wages and working conditions and basic right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. This struggle requires the development of a movement of the working class that builds militant industrial action within the framework of a struggle against imperialist globalisation.

AFFILIATE REPORTS

Madras High Court dismisses petitions seeking stay order on minimum wages for garment industry: 19 September 2011, Chennai: The Madras High Court dismissed a batch of writ petitions filed by garment industry manufacturers seeking a stay order on the 2004 minimum wages notification for the tailoring industry. This much awaited verdict is a relief to thousands of women workers who can now hope for better

remuneration. After the government declared a minimum wages through a notification in 2004, more than 14 garment manufacturers filed a petition in the High Court seeking a stay order.

In 2010, the Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU) filed a petition for immediate vacation of the interim stay on the grounds that it is violative of fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution under Article 23 and that any factory irrespective of its size or volume of business which does not pay the minimum wages has no right to exist. This petition also challenged the claim that any agreement in effect between the industry and a particular group of workers which is lower than stipulated minimum wages is null and void.

Trade union Solidarity for Maruti workers: *New Delhi, 22 September:* Expressing solidarity with the protesting Maruti Suzuki (MSI) workers at Manesar, NTUI called upon all affiliates to observe a National Day of Action on 22 September against the ongoing deadlock since 29 August, when workers were prevented from entering the factory premises unless they signed a 'good conduct bond'. MSI has dismissed 33 workers and suspended 29 since.



In Delhi, around 75 people, including NTUI affiliate members, the Workers Unity Trade Union (WUTU), along with the Voltas Employees Union (VEU), Mazdoor Ekta Manch, and students and teachers of the University of Delhi (through New Socialist Initiative and Students for Social Justice) marched from the Tis Hazari Metro Station to a Maruti-Suzuki showroom on the afternoon of 22 September. The showroom was occupied for about half an hour and then a public meeting held in the car yard of the outlet that was addressed by Comrades Padam (WUTU), Tek Chand Jangra (VEU) and Gautam Mody.

More than 200 members from Siemens Workers Union, Blue Star Workers Union, DHL Employees Union, Voltas Employees Union, Nicholas Employees Union

and Hindustan Lever Employees Union along with Kachra Vahatuk Shamik Sangh and affiliates of Sarva Shramik Sangh participated in the Mumbai demonstration. An NTUI delegation comprising of Comrades M A Patil, N Vasudevan, Milind Ranade, Girish Ashtekar handed over a protest letter to the management representative.

NTUI-Tamil Nadu held a joint demonstration with AITUC on 26 September 2011 in Chennai. Comrades K Ravi, AITUC State Secretary and T M Murthy, AITUC Deputy General State Secretary along with M Subbu (Treasurer NTUI), R Sampath (Vice President WPTUC), Shankar Babu (GS Areva Workers Union), Sujata Mody and V Devi (President and General Secretary, PTS), Rajendran (TMKTS), Ismail (Hindustan Motors Union), and about 250 members from TMKTS, PTS, Ashok Leyland, Rane group of companies, Audco, Areva, Simpson demonstrated before the Memorial Hall.



About 50 members of Pachim Banga Khet Major Samity, Shramajivee Samanvay Committee, Binodini Shramik Union gathered before the Maruti Suzuki regional office on Camac Street in Kolkata as part of the nationwide agitation on the afternoon of 22 September and submitted a memorandum of protest.

Protests were held in Ernakulam and Trivandrum by the NTUI State Council. In Trivandrum, the protest was addressed by Comrades D Thankappan along with K P Vishwavalalan, Krishnammal, Pratap Singh, E George, Paras Raja, Sreenivas Das and Gaja Das. Several new affiliates of NTUI participated in this demonstration. The Pragatisheel Cement Shramik Sangh and Jan Adharit Engineering Mazdoor Union submitted a memorandum of protest through the District Collector Durg on 22 September, and later in the afternoon several hundred workers raised slogans at Niyogi Chowk in Bhilai. Protests were also held in Siliguri (West Bengal) by Paschim Banga Cha Bagan Shramik Karmachari Union and Majuri Shramik Union. 200 activists from Asom Majuri Sramik Union and Bagicha

Sramik Union demonstrated outside the Maruti Suzuki showroom and submitted a memorandum in Jorhat, Assam.

Hunger strike by Contract Multipurpose Female Health Workers in Ludhiana: 30 September 2011, Ludhiana: Members of the Contract Multipurpose Female Health Workers Union have been on hunger strike for the last 38 days demanding regularisation of employment. Several members of the Union, including the Ludhiana district president of the union, Comrade Surjeet Pradhan, were dragged and severely beaten up by the police when they demonstrated before the residence of the Health Minister in Ludhiana.

Delegate conference of NTUI Punjab and Chandigarh State Council: Jalandhar, 2 October 2011: The Second Delegate Conference of the NTUI Punjab and Chandigarh State Council was held in the Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall in Jalandhar on 2 October 2011. The conference was attended by 175 delegates representing all NTUI affiliates in Punjab and Chandigarh. It was also attended by Comrades Ashim Roy and Gautam Mody.

The report of the NTUI Punjab and Chandigarh State Council was presented by Com Harinder Dosanjh analysing the international, national and state level changes that have occurred in the four years since the first state conference in May 2007. In responding to the Council's report affiliates emphasised the need to support the grassroots cadre and worker activists. This is most of all necessary amongst those engaged in organising the Asha and mid-day meal workers as this is where the most difficult fight for the most basic rights of being recognised as workers lies. 23 affiliates from various districts and unions participated in the deliberations. The report was supported and passed unanimously.



The NTUI Punjab and Chandigarh State Council passed resolutions demanding:

- (1) minimum wage of Rs 10,000 for all workers;

- (2) regularisation of all temporary and contract workers;
- (3) control on increasing inflation and corruption; and
- (4) scrapping of all black laws passed by the Punjab government to curb democratic and workers rights.

A 31 member State Council was elected unanimously, with Comrades Bhagmal Rana as President; Dinesh Parsad as State Secretary; Yograj Kharar as Treasurer; Germanjit Singh, Makhan Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Amarjit Kaur Kameana, Lakhwinder Kaur Faridkot as Vice-presidents; Didar Singh, Nachattar Singh, Iqbal Singh, Harinder Dosanjh, Gurdip Singh as Secretaries and Paramjit Kaur Maan as Organising Secretary.

Meeting of Garment Workers Unions: 13 October 2011, Chennai: Attended by members of Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU), Garment and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam (PTS), the meeting brought together the different garment workers unions associated with the NTUI which shared their work as well as discussed issues of commonality and possible areas of collaboration. It was suggested that the unions shall collaborate and work towards a National People's Tribunal on Living Wage for Garment Workers in 2012 -- on wage issues and struggles in the garment industry in India; the gap between minimum wage and living wage; and recommendation for national minimum and/or living wage for garment workers.

Supreme Court rejects Siemens Union's Appeal on "Unfair Labour Practices": New Delhi, 27 October 2011: A bench of justices D K Jain and A K Ganguly of the Supreme Court in a judgement, said that the argument of unfair practices can be accepted only if there is "arbitrariness and unreasonableness" in the management's action violating Article 14 of the Constitution. The Bench stated, "It is also to be kept in mind that in the changed economic scenario, the concept of unfair labour practice is also required to be understood in the changed context... Today every state, which has to don the mantle of a welfare state, must keep in mind the twin objectives of industrial peace and economic justice and the courts and statutory bodies while deciding what unfair labour practice is must also be cognisant of the aforesaid twin objects".

This order was given in the case of the Siemens Employees Union that is arguing that the promotional scheme of Siemens Ltd. amounted to unfair labour practices as defined under Section 9A of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947; and sections 9 and 10 of the Maharashtra Recognition of Trade Unions and Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Act, 1971. The Labour court and the Bombay High Court had quashed the company's decision to create a cadre of Junior Executive Officers, to be filled from among the

company's workmen. According to the apex court, if the job of executive officers are the same as is done by the existing worker, that does not bring about such a violation of clause 7 as to constitute 'unfair labour practice'.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

CAMPAIGN FOR RIGHT TO FOOD

ICDS services extended to children of migrant workers: 28 April 2011: In a major direction by the Department of Women and Child Development, Delhi, ICDS services have been extended to children of migrant and temporary residents. The direction has been endorsed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and replicated all over the country.

RTFC protests against Planning Commission poverty figures: 23 May 2011: The Right to Food Campaign protested against the Planning Commission's poverty lines of Rs 20 per day per person in urban areas and Rs 15 per day per person in rural areas (2004-05 prices). The protest took place in front of the Planning Commission and later in the evening a delegation of 15 members of the Campaign met the Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission, Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia. All the Planning Commission members were presented with dabbas that contained goods of daily need bought at the poverty line. The purpose of this was to make the Planning Commission members realise how little can be bought at the poverty line.



Rozi Roti Abhiyan launches yatra on cash transfers: 11 August 2011: The Government of Delhi has initiated a pilot project of cash transfer instead of PDS in two districts with proposal to extend it to the entire city. The Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan (RRAA), a network of about 30 organisations working on issues related to food security, especially through the Public Distribution System, in Delhi, conducted a survey of 4005 households in slums, resettlement colonies and amongst

homeless people on PDS and to investigate preference of households between a reformed PDS and cash transfers. The survey revealed that 91.4 per cent of the respondents preferred a reformed PDS over cash transfers and only 5 per cent of the respondents were in favour of replacing the PDS with cash transfers.

The month long yatra in September, started from Shaheed Bhagat Singh Park on the Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and travelled through 48 slum habitations across 9 districts of Delhi to campaign against cash transfer. The yatra culminated with a rally of thousands of slum dwellers on 26 September 2011 from ITO chowk to the Delhi Secretariat demanding government to withdraw its scheme of cash in lieu of rations and strengthening the PDS. A delegation of the RRAA submitted a memorandum to the state Food Minister Haroon Yusuf.

CAMPAIGN ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

GAFWU holds meeting on Health and Safety of Women Workers in the Garment Industry: 26 January 2011: Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU) held a public meeting on health and safety of women workers at Thirukazhikundram, near Chennai.

Attended by over 150 women garment workers and activists, the meeting served to initiate a discussion with public health professionals, the ESI department and OHS activists to develop a long term strategy and support system to ensure the good health and safety of women workers. It was also attended by Mr. Rajagopal, Assistant Director, ESIC, Chennai; Anton Marcus, FTZ Union, Sri Lanka; Dr. Subashree, OHS specialist, RUSEC Hospital, Thirukazhikundram and Madhumita Dutta, an OHS activist.

Apart from the extension of ESI facilities, the union has also taken up issues in factories where the management fail to pay the deducted contributions to the ESI department. More than 100 workers in Unitex, a factory in Ambattur Industrial Estate were unable to avail any sickness benefits or medical treatment. It was after persistent complaints from the union that the ESI department initiated proceedings for recovery of the contributions.

Government favours statutory framework on occupational safety, health: *New Delhi, 19 September:* While addressing the India-EU seminar on occupational safety and health, the Labour and Employment Secretary Mrityunjay Sarangi said, new technologies and their application in workplace should also be studied to analyse their impact on health. "Another area which needs attention is the biological risks arising out of the application of new technologies which can affect workers in many sector ranging from

health care, waste management to biotechnology industry," he said. He also added that restructuring, downsizing and outsourcing has led to a change in employment pattern which has "inevitably" had an impact on the working condition. "With a view to develop such a culture and to improve safety, health and environment at workplace, it is essential to provide a statutory framework on occupational safety and health in respect of all sectors of industrial activities", he said.

The two day seminar was attended by members of EU, ILO representatives, workers and employers representatives both from India and European Union.

OEHNI protests against Canadian efforts to convince India on Safe use of Asbestos: *New Delhi, 4 February 2011:* The Occupational and Environmental Health Network of India (OEHNI), a network of civil society groups and trade unions, held demonstrations in Mumbai and Delhi, and handed over a memorandum calling upon the Canadian government to stop promoting and exporting asbestos to Asia.

Canadian Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade, Clement Gignac, visiting India on a trade mission, is here to persuade the Indian Government to sign an agreement on "Safe Use" of Asbestos. The trade delegation includes a senior official of Balcop Enterprises, which is one of the leading organisation in the consortium which is going to acquire the Jeffery Asbestos Mines in Canada.

Planning Commission recommends moving pharma dept under health ministry: 7 October, *Pune:* The Planning Commission has recommended moving the Department of Pharmaceuticals to the Union Ministry of Health. At present, the department, responsible for supervision and manufacturing of drugs and their price control, is with the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. The Commission's high-level experts' group on universal health coverage, headed by Dr K Srinath Reddy in its report has said that public interest would be served best by transferring the department of pharmaceuticals to the health ministry. The report stated that the transfer would be appropriate since the ministry of health is responsible for ensuring quality, safety and efficacy of drugs and is accountable for unhindered availability of all essential drugs in the public healthcare system.

CAMPAIGN ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

Environment ministry gives clearance to POSCO project: 31 January 2011: The Ministry of Environment and Forest gave its clearance to the Rs 50,000 crore POSCO integrated steel plant in Orissa today, conditional to the State government giving categorical assurance that the forest land to be acquired is free of claim under the Forest Right Act 2006.

POSCO's plant, which also includes a captive power unit and a port, is the single largest foreign direct investment in the country yet. The clearance was given with 60 additional conditions, 28 for the steel plant and 32 for the captive port, but these are seen as unlikely to be high obstacles for the Korean promoters.



AIKMM Protest against waste-to-energy plants

Protest against waste-to-energy plants: 24 October 2011: The Waste Collectors Workers' Union along with several civil society groups organised a protest before the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Lodhi Estate in Delhi demanding an immediate end to the three incinerator plants which are supposed to come up at Okhla, Timarpur and Gazipur. The Waste-to-Energy plants are being set up in complete violation to the health concerns of the residents of the adjoining areas as well as disregarding the livelihood of thousands of waste collectors who would be severely affected if recyclable waste is burnt. The incinerators are been set up by Government of Delhi under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

CAMPAIGN ON TRADE

Japan, India Sign Free Trade Pact: 11 February 2011: Japan and India signed an agreement today that will eliminate tariffs on 94% of goods trade between the two countries over the next ten years. This pact, which was finalised during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Tokyo last October, is India's first such agreement with a developed country. The accord does not address regulatory standards that can serve as a barrier to trade, especially for exports from India to Japan.

In investment, India will allow Japanese FDI with no caps (barring exceptions) and Japanese companies will be treated the same as a domestic company for all purposes of policy. The Government of India has taken on itself to commit state governments to the same legally binding conditions. Also, private foreign companies will be allowed to file cases against

governments, instead of confining matters to governments. However, Japanese firms are now allowed to object to India's environmental, health, social or economic policies, if these are seen to interfere with the company's "right" to profit. The resolution of such conflicts is generally governed by multilateral tribunals. Although the agreement does not directly cover rare earths, the Japanese foreign ministry said it could make it easier for Japanese companies to invest in mineral resources exploitation in India. Rare-earth resources are used in a variety of high tech products from iPads to solar panels.

FTA with Malaysia inked: 18 February 2011: The pact between India and Malaysia signed in Kuala Lumpur today will be in addition to the agreement on goods India has with the 10 Southeast Asian nations and which came in force in January 2010. In addition to the commitments under the India-ASEAN agreement, India will cut import duties for fruits, cocoa, and palm oil. Malaysia will cut import duties for basmati rice, mangoes, eggs, trucks and motorcycles, and cotton garments.

Areas beyond the purview of the previous deal include services and investment. India has committed to higher level of Foreign Direct Investments in the construction services up to 51%. India is projected to require \$1 trillion investment in the next 5 years in modernising and upgrading its infrastructural facilities, such as ports, roads, railways and shipping. Investment in these areas is expected to flow from the ASEAN region. Malaysian companies are present in the Indian construction sector. Malaysian automobile and auto part manufacturers are also interested to participate in the Indian auto sector.



More than 2000 protesters march in Delhi against the EU-India FTA: Delhi, 2 March, 2011: More than 2,000 demonstrators from India and other Asian countries marched through Delhi today carrying banners reading "Don't Trade away our Lives". In the Free Trade Agreement under negotiation with India, the European

Union is seeking intellectual property provisions that would push up prices of generic drugs made in India. EU demands include "data exclusivity" which would block more affordable generic medicines from the

market, even for drugs that are already off patent. "It would be a colossal mistake to introduce data exclusivity in India, when millions of people across the globe depend on the country as the 'pharmacy of the developing world'," said Anand Grover, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health. Indian-made generics have pushed the average yearly cost of anti-HIV drug treatments down from \$10,000 per patient in 2000 to \$70 in 2010. The deal also contains provisions that will allow the EU to stifle changes in Indian policy that it fears will hurt its investments. The protest coincided with "sensitive" negotiations in Brussels on the market-opening pact, which is to be concluded before the year end.

India to reject EU proposal on Doha round: 10 May 2011: India finds the proposed cuts in the tariffs of chemicals, pharmaceuticals and machinery too generous towards developed countries, and will instead argue that the likes of the United States and Europe should offer deeper concessions.

NEWS UPDATES

Hotel workers united through HEFOI vote for affiliation to IUF: 21 March 2011: The Hotel Employees Federation of India (HEFOI) held its Second Delegates Conference in Goa in the week of 21 March attended by representatives of over 46 local unions from seven states. Formed in 2007, HEFOI is India's first national trade union federation of hotel and catering workers, uniting the workers of the industry across the political spectrum.

Delegates at the conference strengthened their commitment to step up the campaign for a 10% service charge, which was launched in February 2010. The conference also reviewed with increased concern the rampant use of precarious employment practices in the hotel industry, including fixed term contracts, contract workers, casual workers, and trainees. Comrades N Vasudevan was re-elected as President and Subash Naik Jorge was re-elected as General Secretary of HEFOI. Also elected were 8 Secretaries, 9 Organizing Secretaries and 13 Executive Secretary members.

National floor level Minimum wage revised from Rs. 100 to 115 per day: New Delhi, 7 April 2011: The Central Government has revised the National Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) from Rs. 100 to Rs. 115 per day effective from 1 April 2011, on the basis of the rise in the All - India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers during the period. All State Governments and Union Territory Administrations have been requested to revise their minimum wages such that the minimum wage of no scheduled employments is less

than National Floor Level Minimum Wage of Rs.115 per day.

Extension of RSBY to Domestic workers and Beedi workers: New Delhi, 23 June: The Union Cabinet on 23 June 2011 approved the extension of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) to all registered domestic workers in the country. The health insurance cover, available to domestic workers in the 18-59 age group, will entitle the beneficiary to cashless treatment upto Rs. 30,000 at empanelled hospitals. A maximum of five members per family would be covered. This can be done with the help of a smart card that would be issued to those covered under the RSBY, which is now expected to cover around 47.5 lakh workers. The beneficiaries will have to get identification certificates from two of the four eligible institutions namely- employer, residents welfare association, registered trade union or the local police.

The Cabinet earlier on 9 June approved the extension of RSBY to beedi workers and their family (unit of five) upto a sum of Rs.30,000. Any claims beyond Rs.30,000 will be reimbursed directly by the related Welfare Commissioner to the concerned empanelled hospital through the existing procedure. The State Government will identify and register beedi workers. It is proposed to cover 10 lakh beedi worker in the current financial year and cover 100% of the total beedi workers by the year 2013-14.

Negotiations on with contract workers of Cochin Shipyard Limited: 24 June 2011: The 23-day strike by nearly 3,000 contract workers at the public sector Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) was called off on 23 June following talks between the management and trade union representatives. The strike was called off after reaching an agreement on wage revision and extending gratuity payment to around 300 workers who were not receiving it until now. The workers resumed duty from 24 June morning.

The contract workers employed by 170 small and big contractors, under the banner of Cochin Shipyard Workers Union went on strike on 28 May 2011. The strike was for a 22.5 per cent hike in wages for contract workers with effect from January 2010. The wages and allowances for the permanent employees of the shipyard had gone up substantially since the last wage settlement in 2007. While a contract worker earns about Rs 300 a day, a permanent worker at the CSL gets around Rs 610. This is the wage for the lowest category and it is in contravention of the Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act

Cochin Shipyard Employees' Union, the union of permanent workers in the shipyard, led by Comrade V B Cherian extended their support to the Union and also

aided in the process of negotiation with the management.

CATEGORY	Existing Honorarium wef 1 April 2008	Revised Honorarium wef 1 April 2011	6 th Pay Comm. Scale Basic + Grade Pay (Excluding all Allowances)
A. ANGANWADI WORKERS			
i. Non-Matriculate	1438	2938	5730
ii. Non-Matriculate with 5 years of Honorary Work	1469	2969	6250
iii. Non-Matriculate with 10 years of Honorary Work	1500	3000	6770
iv. Matriculate	1500	3000	5950
v. Matriculate with 5 years of Honorary Work	1531	3031	6470
vi. Matriculate with 10 years of Honorary Work	1563	3063	7000
B. ANGANWADI HELPERS	750	1500	5730
C. ANGANWADI WORKERS OF MINI ANGANWADI CENTRES	750	1500	5730

Notification on hike in honoraria for Anganwadi workers and helpers: 12 July 2011: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India through its notification dated 11 July 2011. has revised the honorarium rates for Anganwadi workers and helpers, as it was decided in this year's budget. As per the revision, Anganwadi workers will now receive Rs. 3000 from their earlier amount of Rs. 1500. Anganwadi helpers and workers of mini Anganwadi centre on the other hand will receive Rs. 1500 from the earlier amount of Rs 750. The revised rates would be effective from 1 April 2011.

Sixth pay commission revised pay scale for S1 (non-matric) is Rs.4440 (basic) + Rs. 1300 = Rs. 5740 and for Pay Band I (matric) is Rs. 4990 (basic) + Rs.1800 (grade pay) = Rs. 6790 (excluding HRA, Transport Allowance, Education Allowance, etc.)

Government of India and World Bank sign US \$ 1 Billion Agreement to 'boost' Rural Livelihoods: 18 July 2011: The Government of India and the World Bank has signed a Credit Agreement of US\$ 1 billion (approximately Rs. 4,600 crores) for the National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP). The Project will support the implementation of the Government of India's newly launched National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). Under the aegis of the NRLM, the NRLP will now support specific additional investments in the 12 states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal that together account for almost 85 percent of India's rural poor.

The NRLM aims to bring at least one member, preferably a woman, of each of the 70 million rural BPL households under the Self Help Group (SHG) network.

Constitution of National Social Security Fund for Unorganised Sector Workers: 28 July 2011: The Union Cabinet has approved the constitution and operation of a National Social Security Fund for unorganised workers with an initial allocation of Rs.1000 crore to support schemes for weavers, toddy tappers, rickshaw pullers, beedi workers etc. The Ministry of Labour & Employment will be the nodal Ministry for the operation of the Fund.

Goa: Anganwadi workers get one-time financial assistance on retirement: Panaji, 24 August 2011: Anganwadi workers and helpers in Goa will now get a one-time financial assistance on retirement. The Anganwadi workers and helpers completing 60 years of age will be paid a sum of Rs. 2 lakh and Rs. 1 lakh respectively under the scheme. The scheme will be implemented by the department of women and child development and all Anganwadi workers under the centrally sponsored Integrated Child Development Services Scheme will be eligible for benefits.

Anganwadi workers and helpers who have completed the age of 60 years in the financial year 2009-10 and have served a minimum of 15 years in service will be paid an amount of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 50,000 under the scheme, respectively. This benefit was earlier provided to workers who completed 20 years in service. The anganwadi workers and helpers who have attained the age of 60 in the financial year 2009-10 and rendered service of between of 10 to 15 years will be paid an amount of 50,000 and 25,000 respectively under the scheme.

Call for Nationwide Satyagraha on 8 November from National Convention of Workers: New Delhi. 7 September 2011: All the 11 government recognised central trade union organisations came together in a National Convention for Workers at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on 7 September and issued a call for

countrywide multiple forms of action such as *Satyagraha*, *Jail Bharo*, Mass squatting in all the state capitals and industrial centres on 8 November 2011. Among the major demands are roll-back of petro product price hikes, halt to disinvestment in Central and State enterprises, linkage of employment protection with the concessions or incentives offered to entrepreneurs, universal social security cover for the unorganised sector, compulsory registration of trade unions within 45 days etc.

Though the Central Trade Unions have been agitating for the last two years, the UPA government has not taken any step to address the demands. Coal workers have gone on a countrywide strike. BSNL employees have declared a one-day strike against so called voluntary retirement for nearly one lakh workers. Bank employees are agitating over amendments on banking regulations. Countrywide agitations are being conducted by state and central Govt employees against denial of pension benefits. Struggles are on in different parts of the country against denial of trade union rights and against large scale victimisations.

The demands for the joint court arrest programme are:

- Concrete measures to contain price rise
- Concrete measures for linkage of employment protection with the concession/incentive package offered to the entrepreneurs
- Strict enforcement of all basic labour laws without any exception or exemption and stringent punitive measures for violation of labour laws
- Universal social security cover for the unorganized sector workers without any restriction and creation of a National Social Security Fund with adequate resources in line with the recommendation of NCEUS and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour
- Stoppage of disinvestment in central and state PSUs
- No contractorization of permanent/ perennial nature and till then payment of wages and benefits to the contract workers at the same rate as available to regular workers of the industry/ establishment
- Amendment of Minimum Wages Act to ensure universal coverage irrespective of the schedules and fixation of statutory minimum wage at not less than Rs 10,000/- per month with indexation
- Remove all ceilings on payment and eligibility of Bonus, Provident Fund; Increase the quantum of gratuity
- Assured Pension for all
- Compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days and immediate ratification of the ILO Conventions 87 and 98

The convention on 7th September has also called upon the workers to be prepared for a countrywide general strike after the “Jail Bharo” agitation.

Supreme Court directs DIAL to abolish contract labour system: *New Delhi, 15 September 2011:* The Supreme Court directed Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) to abolish its system of contractual labour and asked it to pay compensation of Rs 5 lakh to each of its 136 workers who were not reinstated after expiry of their contracts. A bench of Justices Dalveer Bhandari and A.K. Patnaik said the Centre’s notification of 26 July 2004 pertaining to regularisation of contractual labour is binding on DIAL. The bench, however, refused to reinstate 136 trolley retrievers, saying their jobs have already been given to others and reinstatement would lead to an “absurd” situation.

Domestic workers left out in sexual harassment at workplace Bill: Domestic workers have been specifically excluded from the definition of employee under the 'Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at workplace Bill' which seeks to provide protection to all women at their places of work. The reason for exclusion provided by the Minister for Women and Child Development was that it may be difficult to enforce the provisions of the Bill within the privacy of homes and there being no domestic code of conduct having been prescribed. "It may be more practical for them to take recourse to provisions under criminal law," she said.

Over 2,500 textile workers continue to hold strike: *Ludhiana, 22 September 2011:* The strike of nearly 2,500 textile workers since 22 September 2011 in 155 powerloom units at Shakti Nagar, Gaushala, Kashmir Nagar, Motinagar, Textile Colony, Madhopuri and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar continues. The workers held a big demonstration before the DC Office on 18 October. The unions, Textile Mazdoor Union and the Karkhana Mazdoor Union, are demanding better wages in view of rising prices and inflation, for identity cards, maintenance of muster-roll, attendance card, salary slips, ESI, PF, Bonus, weekly and other holidays, and improvement of working conditions and appropriate security measures to prevent accidents in factories. Most of these workers are piece-rated workers earning a wage of about Rs. 3000-4000 per month. With working hours extending to 12-14 hours a day during peak season, these workers earn upto Rs. 5000.

Tea Industry to pay 20 per cent Bonus: *Kolkata, 20 September:* Though the wage negotiation remained inconclusive, the tea industry of West Bengal has agreed to pay a flat 20 per cent bonus to workers in all 250 estates in Dooars and Terai region of the state. In a separate agreement the Darjeeling tea industry has also agreed to pay bonus at the rate of 20 per cent for

gardens falling within Grades A, B and C and at the rate of 17 per cent for Grade D. The bonus percentage is calculated on the total annual earnings of a worker. The upper limit has been fixed at Rs 9,000. This means that if the bonus works out to be more than the upper limit, the worker will be entitled to only Rs 9,000.

Ration cards for Sex workers in Maharashtra: *Mumbai, 4 October:* The Supreme Court on 15 September directed the Centre and states to consider the idea of providing ration cards and voter identity cards to sex workers without insisting on strict verification like seeking their professional status. A bench of Justice Markandeya Katju and Justice Gyan Sudha Mishra passed the order while accepting the third report of a panel constituted by it to suggest measures for recommending rehabilitation of sex workers.

The Maharashtra government distributed ration cards among 50 sex workers from Kamathipura in Mumbai on 4 October kick-starting a drive for the whole of the State. The state Food and Civil Supplies Minister assured that they will "... set up camps in [red-light] colonies to implement the drive". The cards will include the name of the woman worker and her children. The orange cards would entitle women to 10 kg of wheat at Rs.7.60, 5 kg of rice at Rs.9.20, one litre of palm oil and around two to three litres of kerosene.

Age limit lowered from 65 to 60 yrs under National Old Age Pension Scheme: The Cabinet has approved the lowering of the age limit for the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) from 65 to 60 years and increasing the rate of pension from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 to persons of 80 years and above. The revised norms would be applicable with effect from 1 April 2011. Consequently, the eligibility criteria for widow pension under IGNWPS and disability pension under IGNDPS will get revised from 40-64 years to 40-59 years and from 18-64 years to 18-59 years respectively.

National Manufacturing Policy: *25 October 2011:* The Cabinet approved the revised proposal of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry to put in place a National Manufacturing Policy. The Policy aims to increase the sectoral share of manufacturing in GDP to at least 25% by 2022; to increase the rate of job creation so as to create 100 million additional jobs by 2022; and to enhance global competitiveness, domestic value addition, technological depth and environmental sustainability of growth. Industrial infrastructure development is envisaged through the creation of large integrated industrial townships called National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs).

Allowances a part of 'Basic Wages' for PF calculation: *16 August 2011:* The Madhya Pradesh and the Madras High Courts have both recently passed rulings covering various allowances like conveyance allowance and special allowance as part of basic wages for calculation of Employees' Provident Fund contributions. Under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 (EPF Act), employer and employer's contribution to provident fund is calculated on basic wages, dearness allowance and retaining allowance (if any).

The basic wages is defined to mean all emoluments in accordance with the terms of the contract of employment and which are paid or payable in cash, but does not include cash value of any food concession, dearness allowance, house-rent allowance, overtime allowance, bonus, commission or any other similar allowance and presents made by the employer.

The Madhya Pradesh High court has ruled that the conveyance allowance is included in the definition of basic wages because it is universally, necessarily and ordinarily paid to all the employees across the board. Further, special allowance is included in the basic wages since it is paid to all the workers and there is no specific criterion to determine the amount of special allowance.

The Madras High court on the other hand has ruled that any payment which is based upon contingency is not included in basic wages, however, merely labeling salary as various allowances does not give it the colour of contingent payment. Further, if the intention of the employer is to avoid the payment of provident fund contribution, the same can never be allowed.

The rulings have reinforced the principles laid down by the Supreme Court earlier for deciding what basic wages is, namely: (a) any payment which is universally, necessarily and ordinarily paid to all employees across the board is included in basic wages; (b) any payment which specifically made to those who avail of an opportunity like an overtime allowance is not included in basic wages; and (c) any payment by way of special incentive or work or which is based upon contingencies and uncertainties is not included in basic wages.

Workers cannot be exploited under the garb of globalisation - SC: *New Delhi, 2 September 2011:* Dismissing an appeal filed by Bhilwara Dugdh Utpadak Sahakari Ltd on contract workers, a bench of justices Markandeya Katju and C K Prasad of the Supreme Court ruled that employers cannot exploit workers by claiming that they were working under a contractor and deny them wages and perks. "This court cannot countenance such practices any more. Globalisation/liberalisation in the name of growth cannot be at the human cost of exploitation of workers." The Bhilwara

Dugdh Utpadak Sahakari Ltd, Rajasthan, challenged the concurrent findings of the labour and the High Court which had held that the employer was indulging in "subterfuge" by resorting to discriminatory wage structures between regular and contract workers.

The apex court said this technique was being adopted by some employers in recent years in order to deny the rights of the workmen under various labour statutes by showing that the concerned workmen are not their employees but are the employees/ workmen of a contractor or that they are merely daily wage or short term or casual employees when in fact they are doing the work of regular employees.

NREGA wage cannot be less than minimum wage - Bangalore HC: *Bangalore, 24 September:* The Bangalore High Court has held that the central government, while exercising power under MGNREGA cannot fix a wage that is less than the one fixed by respective state governments under the Minimum Wages Act applicable for agricultural labour.

A division bench of acting Chief Justice Vikramjit Sen and Justice A S Bopanna quashed the 1 January 2009 notification issued by the central government fixing Rs 82 as wage to be disbursed to agricultural workers. He directed for payment at the rate of Rs 119.42 per day and also at subsequently revised rates.

Ministry of Labour working to amend the Trade Union Act: *New Delhi October 02, 2011:* The Ministry of Labour and Employment is working on amending the Trade Union Act, 1926, to make the process of registration of a trade union more transparent. The amendment Bill would be placed in the next session of Parliament.

The right to register a trade union was at the heart of the Maruti strike, which went on for more than a month.

Officials in the labour ministry say the proposed amendment would ensure that a decision on whether to grant registration to a trade union or not becomes time-bound. The ministry is looking at a time period of 45 days for the registrar of the trade union to take a decision on the issue. At present, there is no time limit on the registrar to take a decision.

The amendment would also simplify the process for appeal. At present, appeal against the order of the registrar can be challenged in a civil court which takes a long time. The amendment will grant the labour court the power to hear an appeal. Also, the registrar would be required to provide a "speaking order" explaining the reason for rejecting the registration of a trade union.

GAFWU participates in the UE Young Activists Convergence in Pittsburgh: Throughout its 75-year history United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) has recognised the importance of solidarity between workers in different countries, and UE's 72nd Convention carried that work even further. Young activists from unions in five other countries met with UE's own Young Activists before the convention, and joined UE delegates in a "March for Jobs and Workers' Rights" and other convention events.



Kamal Ahamada of France's Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), Meghna Sukumar of New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), four young activists from Mexico's FAT, three from Japan's Zenroren, and three from CSN in Quebec participated in discussions teaching each other about the political and economic situation in each of their countries as well as major current labour struggles. They also spoke on the role of young labour activists in the 21st century.

Strike at Honeywell's US plant: *25 October 2011:* Members of the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers (IAM) began strike action on 10 October at the Honeywell plant in Kansas City, Missouri, USA after an overwhelming 79% of the membership rejected the proposed new labour contract on 9 October. Union members followed that ballot with an 85% strike vote the same day. Honeywell runs the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration plant at the Bannister Federal Complex in Kansas City, which provides up-to-date avionics and other non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons. The plant kept operating during the strike under a contingency plan, with help from temporary workers.

On 20 October, a manager for Honeywell Federal Manufacturing & Technologies LLC told a television broadcast that IAM members are overpaid and should be satisfied with the company's "last and final" offer. That offer is a six-year proposal that does contain minimal pay gains in each year, but it also creates a

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

two-tier wage scheme. That pay grid would see all employees hired in 2012 receive less hourly pay and come under a slower pay progression. Such a pay schedule would take new hires five years to reach only 90% of what current workers earn. Honeywell's proposal also attacks workers' health care coverage, making it more costly for union members to have adequate health insurance.

The union has proposed a four-year contract without the concessions. The union is also awaiting a decision from the US National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) declaring the work stoppage an unfair labour practice strike. In the days prior to the 9 October rejection vote, Honeywell management circumvented the union's bargaining committee by express mailing a letter to all workers, misrepresenting the company's proposal and urging them to accept the offer. This is in violation to US labour statute and if the NLRB does issue a complaint, the strike will take on a new meaning.



Strike by Student Exchange Workers at US Chocolate make Hershey's: On 17 August, hundreds of student exchange workers on J-1 visa from around the world, organised by the National Guestworkers Alliance, occupied the factory floor of the Hershey's chocolate packing plant in Pennsylvania. They exposed how the Hershey's Corporation (HCC) had schemed to turn hundreds of permanent union jobs into sub-minimum wage jobs. Through subcontractors and recruiters, Hershey's had its Halloween chocolates packaged by students from around the world who came to the U.S. expecting a cultural exchange. The students' plant occupation sparked a movement in Pennsylvania. Their key demand: make these jobs living wage jobs for local workers. Thousands mobilized to hold Hershey's accountable.

The J-1 visa is a US Government summer visa programme that allows visa holders to work for two months and then travel in the US. The programme is advertised as an opportunity for university students from other countries to experience a "real cultural exchange" in the US.

The US Government has outsourced its oversight role to programme sponsors and employers who hire the participants. This has allowed for the emergence of a

complex contracting system, which both the Government and HCC are now using to deny responsibility for the complaints. Beside the complaint against HCC, complaints about abuses of hundreds of students in more than a dozen states in the US have been reported.

Accor continues violation of trade union rights at Canada hotels: Management at 3 Accor hotels in Canada - Novotel Mississauga, Novotel Ottawa and Novotel North York - continues to retaliate against union members and supporters. Despite fierce management opposition, workers at the hotels are committed to winning recognition and bargaining rights.

In 2009-2010, workers at the Novotel Mississauga, Novotel Ottawa and Novotel North York demonstrated strong majority support for union representation by signing union cards, but a concerted management effort compelled workers to vote 'no'. Active union supporters were terminated and punished through reduced shifts and other forms of discrimination. In the face of these attacks, union supporters at the Novotel North York decided to wait for a sign of management non-interference to press ahead with the certification process. They are still waiting.

UNITE HERE, supporting the workers, has filed dozens of complaints for labour law violations, but the process is subject to endless delays. In October 2010, the IUF filed a complaint with the French National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines, alleging gross violations of the Guidelines' provisions on trade union rights. There as well, workers are still waiting.

Workers again demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the union through an independent confirmation earlier this year by signing new membership cards. On October 7, one of the leading union activists at the Novotel Mississauga, Ignacio Dadap, was 'disciplined' for distributing a leaflet to his co-workers. Three of the most visible union leaders at the Novotel Ottawa were suspended on the same day.

Agricultural workers in UK oppose the Public Bodies Bill: 25 October 2011: Set up by the Atlee Government in 1948, the Agricultural Wages Board fixes legally enforceable minimum wages and conditions for agricultural workers in England and Wales. The Public Bodies Bill being discussed in the Parliament today seeks to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB).

The abolition of the AWB will lead to lower wages in the countryside, and a worse deal for farm workers and fruit pickers. According to figures of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the abolition of the AWB will take £9 million a year out from holiday and sick pay alone. 42,000 casual workers will see a

drop in wages once the AWB is gone (October 2012). The remaining 110,000 could see their wages eroded over time. Children - who do summer jobs or part-time jobs - currently receive £3.05p an hour but are not covered by National Minimum Wage and so will have no wage protection when they do holiday or weekend work.

The agricultural workers' union, Unite, called the demonstration to try to persuade MPs to oppose both the inclusion of the AWB in the Bill and the entire Public Bodies Bill. The opposition Labour Party is committed to maintaining the AWB. The demonstration was followed by a meeting in the Parliament where MPs were invited to meet with rural workers to hear from them directly how the abolition of the AWB would impact on their lives.



Zenroren Rally on May Day in Tokyo. The banner in the centre reads "Abolish nuclear power plants." AP

Zenroren calls for shift away from Nukes: 7 July 2011: The National Confederation of Trade Unions, or Zenroren, Japan recently released a draft proposal calling on the Japanese government to abandon nuclear energy and to shift to natural, renewable energy resources. The union cited the disaster at Fukushima as a major reason for the need to shift away from nuclear energy. According to the draft proposal, the "grave accident of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant involving the loss of all power supplies, the core meltdown and the release of massive amount of radioactive materials revealed the danger of nuclear power plants, despite the assurance of successive governments and electric power companies that they were 'absolutely safe'. Comparing the recent incident to the 1986 accident at Chernobyl, the union's proposal noted the ongoing contamination of the region's food supply and the health hazards created by the Fukushima accident.

The draft proposal recommended scheduling a process for taking steps to prevent similar accidents in the future. First, Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission should review all existing nuclear plants and cancel any plans for new construction that may be already scheduled.

Then, plants located in danger zones that could be affected by natural disasters like the Fukushima plant should be immediately closed and their fuel removed. Finally, operations at outmoded nuclear plants should then be terminated, followed quickly by ending operations at all remaining plants. The report stated that as a result of current inspections and proposed plant closings, as many as 42 nuclear power plants have already been closed or will be closed.

In the meantime, special efforts should be made to moving the country toward renewable energy sources. To accomplish the shift to renewable and safer energy sources, Zenroren's report added, Japan must "reconsider 'mass production, mass consumption and mass disposal' and the '24-hour society.'" On 2 July, the union helped bring some 20,000 people gathered at Meiji Park in downtown Tokyo to call for abolishing nuclear reactors. In addition, the union has dispatched as many as 7,000 volunteers to the Tohoku region to help with disaster relief.

Myanmar allows Trade Unions for the first time since 1962: Yangon, 17 October: The Government of Myanmar will permit the formation of trade unions for the first time since 1962. The new legislation, the Labor Organization Bill, cancels the 1962 Trade Unions Act, which effectively banned trade unions. Under the new legislation, trade unions with a minimum of 30 members will be allowed to be formed and industrial action will be permitted provided a notice of 14 days for public sector employees and 3 days notice for private sector employees is given. Striking workers won't be allowed to block transport routes or security infrastructure. Workers in officially designated essential services won't be allowed to strike.

The new legislation, passed after decades of unceasing international pressure and sanctions, however is a move to boost the country's ability to attract foreign investment. The test of the government's tolerance of unions will be how the union-in-exile Federation of Trade Unions of Burma is treated if the organization decides to come in from its shadowy existence. The FTUB was formed in 1991 after the junta clamped down on unions. In 1998 Myo Aung Thant, a senior FTUB member, was sentenced to life in prison for labor organization activities inside Myanmar. As late as 2003, two FTUB members reportedly were sentenced to death.

Thousands in Greece Protest against Austerity Bill: Athens, 19 October 2011: After a day of violent demonstrations against government cutbacks, the Government of Greece on 20 October gave its final approval to more austerity measures including additional wage cuts, pension cuts, lay-offs for public sector workers and changes to collective bargaining

rules to make it easier to hire and fire. About 100,000 demonstrators poured into the central Syntagma Square outside Parliament on 20 October.



Hundred thousands of Greeks protest Austerity measures of the government. Reuters

The protest turned violent when members of PAME (All Workers Militant Front), affiliated to the WFTU, were violently attacked by hooded goons while the police stood and watched. About 100 people were hospitalised with injuries.

FIOM-CGIL Strike at Fiat: 21 October 2011: Thousands of members of FIOM-CGIL, Fiat’s biggest union, walked off the job today as part of a one-day strike demanding “Fiat remains in Italy”. The strike was decided after Fiat’s CEO Sergio Marchionne some days earlier announced that his company was to quit the employers’ group Confindustria in a dispute over labour contracts. FIOM leaders argued that this could be a precursor for a gradual disengagement from Italy.

Fiat has threatened that it will leave the country if a majority of workers reject its plans to make the factories more competitive by cutting production costs. Marchionne succeeded in winning three concession votes from Fiat workers over the past 15 months, introducing new labour rules, including measures to limit strikes, curtail absenteeism and operate the factories on a six-day workweek, spurred by the promise of a 20 billion-euro investment plan, called Fabbrica Italia.

Fiat has already announced its plans to close two of its plants by the end of the year—Sicily’s Termini Imerese site and the Irisbus bus production site near Naples. This decision affects about 3,000 workers and their families: 700 employees of Irisbus in Campania plus 300 contract workers, and 1,300 Fiat workers in Sicily plus a further 800 workers at the supplier companies. Workers have been forced to live on state compensation payments (*Cassa Integrazione*).

On 21 September another confrontation took place with the police in Rome when a delegation of workers sought to demonstrate outside the parliament. The workers,

including women and elderly persons, were forced by armed forces into a side street where they were surrounded and held for hours.

British Trade Unions take public sector pensions dispute to High Court: 25 October 2011: Britain’s trade unions have taken their dispute with the government over pension reform to the High Court, arguing that the proposed changes are “unfair” to millions of workers. The trade unions are challenging the decision to use the consumer price index (CPI) instead of the traditionally higher retail price index (RPI) to calculate the annual increase in public sector retirement payments. Figures published by them suggest the loss to existing public sector pensioners will be around 15 per cent as CPI is 1.2 per cent lower than RPI on average. With this calculation pensioners will be forced to bear an unfair burden for the financial crisis.

The new policy came into effect in April this year, when RPI (as of September 2010, the benchmark month) was 4.6% but CPI was 3.1%. It was announced in the 2010 Budget as an explicit measure to cut the government’s spending deficit. The Fire Brigades’ Union (FBU), teachers’ union NASUWT, Prison Officers Association, Public and Commercial Services Union, Unison and Unite along with several associations of retired public servants filed this case. The law governing the issue in the public sector is the 1992 Social Security Administration Act. It says that in order to compensate for inflation, public sector pensions and other state benefits should be revalued “in relation to the general level of prices obtaining in Great Britain estimated in such manner as the Secretary of State thinks fit”.

The unions argue that this shift from RPI to CPI will negate all previous pension agreements which were struck in the belief that RPI would always apply. They also argue that the move to CPI means individuals who transferred previous pensions into their public sector schemes, or who bought added years of pension contributions, will no longer receive what they paid for.



Occupy Wall Street spreads across the world: Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets across the United States as part of an Occupy Wall Street movement to protest the intolerable conditions of massive unemployment, growing inequality, rampant home foreclosures, and stepped-up cuts in the social safety net. Their outrage has been

especially focused against the bailout of Wall Street, while Main Street has been left to languish, and the takeover of the political system by big-money interests. It began in New York City's Zuccotti Park in the Wall Street financial district and which has since become a worldwide movement.

A growing number of trade unionists have joined this movement, first as individual workers, then as part of an increasing number of union contingents that have joined the OWS activists to build large protest actions, often with more focused political demands. Various unions, including the AFL-CIO, the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), the Transport Workers Union of America, the Service Employees International Union, the have pledged their support for demonstrators. On October 4, representatives from more than 14 of the country's largest labour unions joined the protesters for a mass rally. The Obama administration has spent over \$4-trillion to bail out players on Wall Street while more than 27 million people are unemployed and more than 50 million people face foreclosures. The Obama government is also trying to enact cuts of up to \$3.5-million in the social safety net – particularly in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – over the next 10 years, in the name of balancing the budget deficits. Forty-nine per cent of the 58 million recipients of Medicaid are children, 25 per cent are adults, 10 per cent are older Americans, 15 per cent are disabled, and all are low-income. This cut will also disproportionately affect the Afro-Americans and the Latin Americans.



Rallies rippled across the globe on 15 October in more than 900 cities in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America took part in the worldwide

demonstration, including Washington, Toronto, Denver, and Chicago. The global demonstrations began on the same day that finance ministers and central bankers from the Group of 20 nations met in Paris to discuss solutions to the debt crisis engulfing Europe.

Italian riot police fired tear gas and water cannons in Rome on protesters demonstrating against corporate greed and European governments' austerity measures. In Frankfurt, continental Europe's financial hub, 5,000 people protested at the European Central Bank, with some setting up a tent camp in front of the ECB building. The Greek capital of Athens has seen near-daily strikes and protests as the government fights to avoid bankruptcy. Some 2,000 rallied outside parliament against a new austerity package being voted

upon, while teachers and civil servants held marches elsewhere in the city. In Thessaloniki, Greece's second city, 3,000 took part in a peaceful protest. In Brussels, thousands marched through the streets chanting "Criminal bankers caused this crisis!" and protested before the stock exchange building. They also accused NATO, which has its headquarters in Brussels, of wasting taxpayer money on the wars in Libya and Afghanistan, saying that one European soldier deployed to Afghanistan costs the equivalent of 11 high school teachers.



Despite heavy rains, hundreds of activists gathered in front of the headquarters of the Financial Services Commission, the country's top financial regulator, located in Seoul's main financial district. The demonstrators carried placards saying "I am not your automated teller machine" and "Taxes to the financial capital, jobs for workers." The rally was part of two-day "Occupy Seoul" protests being organized by a platform of 30 civic groups on 15 and 16 October. A group of civic and trade union activists rallied in Seoul on 22 October to protest what they called the greed of financial institutions and the growing income disparity in the country. The protestors among other demands, urged Korean lawmakers not to approve the FTA with the United States. They claimed that this FTA will only benefit the top 1 percent of the South Korean population. This, they insisted, will further fuel wealth disparity that has become a serious social issue in South Korea. In addition to the "Occupy Seoul" rally, the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions, also held a protest rally calling for an end to discrimination between regular and non-regular workers.



On 22 October, hundreds of industrial workers, agricultural workers, students and political activists gathered at Nasir Bagh Park to express solidarity with the

international occupy movement and also to protest against the anti-people policies of the Pakistan government.

Sri Lankan workers protest against COLA discrimination: *30 October 2011:* Discrimination in the payment of the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for public and private sector employees and the failure to gazette the new unit cost of Rs.280 computed by the Department of Census and Statistics have prompted Sri Lanka's trade unions to launch protests against the government since September. The public sector employees are paid the cost of living allowance and an allowance of Rs. 67 for each increased unit in the cost of living index, presently.

The Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC) is claiming that private sector employers are not legally bound to pay COLA to their workers. Some firms make this payment given their collective bargaining agreements. Employers are of the view that the payment of cost of living allowance is totally unproductive and it is a payment over a fluctuating index which an employer has no control. Therefore the employer is unable to budget the wages bill. On the other hand it is a payment given to employees irrespective of their work performance.

The Free Trade Zone and General Services Employees Union has made representations to free trade zone employers union to increase wages of factory workers and to pay them the cost of living allowance. At the moment some factories are paying this allowance as they have entered into collective agreements with the trade union but most are not.

PRESS STATEMENT

NTUI demands immediate release of Comrade Prafulla Chakraborty: *Kolkata, 16 October 2011:* The New Trade Union Initiative condemns the arrest of Comrade Prafulla Chakraborty of the Kanoria Jute Mill Shramik Sangrami Union on false charges. Comrade Chakraborty was arrested from his residence and charged under sections 149 (Unlawful assembly), 147 (Punishment for Rioting), 120B (criminal conspiracy), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 324 (Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), and 326 (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) of the IPC. His bail application was later rejected by the Uluberia Court and he has been remanded in judicial custody till 24 October.

On 22 August, the mill owner had announced that Rs 12 crore would be invested in the first phase for overall development of the factory of which a major will be used to clear the dues of the workers. But, till date the

mill has absorbed only 318 workers of the 3000 who lost their jobs with no plan for absorbing them too. Production is yet to begin with the absorbed workers engaged in maintaining the machinery of the mill. The left front government had initiated a monthly allowance for the workers of closed factories - some workers of the Kanoria Jute Mill were also receiving it. With the mill being opened, the workers fear that this payment may too be discontinued by the Government. Payment of Provident Fund dues have also not begun.

On 16 October the workers of Kanoria Jute mill wrote a letter to the Chief Minister urging her not to invite the existing promoters to run the mill. The Kanoria Jute Mill Shramik Sangrami Union has been opposing the state government's move to allow the existing management to run the mill again as it had repeatedly failed earlier. The Kanoria Jute Mill was reopened on 22 August by the erstwhile owner Mr. Pasari following talks with the State Labour minister, Purnendu Bose Mr. Bose too had stood with the workers of Kanoria in their struggle before he joined government. Com. Chakraborty has been opposing the Labour Minister's decision to allow the same promoter who had closed down the mill five years ago to run the factory, ignoring the workers' demand to form a cooperative for the purpose.

The arrest of Com. Chakraborty was based on an incident that occurred on 9 October 2011 at a worker's residence where a meeting was on, when a scuffle took place between those present at the meeting and some workers supported by the management, who disrupted the meeting. His arrest is yet another reflection of a state government increasingly constricting the space for reasoned debate and resorting to the use of its repressive machinery to advance its own agenda.

NTUI demands that the Government of West Bengal:

- Immediately release Comrade Prafulla Chakraborty
- Ensures that all workers of the Kanoria Jute Mill are immediately absorbed, paid wages and other dues and the mill revived through workers' cooperative funds for which are guaranteed by the state government.
- Respect the Right to Democratic Dissent.

NTUI Workshop
on
Democratic Industrialisation

30 November 2011

At Shramik, Mumbai