

# Towards Socialism

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## **WELCOME TO TUs UNITED FIGHT AGAINST UPA ECONOMIC POLICY**

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It's a welcome feature that all the Trade Unions irrespective of their political hues have united together to raise their voice of dissent and fight against the pro-rich economic policy of the UPA government. They have rightly realised that when the government's economic reforms are going against the interests of the working class people, they must rise to the occasion and fight unitedly to safeguard their common interests.

In a grim situation when unemployment is steadily rising, an added problem has been created due to fearful spectre of job loss resulting out of economic slowdown. The Centre had admitted to the loss of five lakh jobs over the past year. But the concerned circle estimate that the actual figure could be as high as 50 lakh. This alarming situation, along with others, has prompted the Trade Union leadership as a whole to come together on the same platform to seek government assurance against retrenchment. They jointly met in a national convention in New Delhi on 14 September 2009, when the organising body released a statement, saying : 'All the TUs are holding a national convention to consider the serious situation arising out of continuing loss of livelihood for millions of workers owing to economic slowdown.' It is an unprecedented move that all the TUs - from Congress affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) to RSS controlled Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) to those aligned to the Left - like the AITUC, CITU, TUCC and others have joined hands together to demand the government's intervention to prevent retrenchment in the industry. Indeed, it is a rare occasion, we welcome this spirit and move of the TUs to fight together when the working class people are confronted with a serious situation threatening their livelihood. We do not encourage any political intervention in such a situation. The unity of the working class, irrespective of any political affiliation, is the best strength that can win over all sorts of aggression of the imperialists and capitalist forces. We wish that this spirit of united struggle should continue to face more such threats in the coming years, particularly when the anti-people and pro-rich economic reforms are very active at the Centre.

There are serious problems like alarming price rise, poverty and unemployment, disinvestments and privatisation, closure and retrenchment and others. To fight against such evils, unity of the working class is essential. We are happy to note that the national convention of the TUs has decided to make a joint representation to the Prime Minister to stop disinvestment of profit making public sectors. For this purpose, they would also sit in dharna in New Delhi during the forthcoming Parliament session and would observe country-wide Protest Day on 28th October 2009. We welcome all such joint moves and wish all success to their fight against pro-rich economic reforms of the UPA government.

## **WHETHER FURTHER EDUCATION CESS IS IN OFFING?**

It is rather unprecedented for a Prime Minister to identify one or two of his colleagues in his Cabinet as the best performer and eulogise them publicly, but that is what has been done by Dr. Manmohan Singh by praising his Human Resource Development Minister Kapil sibal and the Minister of State in HRD department Sm. Purandeswari as the "finest minds" in his cabinet. While inaugurating the "Swakshar Bharat Mission" in New Delhi on 8th September 2009, the Prime Minister further congratulated his HRD ministers as 'nation builder' for the unique work done by them in taking initiatives for multi-sectoral educational reforms and that, too, within the 100 days target.

Without going into the good or bad aspect of this unprecedented enlogisation, we may interpret it as an over enthusiastic expression of the Prime Minister for his most favourite choice for educational reforms, next to his dearest choice for economic reforms. Sibals have succeeded in taking over-zealous hasty steps for early implementation of PM's favourite choice.

But unfortunately, the HRD minister has not cared to think calmly about the pros and cons of the proposed reforms, neither to consult the experts in the academic circle or to go through the elaborate observations and recommendations made by earlier distinguished Education Commissions like Kothari Commission (1964-66) in the matter, nor even to discuss the matter with the State governments, particularly when education is in the concurrent list. It appears that the proposed educational reforms were pre-conceived and the task of implementation was given by the Cabinet leader to his trusted Cabinet colleague. Perhaps that was the 'prime mover' reason for the HRD minister to jump in hurry in reforms initiatives and making many arbitrary and controversial announcements causing concern for the entire academic circle as well as the students and parents of the whole country. It is apprehended that as the UPA government's economic reforms have caused wide economic disparity and inequality among the handful of rich people and a vast majority of poor and lower-middle class people, so will the UPA government's educational reforms lead to a wide gap among the rich and the poor in respect of quality and privileges of education being provided to them most discriminately. It is aimed at creating a small elite society at the cost of millions of deprived people.

This type of discriminating educational reforms initiated by the HRD minister might have earned high praise of the Prime Minister, but it lacks the quality and ability to implement the basic needs of universalisation of education and free & quality school education for all, irrespective of wealth or family status of the students.

But surprisingly, promises are very high-sounding and attractive. But in practice, it is far from reality. when the Prime Minister reiterates his government's commitment to providing good quality education to each and every child, HRD minister's proposed reforms scheme doesn't assure us proper implementation of those commitments.

Prime Minister further assures that resources will not be a constraint in the quest for achieving the goal announced by the government. But in reality \_\_\_ what is the position. The cost of implementing the Right to Education is Rs. 1,50,000 crore over the next five years. Of this, Rs. 90,000 crore is provisioned under the plan expenditure. Hence, the government needs to raise an additional Rs. 60,000 crore to be able to finance the Right to Education over the next five years. But the government is still now silent in the matter. As the government has not disclosed its plan to raise this fund, apprehensions are there that the government may again go for levying further education cess. We may recall that the UPA government has so far levied education cess twice, once @ 2%, and then @ 1% for funding their flagship programmes like Mid-day Meal and Sarvasiksha Abhijan. The UPA government while assuming power for the first time in 2004, with the outside support of the Left, committed in the NCMP to spend 6% of the GDP for education. But till now the government's education budget could cover not even 3% of the GDP. It only shows the government's lack of sincerity in matters of education. Instead of aiming at universalisation of education and good quality education to all, it is more interested in foreign ties and privatisation in fields of education for the benefit of a handful of rich and privileged class. And whatever is done for the common people, that is done at the cost of levying more and more education cess causing increasing distress to the common people. We call for united opposition to all such anti-people educational reforms.

## **BRISK PREPARATIONS FOR 16TH PARTY CONGRESS**

The 16th Party Congress of the All India Forward Bloc is going to be held at Kolkata from 17th to 21st December 2009. As the Bengal Committee of the AIFB is hosting the Party Congress, the entire state leadership under the able guidance of the veteran leader Com. Asok Ghosh has geared up the whole party machinery to take dozens of action programmes to ensure a grand success of the Party Congress. This Party Congress is now being held in Kolkata after 25 years of the 11th Party Congress in 1984, and thus throws challenge to the state leadership to adorn it with unprecedented success.

On the eve of the Party Congress, the Branch and Local Conferences from the beginning of September, 09 onwards, are now being held throughout the state. The zonal and district conferences will follow from October, 09 onwards, ending in the state conference scheduled to be held from 12th to 14th December 2009.

The other part of the preparations are based on forming different committees entrusting them with different positive responsibilities. So far the following 13 Committees have been formed :

1) Reception Committee, with Robin Ghosh as Chairman and Asok Ghosh as General Secretary, 2) Organisational Committee, with Hafiz Alam Sairani as Convenor, 3) Finance Committee, with Naren De as

Convenor, 4) Publication & Seminar committee, with Dr. Barun Mukherji as Convenor, 5) Publicity & Exhibition Committee with Asok Ghosh as Convenor, 6) Cultural Committee with Aparajita Goppi as Convenor, 7) Transportation Committee with Narayan Saha as Convenor, 8) Accommodation Committee with Jiban Saha as Convenor, 9) Food Committee with Sukumar Chakraborty as Convenor, 10) Volunteers Committee with Narayan Saha as Convenor, 11) Reception to Foreign & Indian fraternal delegation Committee with Bhaktipada Ghosh as Convenor, 12) Medical & Health committee with Dr. Subodh De as Convenor, and 13) Lokmat Prakashani Committee with Sanat Nandy as Convenor.

All the aforesaid committees have already completed their first round meetings and have drawn their outline action programmes. Booking of several Halls in the city for delegates session, seminars and accommodation is completed. Huge preparatory work is going on for publishing party documents, History of Forward Bloc, including one Pictorial History, in five volumes, holding of 3 seminars, with distinguished speakers, at different venues in the city, publishing a Souvenir with thoughtful articles, decorating main thoroughfares of the city leading upto the Railway stations and Air-port, publicity campaigns throughout the state, organising a big rally for the open session on 17th December 2009, enlisting members for a big volunteer corps., etc. Cultural programmes will also be organised in several parks in the city during the Party Congress session. Collection of funds for a big budget is no less important. Public collection drive is planned from 21 to 25 October 2009 throughout the state. Besides, all the Associate & Active members, State committee members, MLAs-MPs-Ministers have been asked to pay special levies for the Party Congress fund. The Bengal committee is getting itself fully prepared to ensure a comfortable stay of the delegates from different states during the 16th Party Congress in Kolkata.

## **LAKHS OF PEOPLE THROGGED IN KOLKATA TO OBSERVE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOOD MOVEMENT**

31st August 1959 is a red letter day in the history of left movement in Bengal, when 80 people died at the ruthless lathi charge and firing by the police of the then Congress government of West Bengal. In the prevailing price rise and acute scarcity of food, reaching a near-famine condition in the state, massive rallies of hungry poor people assembled at Kolkata on 31st August 1959 to place their demand for food to the government. But in retaliation, the police charged the people with violent force of lathi-tearing gas-bullets resulting in death of 80 people. The movement continued for a couple of days under the banner of 'Price rise and feminine resistance Committee', led by Left leaders like Hemanta Basu, Suresh Banerjee, Jyoti Basu and others.

On completion of 50th year of this historical food movement, the Left Front organised a central rally at Kolkata on 31st August 2009 to pay respect to the martyrs. The record massive gathering of the day was presided over by the Left Front Chairman Biman Bose and was addressed by the Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and other leading left leaders like Asok Ghosh (F.B.), Manju Majumdar (CPI), Kshiti Goswami (RSP) and others. Living members of the families of the martyrs were felicitated from a specially erected dias.

Forward Bloc leader Asok Ghosh in his speech congratulated the brave martyrs who fought against the enemies of democracy. He further said, the Left Front today still represents the hungry millions who fought against the Congress regime. The Left Front continues to be committed to fight against the anti-people policies of the Congress, who are of late associated with the right reactionary forces like Trinamool Congress and other ultra-left and reactionary forces. Spiralling price rise, poverty and unemployment, mostly created by the Congress rule at the Centre, are the core issues against which the Left Front are continuing their ceaseless fight, taking the poor people in confidence. Com. Ghosh asserted that the Left Front has the strength, capacity and determination to overcome the present phase of temporary setback in the state; it will again be in full command in West Bengal - the traditionally left-dominated Progressive state in the country.

## **DR. RAMMANOHAR LOHIA SAPTKRANTI VICHAR YATRA : Forward Bloc felicitates the marchers in West Bengal**

On the eve of birth centenary of the legendary socialist leader Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, his ardent followers 'Yusuf Meher Ali Youth/Rastra Seva Dal', led by Dr. Sunilam organised a 20,000 km Yatra from Pune to Delhi, between 9th August to 12 October 2009, with the object of propagating the message of National Integration and Fight against injustice.

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia advocated seven revolutionary theories at Nainital in June 1962. His followers believe that these theories are still relevant. Hence, during his year-long birth centenary

programme, his followers have undertaken this march to propagate his theories throughout the country.

After completing journey through Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhrapradesh, Puducherry, Orissa and Jharkhand, the 30-member team entered West Bengal through Kulti on 8th September 2009 and passed through Asansol, Burdwan, Kolkata, Shyamnagar, Krishnanagar, Palascy, Berhampore & Farakka and thereafter proceeded to Bihar. During their journey through West Bengal, the Bengal Committee of All India Forward Bloc, firm believer of socialist ideology of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, extended all support to their Yatra mission and arranged receptions at various points. While reaching Kolkata on 9 September 2009, they were warmly felicitated at a meeting held at Nalini Guha Hall at the state headquarter of All India Forward Bloc. Welcoming the 'abhijatri', Asok ghosh, General Secretary, All India Forward Bloc, Bengal Committee called for unity of all socialist forces to fight against Imperialism and to establish Socialism in India. Leaders and workers of Samajbadi Party, Janata Dal(U), Janata Dal(S), West Bengal unit also joined the reception meeting.

## **YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOP IN TAMILNADU**

On 25.8.2009 evening Com. Debrata Biswas, National General Secretary and Dr. Barun Mukherji, MP, Central Secretary, AIFB arrived at Madurai by flight. Tamilnadu state party office bearers welcomed them at Airport and escorted them to Rajapalayam, the venue of Youth Leadership Training Workshop.

Two-day Youth Leadership Training Workshop was held at Rajapalayam, Tamilnadu on 26 & 27th August 2009. Forty four youngsters from 22 districts of Tamilnadu got training in that workshop. Seven of them are post-graduates, 12 of them are graduates, remaining of the participants are school finalists.

On 26.8.2009 at 10.15 a.m. Com. D. Biswas inaugurated the Workshop. Com. Dr. Barun Mukherji took the first class on the topic "AIFB : historical perspectives, objectives & its justification : Youth Movement in India". Com. Biswas took the next class on "Party Building Process (Dhanbad Party Congress document 2005) : rise and growth of All India Youth league".

After lunch break, the State Party Chairman Com. V.S.Navamani summed up the proceedings of the morning session and explained briefly in Tamil. Next Prof. gopal gave an outline of the topic "India's Freedom Movement - Netaji and Muthuramalinga Thevar's participation". Last class of the day was taken by Dr. Barun Mukherji which covered the topic "Netaji : his political thoughts and ideologies".

On 27.8.2009, Com. Dr. Barun Mukherji gave an elaborate lecture on "Party Constitution : its preamble and other clauses". In his speech, he gave an outline of what is meant by Scientific Socialism. Next Com. Debabrata Biswas spoke on "Party and Mass Fronts : relationship, necessity and objective, rise and growth of All India Youth league". After lunch break, participants gave their feedback reactions on the training programme. Com. Dr. Barun Mukherji, M.P. distributed the Certificates to the participants. During the course of discussions, Prof. Gopal gave Tamil interpretations of the speeches delivered by the speakers.

Almost all the magazines and newspapers of the state gave a wide coverage of this training workshop. Since the inception of Forward Bloc about 70 years ago, such training programme was held for the first time in Tamilnadu. In earlier days after Muthuramalinga Thevar and Mukhia Thevar periods, Forward Bloc was presented as a party in favour of only Thevar community. Such illusion is overthrown by the fact that majority of participants in this training programme belong to other communities such as Mutharayar, Dalit, Christians and Muslims. This fact was highlighted in most of the magazines and daily newspapers.

Tamil magazines highlighted the reasons for choosing Rajapalayam for the Party Youth wing Training Workshop. They pointed out the following reasons :

- i) Thevarji pleaded for abolition of Zamindari in public meeting of left leaders including E.M.S. Namboodripad, P. Jeevanandham, P. Ramamurthy, Joyprakash Narayan, Achutha Menon at Rajapalayam.
- ii) Adalit candidate Com. T. Mukkaian was elected as Forward Bloc MLA from Rajapalayam constituency in 1980.
- iii) All India Agragami Kishan Sabha Conference was held at Rajapalayam in 1983.

## **DELHI STATE TRADE UNIONS ARE PRAPARING FOR ALL INDIA PROTEST DAY**

A joint meeting of the state leaders of TUCC, AITUC, INTUC, CITU, BMS, HMS, UTUC, AIUTUC, AICCTU was held at TUCC office, New Delhi on 19th September 2009.

The leaders elaborately discussed about the declaration of National Trade Union Convention held Mavlankar Hall on 14th September 2009. It was decided to take all possible steps to make success the All India Protest Day on 28th October, 2009. The leaders of Delhi Trade Unions decided to organise Protest Rally and Dharnas against the anti worker policies of both the Central and State Governments.

The meeting also decided to raise voice against the anomalies prevailing in the implementation of ESI, PF, Bonus, Minimum wages and others labour laws.

The meeting was concluded successfully in the presidentship of Com. P.N. Dwivedi, General Secretary, TUCC Delhi State Committee.

# NATIONAL CONVENTION OF WORKERS

Workers from all sectors and sections gathered at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi on 14th September 2009 on the call of 9 Central Trade Union organisations (TUCC, BMS, INTUC, HMS, AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, UTUC) of the country to launch joint movement all over the country on five basic demands related to general people and working class in particular. The convention was conducted by nine member presidium, one from each Central Trade Unions - Com. G.R. Shivashankar (TUCC), Com. Md. Amin, MP (CITU), Com. Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Com. Thampan Thomas ((HMS) and others. This convention was organised to establish Trade Union Unity on broad base understanding, the National Convention of workers expressed serious concern over:

- + rising prices of the essential commodities including food grains and vegetables creating severe hardships for the mass of the people
- + continuing job losses resulting in loss of livelihood to millions of the workers across the sectors owing to recession and economic slowdown
- + non-implementation of and rampant violation of basic labour laws pertaining to minimum wages, working hours, social security, safety in workplace and trade union rights etc throughout the country adding to the sufferings of the entire toiling people
- + extreme inadequacy of the provisions and schemes under the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008 to provide any substantive relief to the vast multitude of unorganized sector workers including the contract workers owing to the restrictive provisions under the schemes and absence of any National Fund for the Unorganised Sector (NAFUS) as recommended by the National Commission on Enterprises in Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour
- + Move of the Govt. for disinvestment of shares in profit making Central Public Sector Enterprises.

The National Convention urges upon the Government to take urgent remedial/corrective measures to address the aforesaid concerns of working people effectively so that

- + Price rise of essential commodities is contained through appropriate corrective and distributive measures like universal PDS and containing speculation in commodity market
- + Concrete proactive measures are taken for linkage of employment protection in the recession stricken sectors with the stimulus package being offered to the concerned entrepreneurs and for augmenting public investment in infrastructure
- + Strict enforcement of all basic labour laws without any exception or exemption and stringent punitive measures for violation of labour laws
- + Steps are taken for removal of all restrictive provisions based on poverty line in respect of eligibility of coverage of the schemes under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act 2008 and creation of National Fund for the Unorganised Sector to provide for a National Floor Level Social Security to all unorganized workers including the contract/casual workers in line with the recommendation of National Commission on Enterprises in Unorganised Sector and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour
- + Disinvestment of Shares of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is not resorted to for meeting budgetary deficit and instead their growing reserve and surplus is used for expansion and modernization purposes and also for revival of sick Public Sector Undertakings.

Supporting the concern expressed by the convention General Secretary of TUCC Com. S.P. Tiwari thrashed the policies of Government of India which do not initiate measures for curtailing price rise and hoarding of essential commodities, 'DAL' a common item of food basket had went beyond the reach of "AAM ADMI" and survival of livelihood of low paid workers in formal and informal sectors are at stake.

Criticising the gimmick statements of Government of India claiming Indian Economy unaffected during recession, he point out that the report of labour bureau survey conducted in 3263 units published recently had shown that nearly 7.7 lakhs workers lost their jobs during October 2008 to June 2009 and survey conducted by Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India in 576 export oriented units shows that from August 2008 to June 2009 - 2,37,761 workers lost their jobs.

He also stated that the private corporate houses and multinational companies were conceded grant cum subsidies in 2008-09 as Rs. 282735 crore in compare with Rs. 55184 in 2007-08, hence 69% of total revenue were expensed not for them who created it but for them who lost it.

Bringing focus on the issue of construction workers, he told the gathering about the exploitation of workers by Real Estate Builders and Corporate Sponsored big contractors, who are not paying them the minimum wages of Rs. 142/8 hrs. and instead paying them Rs. 130-140 in 12 hours. Needless to say the revenue generated through cess collection for these workers are lying unused in corps of state governments. The National Convention adopts the following programmes to highlight the above burning issues facing the

working people:

- + State level joint conventions.
- + To observe All India Protest Day on 28th October 2009.

The National Convention calls upon the workers and employees and their unions irrespective of affiliations to unitedly highlight their concern over the above mentioned burning issues facing them. The Convention also appeals to them to participate the joint programmes of the trade unions en masse to press for the abovementioned demands before the Government.

## **AIFB PROTEST RALLY AT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

The Thiruvananthapuram unit of All India forward Bloc has organised a protest march and meeting against the defacing of Netaji Park in front of Kerala legislative assembly building. The City Corporation has reduced the park area surrounding the Netaji Statue of Thiruvananthapuram under the pretext of expanding the road before the assembly building, though it was very broad road compared to other roads in the city. This was done at midnight as war time situation.

The AIFB activists have organised a protest march and meeting on 27th August 2009 in front of the Assembly building. The protest meeting was held in front of the Netaji Statue. Com. V. Ram Mohan, General Secretary of AIFB Kerala Committee inaugurated the protest meeting. While addressing the gathering, Com. Ram Mohan came down heavily on the authorities of the Corporation and demanded them to restore the old position. He said that the road in front of the statue is sufficient to move more than three heavy vehicles at a time and there is no such traffic congestion in that area. The corporation has done this act only for the movement of the VIPs coming to the Assembly. It is unfortunate to deface the statue area of Netaji who fought and sacrificed his whole life for freedom of our motherland for making the way for 'new' leaders. He urged upon the patriotic people of Kerala to raise voice against this injustice and come forward to pressurise the authorities to restore the status co. After the meeting the protesters lighted candles surrounding the whole statue area as a mark of protest and respect to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Com. Arun S. Sasi, General Secretary of AIYL, who organised the whole protest march, criticised the act of Corporation and the criminal silence of the state government. He announced that the AIFB and its mass organisations will continue its protest programmes till the status co restored. Com. Rajith Rajendran, Com. Rajan Amboory, Com. P.R. Das, Com. Vazhuthacaud Sivankutty, Com. Rajagopal, Com. Kazhakootam Prabhakaran and Com. Sivakumar also addressed the gathering.

## **KASHMIR CONFERENCE OF AIFB AT SRINAGAR**

The Kashmir Conference of All India Forward Bloc will be held at Srinagar on 3,4 November 2009. This was decided in an extended state committee meeting of the party held at Srinagar on 15th September 2009. The meeting was presided by Com. V.P Saini, Secretary, AIFB. State Committee members from Kashmir, candidates of the last Assembly and Parliament elections were attended the meeting. Com. Naren Dey, Secretary, AIFB and Minister of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal and Com. G. Devarajan, Secretary, AIFB also attended the meeting.

While addressing the meeting Com. Naren Dey explained about the importance and relevance of Netaji's ideology in the contemporary socio-political situation of our country. He opined that it is the duty of the patriotic people of the valley to bring back the misguided young people to the main stream of Indian society. The government should take the people into confidence before implementing any scheme meant for the welfare of the public. He urged upon the members to propagate the ideals of Netaji as an alternative to save the nation from anti-national forces.

Com. G. Devarajan, explained about the activities of AIFB in Jammu and Kashmir since its formation. He said that the people of Kashmir overwhelmingly accepted the photo, flag and ideology of Netaji to the core of their heart and extended all sorts of support to propagate the political philosophy of the party. The party tried its level best to stand with people when the valley was devastated due to earthquake. The Party had organised several movements against unemployment, police-military atrocities and corruption. The Party participated in all the elections held in the state in the last six years. In the last Assembly elections, the party got more than twenty five thousand votes despite all limitations. The All India Forward Bloc is developing gradually in the state and more and more young people are joining in the party. In order to streamline the organisational activities in the state, more coordination and communication between the leaders and workers are required.

Com. Gh.Mohiuddin Sheikh, General Secretary of AIFB J&K State Committee placed the report about the organisational activities of the party in the state since last State Committee. He accepted that due to lack of coordination and communication, we are unable to achieve the target of enrolment of

membership and organising regular mass movements. Now the party is moving in the right direction and will open its office very soon with necessary facilities at Srinagar.

After day long discussion, it was decided to make two committees before the Party Congress - one for Kashmir consists of 12 districts and the other for Jammu consists of 10 districts- The Kashmir Conference will be held at Srinagar on 3,4 November 2009. Before the Kashmir Conference districts conferences will be organised in 10 districts of Kashmir and will form new committees. A Public meeting will be organised during the Conference on 3rd November. It was further decided to organise regular mass movements against corruption and unemployment.

While concluding the meeting, Com. V.P. Saini explained about the sacrifice and contributions of Netaji to liberate our motherland from the clutches of British imperialism. He opined that the new generation is getting the real history of our freedom struggle. Therefore it is the duty of the followers of Netaji to propagate the real history of our liberation struggle. The young people should learn lessons from the supreme sacrifices of revolutionary heroes of India to build a new India free from all strings. He promised to the committee that he will extend all sorts of assistance to open and run an office at Srinagar.

Com. Ameer Geelani, Com. Reeyas Geelani, Com. Shahid Mansoor, Com. Shakeel Geelani, Com. Malik Noor-ul-Amin, Com. Showkat Ali Beigh, Co. Iqbal Lone, Syed Basheer Ahmed Shah, Com. Ahmed Malla, Com. Yaseen Baba, Com. Haji Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Com. Md. Hussain, Com. Gh. Hassan Mir, Com. Syed Md. Farooq and Com. Gh. Mohammed Dar also spoke.

## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF KARNATAKA ANGANWADI WORKERS FEDERATION HELD SUCCESSFULLY AT BANGALORE**

Karnataka State Anganwadi Workers Federation's 26th Annual Conference was held at Sri. Uddana Swamy Samudhaya Bhavana, Sri Siddaganga Mutt, Tumkur. As Sri Siddalinga Swamiji inaugurated the conference Sri. H.S. Basavaraju, M.P, tumkur has attended the programme and Sri. G.R Shivashankar has presided the conference. In this conference more than 974 delegates were participated representing 21 districts of Karnataka.

Also, We have release our "Anganawadi" monthly Magazine of the federation was realised at the conference.

The conference elaborately discussed about Anganawadi Workers Retirement Benefits, Pension Schemes, Leadership Training, Free Sites for Anganawadi Workers & Helpers, A separate Trade Union Office in Bangalore and Anganawadi workers and helpers welfare fund and other concerned points of the union. Also, the conference unanimously pass these resolutions as below:-

1. Conference demanded the State & Central Government should implement the Retirement Benefits and Pension Scheme to all the anganawadi workers & helpers immediately,
2. Conference demanded all the anganawadi workers & helpers should get housing facility under Rajiv Gandhi Vasathi Nigam.
3. The conference is decided to give leadership training programme to 4 divisional by end of 2009.
4. Conference has demanded both State & Central Government to give the honorarium at one time within 5th of every month.
5. Also, Conference demanded the state & central government to regularize the anganawadi workers & helpers alongwith the allotment of free site/free house.

## **LEFT PARTIES MASS MOVEMENT AGAINST PRICE RISE IN PILIBHIT**

Hundreds of activists belongs to Left Parties viz. CPM, CPI and All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) protested against sky-rocketing price rise of essential commodities in different places of Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. The protest rallies and meetings were organised at Puranpur on 31st August, at Bisalpur on 2nd September and at Vithra Adda Tanakpur Road on 4th September.

A mass rally was organised on 9th September 2009 from railway warehouse to Kachahari Tikuniya Park. The leaders who addressed the public meetings criticised the callous attitude of both central and state government to check the spiraling price rise. The leaders of Left parties demanded to put an end the forward trade of all essential commodities, to universalise the public distribution system and remove all APL, BPL categories and to take stringent actions against hoarders and black marketeers. The mass movement also raise the slogan for rural development including drinking water, roads, public health system and education.

The leaders of the left parties of Pilibhit has decided to strengthen mass movement in the coming days.

## **EDUCATION ONVENTION IN KOLKATA**

After Delhi, it was in Kolkata \_\_\_ an education convention to voice people's resentment and opposition to the Congress-led UPA government's educational reforms was held on 13 September 2009 at the prestigious Darbhanga Hall of Calcutta University. The convention was inaugurated by Dr. Barun Mukherji, MP and was addressed by Prof. Dhruvajyoti Chattopadhyay, Pro-VC (Academy) and Prof. Basab Chowdhury, Registrar of the Calcutta University, Prof. Sikha Sengupta presided over the convention.

A folder (in Bengali) highlighting the detrimental aspects of the Centre's educational reforms was distributed among the distinguished audience. The convention raised demands to stop privatisation and foreign tie-ups in education sector, to implement compulsory free quality education for all and to ensure equal education facilities for all, irrespective of wealth and social status.

The convention was organised by the Party's Higher Education cell, West Bengal Secondary Teachers Association, Primary Teachers Association(West Bengal), All India Students Bloc (W.B., Committee) and the West Bengal Lawyers' Federation.

## **PROTEST RALLY AGAINST PRICE RISE AT NAGPUR**

The All India Forward Bloc Nagpur unit has organised a mass rally and protest meeting against the price rise of essential commodities at Akashvani chowk, Nagpur. Hundreds of AIFB activists and members of mass organisations have participated in the march and meeting. They raised slogans against the callous attitude of both central and state government to check the sky rocketing price rise of all essential commodities.

The Rally was addressed by the leaders of AIFB Maharashtra. While addressing the gathering Com. Arun Wankar, general Secretary of AIFB Maharashtra said that instead of universalising the PDS and to checking the hoardings and black marketing the government is keeping criminal silence on the spiralling price rise. The second UPA has increased the prices of petrol and diesel unprecedentedly. The current price rise is the cascading effect of petrol price hike and hoarding, forward trading and blackmarketing. He further said that not only the prices of rice and dal but all commodities including medicines also going high every day. The government has no control over the market. The state government has miserably failed to interfere in the market to control the price rise and to provide solace to the poor people. He declared that the All India Forward Bloc will continue its struggle for the cause of common people.

Com. Balwant Rai Mehta, Central Committee member of AIFB also came down heavily on both central and state government on their insensitive attitude towards this vital issue being confronted by the common people of the state. Com. Dharmaraj Dubey, Chairman of AIFB Nagpur Committee also addressed the gathering. He criticised the nexus between police and real estate mafia in the city and urged them to stop all atrocities against the people living in the cluster areas. He declared that the All India Forward Bloc will continue its struggle against all corruption and malpractices of the government officials. Com. Suryaman Shinde, Com. R.T. Vaidh, Com. Rajani Shinde, Com. Rajesh Bodhle, Com. Shyama Jain, Com. Bhimarao Khonde, Com. Vijay Nimbalkar, Com. Usman Khan, Com. Gajanan Yadav, Com. Mrinal Baghre etc also spoke.

## **F.B. PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD IN TAMILNADU**

A public meeting was held on 25.8.2009 night at Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi District. That meeting was held to protest the price rise of essential commodities. It also served to declare the names of office bearers of city and local body of Thoothukudi District. A lot of party workers, specially a lot of women party workers, participated in that meeting. National General Secretary Com. Debabrata Biswas, National Secretary and Member of Rajya Sabha Dr. Barun Mukherji, State Chairman Com. V.S.Navamani, State Secretary P.V.Kathiravan, AIYL State General Secretary Com. K. Subburaj, AKS State Chairman Com. Narayanasamy, District General Secretary Com. Karthick, District Chairman Com. Marikannan, Kovilpatti City Secretary Com. Lord and many others addressed the meeting.

Another public meeting was held on 27.8.09 at Rajapalayam City ward no. 8. The meeting was held for the purpose of stressing the issue of patta and the outcomes of the training workshop for youths. A lot of public, more specially a lot of women, participated in the meeting. City Secretary Com. Gurusamy presided over the meeting. District Secretary Com. Dharmaraj welcomed the gathering. Dr. Barun Mukherji, MP, State Chairman V.S.Navamani, AKS State Chairman Com. Narayanasamy, AIYL State General Secretary K.Subburaj, District Secretary Com. Nallamuthu, District Committee Member Com. Kanagaraj addressed the meeting.

## **AIFB OFFICE OPENED**

One office of AIFB state committee was opened at Agharamdevi Chowk, Subhas Road, near Kumbhalkar College, Nagpur on 30th August 2009. Com. Arun Wankar hoisted the party flag and leaders of AIFB spoke on the occasion. It was decided that now onwards all the correspondence and other party activities will be carried forward from this office. This office will work as chief election committee office for the ensuing Assembly Elections.

## TUCC ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

**National Progressive coal employees Federation:** Reception committee of NPCEF met on 20th August 2009 at Barakar, Burdwan, West Bengal to discuss the follow up of organizational process started earlier. The process of membership drive was reviewed and subsidiary wise target and responsibilities were fixed. Some other decisions taken are as follows :

- a) Membership enrollment will continue till October 31st , 2009 and thereafter it would be submitted before the subsidiary committee.
- b) Unit committee will hold their Annual General Meeting between November 2009 to 15th December 2009, to discuss various issues relating to ICWA VIII and also to constitute their Unit committees.
- c) Area wise conferences will be conducted between 16th December 2009 to 15th January, 2010.
- d) Subsidiary Level conference will be held in between 16th January 2000 to 15th February 2010.
- e) Federation conference will be held in Last week of February 2010 at Barakar, West Bengal .

**U. P. State committee:** TUCC state committee meeting was held 29th August,2009 at Meerut . It was presided over by Com. Hansraj Akela, President, TUCC state committee. The following resolutions were passed :

- a) Com. Rajendra Singh was entrusted to prepare white paper on the revival of Sugarcane Industry in U.P. and draft it for representation before Hon'ble Labour and Sugarcane Minister of U.P. in due course..
- b) Issue of NAREGA workers would be taken up with UP state Govt. authorities for redressal of their grievances.
- c) The issue of UP formal and informal sector workers would be taken up by the delegation of UP state leaders during their proposed meeting with Hon'ble Labour Minister of U.P.

**M.P. state committee:** In an extended state committee meeting of M.P. held on 30th August 2009 at Bhopal , presided over by Com. Ram Chandra Parmar, the state committee was reconstituted as follows : President - Com. Ram Chandra Parmar ; Working President - Com. Salma Saudagar; Vice President - Com. Ram Autar Pachori and Com.. Amar Das Upraria; General Secretary - Com. Sanjay Yadav; Organising - Com. Kailash Dabi; Secretary - Com. Mohanlal Bansal.

To review the ongoing organisation process, the state committee will meet again on 30th September 2009 at Bhopal .

**Jharkhand :** Leaders from ECL and BCCL of Agragami Jharkhand Colliery Mazdoor Union met at Nirsa, Dhanbad on 1st September, 2009. The meeting was addressed by Com. S.P. Tiwari, General Secretary, TUCC, who had inspired the leadership for their targets oriented membership drive to take as challenge as well as to launch movement against coal management against their atrocities on coal workers. He also stressed upon the need to include demands of unequal wage increment of worker and Supervisory personal of Coal Industry, issue of rehabilitation of displaced people, to stop rampant out sourcing and privatisation etc. to save the workers and industry as a whole.

## TUCC CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET AT NEW DELHI

Central Committee meeting of TUCC was held on 13th Sept. 2009 at New Delhi at Central Office. The meeting was presided over by Com. G.R. Shiv Shankar, President of TUCC, Central Committee.

Central Committee Members discussed various issues related to working class who are facing acute problems in their working conditions and livelihood due to ongoing effects global slow down, it was observed that the policies implemented and executed by Govt. of India are protecting the interest of big corporate houses of the country and multi national companies who has extracted out huge revenue by exploiting working class and denying them their statutory and legal rights. The newly introduced pension scheme for Central Govt. employees was vehemently opposed and decided to launch countrywide protest to revive this is scheme. The issue of establishing new ESI Medical College & Hospitals on public partnership basis was discussed and decided to be the core issue for movement to stop the Govt. of India from draining out public exchequer for the advantage of private entrepreneurs. It was decided to launch movement by TUCC in following manners.

- From 17th Nov. To 23rd Nov. 2009 - Gate meetings, Dharnas, Deputation, at all unit level.
- 27th Nov.2009 - Deputation before concerned State Governors by the respected State Committee.

## INDIAN AIRLINES BANKRUPT? DUE TO MISMANAGEMENT

When the officials of DGCA were entering the chamber of North Bloc to meet our Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to report the present financial status of our Yesteryear's pride "Indian Airlines", they must be boggling their mind to prepare themselves for replying the questions raised by Hon'ble PM. The same happened immediately after hearing the financial status of Air India as Zero, PM was stunned and scolded all of them with reluctant commitment to save IA from severe and pandemonic

crisis. In last tenure of so called effective manager of UPA Govt. Shri Prafulla Petelji - Acquisition, Merger and expansion were the basic "MANTRA" for revival of Indian Airlines without any long term planning or comprehensive policy which could had generated internal oxygen to this gaint organization employing 30968 regular employees and 19860 Contract Workers - needless to say the same National Public Carrier was earning profits till 2004.

Some features of mismanagement would enlighten the causes which had created the havoc.

- ★ Uneffective planning to purchase 111 New Air Craft for an unexpected value of 55 thousand crores in an unprecedented economic crisis situation.
  - ★ Grade scale of Dy. Maintenance Engineer was Rs. 50,954/- and in addition he used to drawn Rs. 1,68,821 as production incentive.
  - ★ 21 Boeings were Idle and inoperative due to maintenance.
  - ★ The loss in the year 2005-06 was Rs. 333 crores which soared to Rs. 4216 crores in the year 2007-08.
  - ★ The Revenue Generated in the year 2005-06 was Rs. 14600 crores which came down to Rs. 13519 crores in the year 2007-08.
  - ★ Net loss soared upto Rs. 7200 crores due to increased fuel expenses, huge interest payment against loan, Global downturn.
  - ★ Working capital requirement in the year 2005-06 was Rs. 2369 crores which increased to Rs. 14064 crores in the year 2008-09.
  - ★ Out of 167 flights only 13 are earning profits.
  - ★ Revenue were utilized to pay interest (12.5%), Air fair of employees and officials (9.6%), Maintenance (17.7%), Capital expenditure (12%) etc.
  - ★ After Merger of Air India and India Airlines, rather than curtailing corporate expenses the same were increased due to continuation of some executives.
  - ★ Some ridiculous and non-sense practices were allowed to occur regularly on which revenue expenditure increased .
- i) Flight operating from Amritsar to London had the crew members residents of Mumbai and they fly to Amritsar to pilot the flight from Amritsar to London.
  - ii) Cabin crew for Thiruvananthapuram to Male flight, fly from Delhi to Thiruvananthapuram for four hours to piloting a flight of only 40 minutes.
  - iii) Cabin crews fly from Delhi to Chennai to piloting flight from Chennai to Singapore.
  - iv) After merger of IA and Air India - HR directors two for each were continuing whereas two post expected to be ceased.
  - v) Both the Airlines were operating in same segment and with their 60% seat capacity, hence caused nearly a loss of Rs. 1200 crores.
  - vi) Sr. Pilots engaged in desk job instead of flying are paid all sort of flight allowances so that salary of Junior pilots kept less than that of their senior pilots.
  - vii) 20 Boeings are without Engines and lying idle at maintenance shed.

Now, our prestigious "Maharaja" is running at a loss of Rs. 10 crores daily with loan burden of Rs. 30,000 crores in compare with private Airlines which are earning regular profits. Rather than consolidating and utilization of full capacity of our Airlines, the DGCA is planning to issue IPO for Airports Authority of India (AAI) a state run company engaged in developing 35 Airports (Kolkata, Indore, Chennai, Bhopal, Ranchi etc.) for cost of Rs. 6000 crores, to corporatise its entity and generate funds.

May I ask Mr. Patel - The public money of Sweating and hard working general people of the country who contributes to the National GDP are assumed return guarantee or its face value due to this sort of mismanagement ?

## **Thwart Initiative to Revive WTO Negotiations : IPCAWTO**

THE Doha Round of negotiations which was dormant for about a year is now being revived at the initiative of the Indian commerce minister whose objective is to "break the deadlock" in the process. A ministerial meeting to which some thirty five countries have been invited is scheduled for 3-4th September 2009 in New Delhi.

The Indian initiative in this regard is, to say the least, intriguing. The so-called "deadlock" was cited in official circles, only a year ago, as the proof of a strong pro-farmer stance of the then commerce minister. It

was argued that the negotiations got deadlocked mainly because the minimum safeguards insisted upon by the commerce minister for protecting the livelihood of millions of Indian farmers against the unfair competition from subsidised cheap imports from developed countries were not acceptable to the developed countries, particularly USA.

Not an iota of evidence is available to indicate that developed agriculture exporting countries, particularly USA, have since relaxed their stance to accommodate the Indian concerns. On the contrary, reports are circulating that some formulations are being proposed by a minister of one of those countries which seek to dilute the safeguards in agriculture and impose severe burden on the developing countries by opening up of their markets for industrial imports.

The initiative to "break the deadlock" is thus likely to boomerang. The forthcoming ministerial meeting may well turn out to be the preparation of the ground for substantial dilution of the official Indian stand in vital areas of negotiations.

The Indian Peoples Campaign Against WTO (IPCAWTO) has consistently pressed for a strong negotiating stance, particularly in the areas of agriculture, non-agricultural market access (NAMA), intellectual property rights, services. IPCAWTO had hailed the re-emergence of the solidarity of the South at the Cancun ministerial meeting in 2003 and has been stressing that India should forge links with the developing countries and evolve a coordinated stand to defend the interests of the South in these negotiations.

Unfortunately the Indian position not only got diluted in the crucial areas as the negotiations progressed but India also veered away from the solidarity of the South on more than one crucial occasions.

IPCAWTO appeals to the peasantry, the workers, the craftsmen, all patriotic elements and particularly the youth, committed to self-reliant, just, prosperous and egalitarian India, to join the campaign to not only thwart the present initiative to revive the WTO negotiations at the present juncture but also to compel the Indian Government to thoroughly reorient its stand in international negotiations so that it fully accords with the interest of working people.

## **AGRICULTURE**

In Agriculture, the fundamental imbalance persists. The market access sought by developed countries into the developing countries is ensured by the maintenance of the three- tiered tariff reduction formula which has been there for some time. Which, broadly speaking, requires developing countries to reduce their tariffs on agricultural products by 36 per cent as against the developed countries obligation to reduce them by 54 per cent. The promise of average reduction by developed countries will make sense if the very high tariffs in the top tier (some ranging as high as 700 per cent or even more) are drastically reduced and few exceptions are permitted through the escape route of "sensitive products". Both these conditions seem very unlikely to be fulfilled. For developing countries like ours, an average cut of 36 per cent on bound tariffs in agriculture is a stiff proposition. In sharp contrast, the issue of elimination/ substantial reduction in subsidies by developed countries, particularly USA, still remains hanging, awaiting "political solution".

The possible level to which USA may agree to "bring down" the narrowly defined trade distorting domestic support has been indicated at \$14.5 billion, from the present allowable level of \$ 48.7 billion under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). But the actual current level of such subsidies was only around \$8 billion in 2007. Which means that even after much publicised 70 per cent reduction in the allowable level, the newly allowable level will still be nearly double the actual level, leaving a lot of scope for USA to increase the actual level of subsidies in future. What is worse is that all this "reduction" will not at all affect the burgeoning subsidies under the so-called "green box" (estimated currently at \$50 billion) which constitute the bulk of around 80 per cent of the total subsidy bill of USA and which are outside the range of reduction aimed at and are not subject to any worthwhile multilateral discipline, despite some provisions sought to be incorporated in the text for better "surveillance".

India (like a large number of developing countries forming G-33 led by Indonesia) has basically protective or defensive interest in these negotiations. We missed the bus by not insisting on ensuring the right to impose quantitative restrictions on imports to safeguard the livelihood of millions of small and marginal peasants. We placed our trust in the proposed instrumentalities of special products and special safeguard mechanism. G-33 proposed that developing countries should have a right to "self-designate" 30 per cent of tariff lines as special products which would not be subject to any tariff cut. Later G-33 diluted their stand and settled only for 20 per cent tariff lines. As against that the current text speaks of only 12 per cent of tariff lines being eligible to be treated as special products and of these, only 40 per cent, i.e. only 5 percent of the tariff lines, to be subject to no tariff cut and remaining 60 percent i.e. 7 per cent of tariff lines to be subject to an average of 19 percent cut. We have 715 tariff lines in agriculture. We wanted 215 tariff lines to be treated as special products; now the text implies that we would get only 86 tariff lines, of which only 36 lines would be subject to no tariff cut and 50 lines subject to a tariff cut of 19 per cent. Considering vast multiplicity of our agricultural product range and the crucial importance of these products for livelihood, the range of protection available is too narrow and too weak.

As regards special safeguard mechanism, the criteria in the text for the price- based measures are too restrictive and ineffectual. Thus, the provision to impose additional duty to protect indigenous peasantry from sharp decline in international prices and consequent surge or threat of surge of imports can be invoked only if the import price declines to or below the designated "trigger price" which the text suggests to be 70 percent of the average import price of the preceding three years. The additional duty to be so levied cannot exceed 50 percent of the difference between the actual import price and the trigger price. By definition, the import price will continue to remain much below the "trigger

price" even after the levy of additional duty. Moreover, this measure will be applicable only on a shipment-by-shipment basis. The protection so offered is also therefore ineffectual.

The other safeguard measure is volume-based. It has a two-tier volume trigger, with one tier being a volume increase of 120-140 per cent of the base level imports and the second tier being a volume increase over 140 per cent. In tier one, the maximum additional duty permissible shall not exceed one third the current bound tariff or 8 percentage points (whichever is higher). In the second tier, the maximum additional duty shall not exceed half the current bound tariff or 12 percentage points, whichever is higher. These are too restrictive formulations. For one thing, the trigger range of volume is too high, making the remedy coming into force when the damage is already done. Secondly, the remedial protection through levy of additional tariff is too low to effectively address the problem of import surge.

There is also proposed cross-linkage of the two triggers making the application of remedial measures even more problematic. At the same time, the volume- based and price- based measures cannot be invoked simultaneously for the same product. Moreover the measures are not expected to be applied beyond a limited period (four to eight months) and are not expected to be repeated before a lapse of similar period.

It is well known that adverse impact of decline in international prices in a domestic market integrated with the world market is felt even before or without large scale actual imports. What is needed to insulate the peasantry from such adverse impact is a strong signal like immediate imposition of quantitative restrictions. Finely calibrated, halting and inadequate measures taken after the damage is done are of little use.

All in all, the protection regime visualised in the text is too limited and ineffectual to protect the livelihood of millions of small and marginal farmers against the surge or threat of surge of cheap imports of products the bulk of which would continue to be heavily subsidized.

The logic of integration of Indian peasant agriculture with the global agri-buisness dominated agriculture is deeply flawed and fraught with incalculably dangerous consequences. And the present conjuncture only underlines the untenability of that logic. The free trade agreement with the ASEAN has evoked spontaneous resistance in Kerala and other states where the livelihood of small peasantry dependent on plantation crops is threatened. We are witnessing a severe countrywide drought which is already threatening the livelihood of millions of small and marginal peasants. It would be nothing short of suicidal to aggravate such disastrous situations today or in future by accepting or preparing the ground for eventual acceptance of a trade policy that poses a systemic threat to the livelihood of our peasantry.

## **NAMA**

As regards the NAMA text, the tilt against the developing countries is even more blatant. The universal binding of tariffs, the line-by-line tariff cutting instead of the average reduction target (which was the rule in all the previous rounds), application of the "Swiss Formula" and more than proportionate reduction in the tariffs of developing countries through low coefficients and few exceptions, which constituted the hallmark of the earlier texts continue to govern the approach in the latest text. What is worse, the "Para 8 flexibilities " which were insisted upon by developing countries to mitigate the harshness of the approach have been effectively diluted, if not nullified, by the latest text.

The choice of low coefficients leaves developing countries with little margin or manoeuvrability. The simulation exercise done by the Third World network had shown that the developing countries which have had historically high tariffs would need very high coefficients to avoid or smoothen the adverse impact on their industries. But the figures indicated now are close to, if not the same as, what was proposed in the earlier texts. A coefficient of 8 is proposed for developed countries. For developing countries three optional values of coefficient viz. 20, 22, 25 are proposed, each associated with different regimes of flexibilities; the underlying principle being that the higher the coefficient chosen, the lesser will be the flexibility in terms of deviation of tariff lines from the application of the formula cut. If the highest coefficient of 25 is accepted, no tariff lines will be exempted and in case of the coefficients of 20 and 22 are accepted, then 14 per cent and 10 per cent of tariff lines respectively will be exempted for less than formula cuts.

A new conditionality has been introduced to reduce the flexibility even further. The policy space for exempting a particular industrial sector from the drastic formula cut has been severely circumscribed by proposing that no sector or sub-sector can be totally excluded from the formula cut and at least 20 per cent of tariff lines or 9 per cent of value of imports in a given sector or sub-sector must be subject to the formula cut.

Our current level of applied tariff is, on average, 10 per cent, and the bound level average is 34 per cent. The cut which the formula would likely entail will require drastic reduction of bound level of tariff. Assuming that India accepts the coefficient of 22, we would be obliged to reduce tariff by about 60 per cent with only 10 per cent of tariff lines open for less than formula cut. With very limited exceptions available under the dispensation of the text and the policy space severely circumscribed, the door to de-industrialisation will be wide open.

We are experiencing a severe contraction of exports, particularly in the labour- intensive sectors of textiles and garments, leather and leather goods, gems and jewellery, handicrafts. Large scale lay-offs are taking place.

Of late, industrial sector had witnessed stagnation or very low growth. Employment is not keeping pace with the additions to labour force, not to speak of the vast backlog of under and unemployment. In such a situation, it would be nothing short of courting a disaster to open doors to de-industrialisation through trade policies imposed by lopsided and unequal negotiations.

## **SERVICES SECTOR**

There is therefore little to "take" and quite a lot to "give" in the dispensation visualised in the two major areas of negotiations. But the story does not end there. Developed countries are keen to give a push to the negotiations in the area of services to obtain new commitments, which means building up of pressures on emerging economies in particular to integrate their services markets, particularly the financial services markets with the global market. This has a sinister implication at the present times. The "toxic waste" of the financial services market, the magnitude and manifestation of which is still not fully understood, and which virtually brought the recession in the US economy needs to be dumped somewhere. And the burgeoning financial services sector in emerging economies like ours would be as good a destination as any other for the purpose. We have already a powerful "in-house" lobby advocating, as in the Economic Survey 2009, liberalisation and further opening of banking, insurance and other financial services sectors. The US would, therefore, knowingly enhance their pressure in this regard. And there goes another substantial "give" with unknown consequences for our financial sector and the economy as a whole.

When the Doha Round was launched, it was agreed by all that negotiations on outstanding "implementation issues" constituted an integral part of its mandate. Developing countries including India had emphasized the importance of introducing into the TRIPs agreement a mandatory requirement for the disclosure of origin of biological resources and/or associated traditional knowledge used in inventions for which property rights are applied for. In pursuance of this and with a view to harmonising the TRIPs agreement and the convention on biological diversity, developing countries have proposed a text of a new Article 29 b in TRIPs. The new Article will require that patent application concerning subject matter derived from or developed with biological resources and/or associated traditional knowledge must disclose the origin of such resource and/or associated knowledge. Moreover, the applicants must provide evidence of compliance with relevant legal requirements for prior informed consent for access and fair and equitable benefit-sharing arising from the commercial utilization of such resources and/or associated traditional knowledge.

Although more than two years have elapsed after the text was proposed for negotiations, there has been no progress whatsoever. And it seems unlikely that any progress will now take place when the negotiation are being focussed only on Agriculture and NAMA texts. The latest twist, however, is that India is reportedly diluting its position in this regard and is ready to accept that the observance of the proposed amendment be only a voluntary and not mandatory. Thus a priority area of high importance for developing countries will very likely go by default or lose its steam altogether.

Last, but certainly not the least, consideration why the initiative taken by the commerce minister should be thwarted is the stark fact that the present US administration has no "fast-track" authority to conclude the negotiations in a credible manner. The "fast-track" authority which gives the credibility to the offers made by USTR in the course of negotiations lapsed on July 1, 2007. It is not known if and when such authority would be granted by the US Congress to the US administration. And no trade negotiations are meaningful if USA is not at the negotiating table, fully equipped to make credible deals.

The current initiative of the commerce minister took shape after his visit to Washington and his confabulations with the director general of WTO. WTO director general is keen to breathe fresh life into the negotiation for his own professional career must have an achievement to show. Washington would not be averse to inducing the emerging economies to make stiff advance payments even before the negotiations start, so that it can decide in due course whether the trade negotiations deserve any priority in its scheme of things which at the moment has more pressing agenda to attend to on financial, economic and strategic fronts. And EU, Japan and others may be very pleased to see that USA is eventually induced to come to the negotiating table at the cost of third parties such as India and other emerging countries. All this is easily understood. What passes understanding is the keenness of our commerce minister to kick-start the negotiations, when all analyses show that we have much more to lose than gain in these negotiations. Whatever "co-operation" we may extend by agreeing to the unequal bargain at this stage in the mistaken belief that it is good for the global economy, will only bind us to it, leaving USA administration and the legislature to ask for "more" when time comes to approve the deal.

We must be vigilant in the coming months as the process sought to be initiated in the ministerial meeting in New Delhi on September 3-4, is only a first step towards the formal ministerial meeting of all country members of WTO scheduled to be held in Geneva in November-December 2009 intended to formalise the planned outcome of the Delhi meeting.

