



UNION POWER

NTUI

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EDITORIAL

The three year journey of the G-20 Heads of Government Summit from Washington in 2008 to Paris this November is signified by two markers of the depth of the global capitalist crisis. First, that the crisis, as perceived in 2008, of one of private debt is unambiguously one of the state itself insofar as many advanced economies, including members of the G-20, run the risk of defaulting on sovereign debt. Second, the US dollar's continuance as a reserve currency is an increasing improbability while the immediate emergence of another reserve currency is not on the horizon with the unpreparedness of China to take global economic leadership while the Euro lies in tatters. Unstable exchange rates and the inability of states to finance economic expansion has one unambiguous outcome and that is - continued decline in new employment opportunities and growing social and economic inequality.

The G-20 had one important task at its Paris Summit and that was to build a consensus amongst the globe's largest economies on fiscal expansion. While commitments to the centrality for expanding social protection as creating a necessary base for economic growth and acknowledging the report of the ILO's *Social Protection Advisory Group* little advance can be possible until there is a consensus on fiscal policy. This is particularly the case when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) persists with pressing austerity policies in those countries that are faced with the sharpest economic downturns both in the global north and the south.

What in the short term is even worse is that, the G-20 failed to come to any consensus on adding to the financial capacity of the IMF while expecting the IMF to deal with countries faced with the possibilities of sovereign debt default. This in effect means that the club of the most powerful is in the final analysis unwilling to change the basic rules of the game. The rules set by the IMF still in effect say that while profits must grow to grow the economy the working class must make sacrifices to achieve economic stability. And this is despite the fact that economic data and a century of experience say just the opposite.

In fact the collapse of two democratically elected Heads of Government, quite irrespective of their ideologies and barbarism, one before (Greece) and one after (Italy) the G20 summit, and their replacement by bureaucrat-managers is a clear reflection of how capital would like to reshape the globe as it seeks to emerge from its most perilous crisis in living memory. With each crisis capital has learnt to shape new rules for higher levels of profits and lower levels of democracy.

Building a more egalitarian society requires a more democratic society too. And progressive trade unions have always been at the forefront of defending democracy. We have seen large trade union protests in recent weeks on the streets of Athens and London. We have also witnessed a surge of spontaneity under the banner of 'Occupy Wall Street' in many cities across the globe. Transforming this spontaneity into sustained struggle, in every one of our countries, is the task of the progressive militant trade union without which we will fail to stall the recalibration of the economy by the rules of capital and stop the rise of the economic and political right wing. And sustained struggle alone will win us a living wage and social protection as these battles will open the possibilities of transforming society through the core working class values of egalitarianism, justice and democracy.

SPECIAL REPORT

People's Movement in South Asia join hands in Thiruvananthapuram and Dhaka

Peoples' SAARC - 2011, Thiruvananthapuram

Representatives of social movements, human rights organizations and trade unions from Pakistan and India held a parallel Peoples' SAARC meeting in Thiruvananthapuram on 8-9 November just preceding the official SAARC Summit on 10-11 November in the Maldives. This time each country active in the PSAARC movement organized a national level meeting that built upon key issues that were then compiled to form the basis for the PSAARC statement submitted to the office of the President of Maldives to be presented to the Summit.

The People's SAARC statement expressed people's perspective of the harsh reality on issues of national security, peace, justice, human rights, development, environment, refugees, migration, and gender in the South Asia. People's SAARC calls upon the SAARC as a regional grouping and the member states to seize the opportunity towards engaging themselves in serious

dialogue with the people so that the SAARC process is more pro-people and committed to eradication of poverty and injustices through regional developmental process.

Vibrant social movements, trade unions and activists from across India, especially from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and from Sri Lanka and Pakistan gathered at Mannam Memorial National Club, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala for the two day People's SAARC India Assembly titled *Peoples' Movements Unite South Asia*. Over 250 activists participated in the three plenary sessions and the six workshops. The meeting was inaugurated by Mani Shankar Iyer, former Central Government Minister and current Rajya Sabha Member. The Assembly culminated in a colourful march through the streets of Thiruvananthapuram, from Mannam Memorial National Club to the Secretariat.

NTUI was represented by Comrades D Thankappan, Ashim Roy, KP Vishwavalsalan, P T John, Anannya Bhattacharjee along with more than 40 trade union activists from Kerala. Comrade Ashim Roy addressed the opening plenary along with noted historian, KN Panikker, veteran trade union activist from Pakistan B M Kutty, Human Rights Activist from Manipur, Babloo Loitongbam, Sri Lankan film maker, Someetharan and T Peter, President, Kerala Swatantra Mals ya Thozhilali Federation.



The workshop on *Rebuilding the Labour Movement in the Region* addressed issues of contractualisation, migration and the non-implementation of labour laws, which are common issues in the region. Participants demanded that labour be included as an area of cooperation in the SAARC framework; a SAARC compliance mechanism to ILO core standards be constituted, as well as a SAARC mechanism to ensure labour migration with dignity. Participants recognised that cooperation of labour movements will need to take an organisational structure on a South Asian level.

The workshop on *De-nuclearisation and De-militarisation* called upon the governments of South Asia to halt the process of militarisation, including in

the name of countering terrorism and in the name of development, and to redirect its resources and energy to build genuine democratic institutions to ensure education, health, housing and other basic needs of the people.

Other workshops organised were (i) on *Trade and Livelihoods* that discussed the current model of trade in the region and opposed the advancing of the FTA agenda; (ii) on *Exclusion, discrimination and oppression* that discussed the increasing incidence of state repression against peoples fighting for their democratic rights and against a militarised state and corporate greed; (iii) on *Community control over natural resources* that discussed the many aspects of the current model of development and asserted their support for the peoples' struggle in Koodankulam and Jaitapur and call for a halt to these nuclear projects. They called for the promotion of people-centred non conventional and sustainable energy sources and for the implementation of progressive legislations for the protection of the environment and livelihoods; (iv) on *Women in Peoples' Movements* that discussed the contribution of women in movements for recovering communities control over natural resources, and the challenges they face within progressive structures and outside.

The concluding plenary was addressed by Benoy Viswam (Senior CPI leader and President of the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation Employees' Federation), Prafulla Samantra (NAPM), Prashant Paikray (Anti-POSCO Struggle), Udayakumar (Anti-Nuclear Movement in Koodankulam), K P Vishwalsalan (NTUI), Magline Peter (Theeradesha Mahila Vadi-Coastal Women' Movement) and Saket Soni (National Guestworkers Alliance -USA). Speakers shared their perspectives towards deepening the PSAARC process through continuous interaction and consultation to enable people's movements to express and define the South Asian dimensions of their struggles and, on that basis, build a genuine unity of South Asian people's movements.

South Asia Social Forum 2011, Dhaka

Two weeks later the South Asia Social Forum (SASF) was held in Dhaka on 18-22 November at the Dhaka University campus. Attended by 724 foreign delegates representing 437 organisations and over two and a half thousand delegates representing 181 different organisations from Bangladesh, the SASF was made vibrant by the 13 plenary sessions, about a hundred seminars and meetings, a youth forum, a social fair, film shows and cultural programmes. The five day long Forum ended with new hopes and new determination to build a new South Asia. The closing ceremony of this

event was held at the Shadhinota Stombho (Independence Tower Plaza), Sohrawardi Udyan.



The SASF expressed their determination with “Dhaka Statement” where the participants expressed their solidarity to mobilize their efforts in order to assert the agenda of people’s economic survival and political autonomy against all forms of authoritarianism, hierarchy and domination;

To continue to exposure and unmask oppressive and exploitative values and ideologies, systems and institutions, practices and actions;

Network with all the local, regional and global actors engaged in the struggle for change to the present inequality and injustice;

Continue sharing their experience of struggle against capitalism and imperialism and gather inspiration from fellow activists from all over the world;

And to intensify their struggle, developing and using effective and creative methods.

The closing ceremony ended with a cultural programme with famous artists and musical bands dazzled the audiences with their performances.

At the SASF, a meeting of the South Asia Labour Forum was held on 20 November. The meeting was attended by trade unions and labour solidarity organisations from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

They issued the following statement:

We the South Asian trade unions and labour solidarity organisations gathered here in Dhaka at the South Asian Social Forum note that,

- The policies of imperialist globalisation have undermined freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and other democratic rights of workers,
- The economic policies adopted and advanced by the South Asian ruling elites with the assistance of repressive the state machinery have eroded real

wages alongside poor implementation of the minimum wage and virtually no provision of social security and social protection,

- The worst exploited workers are from the marginalised section of society especially women discriminated castes and religious and linguistic minorities who in turn are targets of jingoism and xenophobia in subcontinent and form the majority of migrants both within and between our countries.

We also recognise that the trade union movement is divided in all our countries causing divisions within the working class.

To build solidarity between the working class of all countries in the subcontinent and to effectively resist imperialist globalisation in all its manifestations, we recognise that, the only way is through the building and strengthening of the democratic and militant trade union movement that unites all sections of the working class and fights the divisions within us including those imposed by the discriminatory practices in society be it gender, caste or religion.

We understand that we must build together,

- Our resistance around key struggles for a living minimum wage, universal social security focusing on specific sectors including the garment industry, women workers and contract workers,
- A struggle of migrant workers in order to win free movement of workers across the sub-continent who must enjoy the right to freedom of association, the minimum wage and access to social security in every country of the sub-continent,
- A democratic and peaceful SAARC, free from hatred and discrimination, in the knowledge that working class movement is central to deepening democracy.

As a first step in this resolve we together condemn the unwarranted arrest and sentencing of the 'Faisalabad 6' in Pakistan and demand their immediate unconditional release.

We also advance our resolve take this solidarity forward through the South Asian Labour Forum.

AFFILIATE REPORTS

Honorary Workers in Punjab demand Pay Commission wages: 6 November, Lambi: Several hundreds of ASHA workers, Mid-day Meal Workers, Para-teachers and forest workers gathered at the call of the Joint Action Committee - Punjab and Chandigarh for a protest action at Lambi, Muktsar district. Speaking



at the meeting Comrade Jarmanjit Singh, convenor of the Joint Action Committee, and Vice-president NTUI Punjab and Chandigarh State Council, demanded that the wages of the workers working under the NRHM, the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and the forest workers be paid minimum wages according to the State Pay Commission Report of 1 January 2006.

WUTU Commemorates 94th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution: 7 November, Delhi: The Workers' Unity Trade Union (WUTU), organising garment workers in NCR of Delhi, held a meeting to commemorate the 94th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution on 6 November 2011 at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. The meeting was attended by members of the union along with representatives from Janpaksh, Marxist Communist Party of India-United, Youth for Social Justice, Campaign for Peace and Democracy-Manipur, Nirman Mazdoor Shakti Sangathan, the journal Revolutionary Democracy and the NTUI.



Chairing the meeting, Professor Nirmalangshu Mukherjee of Delhi University stressed on the role of revolutionary working class organisations to provide leadership and expose the present crisis ridden system. Comrade Padam, General Secretary of the union, stressed the need for politicisation of the membership of trade unions in order to make economic struggles into political struggles. Comrade Gautam Mody, Secretary NTUI, speaking on the occasion stressed the need for the formation of a united front of trade unions on a common minimum programme to fight against capitalism. Economist Dr. Jaya Mehta argued for the need for a worker-peasant unity as propounded by Lenin. The meeting concluded with a screening of Charlie Chaplin's epic movie 'Modern Times'.

Dehati Mazdoor Morcha organises 'mela' in Amritsar district: *13 November, Amritsar:* The Dehati Mazdoor Morcha organised the annual *mela* in memory of the martyrs. Attended by thousands of people, this *mela* hosts a number of revolutionary street plays, learning programmes for children as well as a public meeting. Comrades Dinesh Parsad, Jarmanjit, Harinder Dosanj and Jograj addressed the meeting. It generated much enthusiasm among the membership.

Asom Majoori Sramik Union holds mass rally in Silchar: *15 November, Silchar:* The Asom Majoori Sramik Union, organising daily wage workers, including workers employed under NREGA, and the Bagisa Sramik Sangtha, organising tea plantation workers, have been demanding an increase in the daily wages of tea garden workers to the existing NREGA wage. The prevailing minimum wage for tea plantation workers in the Brahmaputra valley today is Rs. 71.50, while in the Barak Valley, it is only Rs.55.50 as against Rs. 130 for works under MGNREGA. The medical and housing benefits to tea workers are mostly on paper.

The rally organised by the two unions in Silchar on 14 November was attended by thousands of rural workers, including agricultural workers, plantation workers, railway construction workers, oil transport workers and NREGA workers. Comrade Arup Baisya while addressing the public meeting called for an increase in the wages of tea plantation workers while simultaneously implementing the NREGA more rigorously. Extending solidarity to the struggle against the displacement of tea plantation workers from the Cinnamora Estate, Comrade Gautam Mody called for building stronger ties with social movements in order to strengthen trade union struggles.

Contract Multipurpose Health Workers Union, Punjab meet CM, lift dharna: *23 November 2011, Ludhiana:* The Contract Multipurpose Health Workers Union lifted their dharna after meeting the Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on 23 November. More than 2,300 health workers on contract under the NRHM have been on a strike, demanding regularisation. Almost 1,000 posts are presently vacant in the state. The Chief Minister gave an assurance that he would make provisions to fill those posts but he postponed the meeting for next week.

NFFPFW holds Regional meetings on Forest Rights Implementation: *30 November, Lucknow:* The NFFPFW held a series of public meetings and dharnas through the month across the states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand demanding immediate implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA). On 14th November, several thousand forest villagers gathered at the district Collectorate at Haridwar and sat on an indefinite

dharna. By the evening, District Collector assured the protestors that their demands would be addressed. On 15 November, several hundred forest villagers marched to a public meeting at Bahraich demanding community forest rights for the van gujjars. Over a thousand forest villagers attended the two day meeting at Mohandi in Lakhimpur Khiri on 21-22 November. The NFFPFW and the Grameen Mazdoor Union together organised a rally of thousands of forest workers and villagers, including van gujjars, in Saharanpur on 30 November demanding immediate granting of individual and community rights under the FRA to the van gujjars and taungiya villagers.

NTUI holds Workshop on 'Democratic Industrialisation': *30 November, Mumbai:* The NTUI raised the banner of Democratic Industrialisation in 2006 in response to the undemocratic and coercive land acquisition for industrialisation in the understanding that while industrialisation was necessary, the process had to be democratic and justiciable and that the choice of investment had to meet the needs of the working class. With the objective of evolving Democratic Industrialisation in all its aspects a workshop was organised at Shramik, Mumbai on 30 November. It was attended by about 50 representatives from the AWBSRU, All India Council of Unilever Unions, Blue Star Workers Union, Chemical Mazdoor Panchayat, DHL Employees Union, Jeeva Construction Workers Union – Kanyakumari, Kachra Vahatuk Shramik Sangh, Kamani Employees Union, Maharashtra Anganwadi Karmchari Sangh, Plantation Working Class Union, Sakhar Kamgar Union-Kolhapur, Sarva Shramik Sangh, TMKTS and the WPTUC. The workshop discussed issues of balance between agriculture and industry in an economy, between farm and non-farm employment for absorption of surplus rural labour; issues of land acquisition using the principle of eminent domain; importance of SMEs in provision of basic goods and services and the public sector in provision of capital goods and need for building an indigenous technological basis; alongside the need for alternatives, especially worker cooperatives as alternatives. The meeting concluded with the agreement that economic growth is essential for improving the condition of life of working people and industrial expansion is necessary for such economic growth. However, this expansion needs to be in a framework of democratic industrialisation that lays emphasis on decentralisation and federalism and is participatory and justiciable and must include the stringent implementation of labour rights.

Auto workers build global networks IMF heads towards a Restructuring: *1 December, Chennai:* The meeting of the Automotive Working Group of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) was held first in Chennai on 31 October. Comrades R Kuchelan,

R. Sampath of WPTUC and representatives from Simpson, Rane TRW, Ucal Fuel, participated in the meeting. It was also held in Pune on 3-4 November. 91 union representatives from across the world discussed strategies to win trade union rights, to strengthen global trade union networks and cooperation with Indian auto workers. NTUI affiliates from Pune and Comrades Kuchelan, Gautam Mody and K Muruga Preman participated in the Pune meeting. NTUI affiliates in Pune have also applied for affiliation to the IMF through the Shramik Ekta Mahasangh. At the meeting the WPTUC expressed that substantive global solidarity through company councils could assist in unionising contract workers and advance the right to freedom of association if the unions in the global north are willing to look at the costs that global firms place on their southern subsidiaries and the inequality of standards of employment adopted by northern firms operating in the global south.

This was then followed by the IMF India Committee Meeting at Chennai on 29 and 30 November. Comrades R Kuchelan and Gautam Mody represented the WPTUC in the meeting. The meetings discussed the possible consequences of the proposed merger of the IMF with the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF).

The WPTUC has been a member of the IMF since 1991. More recently, the Siemens Workers' Union has engaged with the IMF through the Global Siemens Union Council. Upon its affiliation to the IMF, the WPTUC has been pressing for a democratisation of the organisation and has worked with the leading progressive affiliates both from the global south and the north to ensure an equitable balance in the IMF's policies between unions of the global north and the south.

The IMF presently is examining the possibility of merger of Global Union Federations and in particular the prospect of a merger between the IMF and the ICEM and the ITGLWF. The process for merger has reached its finality and is to be approved by the IMF affiliates at its Central Committee meeting in Jakarta on 6-7 December 2012.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

CAMPAIGN ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

UNFCCC - COP 17 at Durban: 30 November 2011: Delegates from about 190 countries gathered in Durban, South Africa, for the two-week UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference

beginning 28 November. They hope to reach a new agreement on reducing the emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. The climate negotiations had come to a stalemate because the USA was not willing to ratify the Kyoto protocol. India and China has also been insistent of not accepting any legally binding agreements.

India has gone into Durban with two major demands - that the principle of equity remain intact in any new climate regime and that any new global deal be launched after 2020. Between the years 1850 and 2002, the cumulative historical emission of India has been 2.2% of the total carbon dioxide as compared to 29.3% by the US. India argues that the developed countries have been responsible for the climate change and should face larger cut on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility'. On the other hand EU contends that all large emitters including India and China should face equal, ambitious and binding cuts.

CAMPAIGN ON TRADE

Workshop on Labour in Competitive Environment: Importance of International Instruments held in Mumbai: 20 November, Mumbai: The Ambedkar Institute of Labour Studies co-sponsored a workshop on "Labour in Competitive Environment: Importance of International Instruments" in Mumbai on 18-19 November. The meeting attempted to discuss a framework for trade union response to issues of international trade, global framework agreements, and on financial sector reform. Specifically, the participants discussed the EU-India FTA; impacts of FDI on labour, OECD guidelines for multinationals and global framework agreements for the implementation of labour standards by companies, external manufacturer, suppliers and their subcontractors, the ILO decent work agenda, and UN millennium development goals. Comrades D Thankappan and N Vasudevan were both present in the meeting.

NEWS UPDATES

Draft National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy, 2011 exempts bulk drugs from price control: 23 November, Delhi: Pharmaceutical companies opposing price control in pharma products have now moved the Supreme Court seeking to be heard on the drug pricing issue. The Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) filed an application seeking "impledment" in the ongoing public interest litigation filed in 2003 by the All India Drugs Action Network and others at the Supreme Court which had complained that the restricted list of only 74 drugs placed under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995 (DPCO) makes the rest of the medicines unaffordable to common people.

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy, 2011 proposes to exempt bulk drugs from price control to encourage domestic investment and production to reduce dependence on imports. At present, 74 bulk drugs and their formulations (around 1,500) are included in the existing DPCO (Drug Prices Control Order, 1995), which covers 20% of the market. Recently, the department of pharmaceuticals formulated a draft policy on all 348 essential medicines (National list of essential medicines) whose prices would be controlled through a market-based pricing mechanism. The draft policy covers 60% of the over Rs 60,000 crore market, and will be finalized after comments from all the stakeholders.

Amid fears that drug prices may shoot owing to the new proposed drug pricing policy, the Supreme Court on 17 November asked the Union government to ensure that rates do not "escalate" causing a burden on common people. "Prices should not escalate. There are apprehensions that prices will escalate. In the name of the new policy the prices shall not escalate. Because we have much much more consumers in India than other parts of the world," the court observed.

India allows 26% FDI in pension: *16 November, New Delhi:* The cabinet has approved an initial 26 per cent foreign direct investment in the pension sector. In its approval to amendments in the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Bill, 2011, the Cabinet, turned down the Parliamentary Standing Committee's suggestion of providing a guarantee on assured returns on pension fund schemes. The provision with regard to the FDI cap for the pension sector is proposed to be incorporated in the regulations once the PFRDA Bill, 2011, is enacted. This pension reform bill would give global financial institutions access to around \$2 billion worth of pension fund assets.

Supreme Court threatens contempt to force implementation of construction worker welfare law: *29 November, New Delhi:* Millions of workers engaged in the construction sector may soon get the promised welfare measures with the Supreme Court on Monday issuing notices to all states and Union Territories asking them to show cause why contempt proceedings be not initiated against officers for non-implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1996, and the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996.

Tamil Nadu Welfare Workers case: State Govt files SLP against HC order for reinstatement: *24 November, Chennai:* The Tamil Nadu government has filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court against a Madras High Court dismissal of its plea challenging a single judge's stay of a government order

dismissing welfare workers and direction to permit those employees, whose names were furnished to the court registry on 12 November, to join duty.

The Bench of Justice D K Jain and Justice Anil Dave in the Supreme Court, hearing the SLP against the interim orders of the Madras High Court on 29 November expressed its displeasure at the Tamil Nadu government's decision to sack 15,000 Makkal Nala Paniyalargal (welfare workers), and observed that there should be "some rule of law in the State."

LEGAL NOTES

Amendments to Factories Act: Stricter norms for hazardous units, night shifts for women proposed: *9 October, New Delhi:* Stricter norms for hazardous units, allowing women to work on night shifts, increase in the limit of overtime work to over 100 hours and concessions for disabled persons are some of the changes proposed in the Factories Act, 1948. These changes are being made using the premise of the government's ratification of the ILO Conventions 174 relating to industrial accidents and protocol and 89 relating to night work by women.

Air India hostesses win discrimination battle: *17 November, New Delhi:* A Supreme Court bench of Justices Altamas Kabir and Cyriac Joseph on 17 November upheld Air India's 2005 decision to abandon its policy of reserving the In-flight Supervisor designation to its male cabin crew. Once on board the aircraft, all cabin crew, are under the direct supervision of the In-flight Supervisor. Until 2005, only men were designated by Air India as In-flight Supervisors. This meant that male Flight Attendants who were appointed In-flight Supervisors would supervise the work of all female flight attendants, including those who were many grades senior to them. In December 2005, Air India decided to end this blatantly discriminatory practice, announced that In-flight Supervisors will be appointed from among both genders, and designated 10 women Senior Managers as In-flight Supervisors.

This decision of Air India was challenged by the male attendants before the Delhi High Court, and then before the Supreme Court. In November 2007, the Supreme Court directed status quo, which meant that Air India was unable to implement its decision to bring about equality. The Kabir-Joseph judgement is an important milestone in the fight against discrimination by Air India's female employees.

Government tightens immigration rules on women workers to the Gulf countries: *26 November, New Delhi:* The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has tightened immigration rules for women seeking employment in the Gulf countries. The decision has

come in the backdrop of Indian missions in the region increasingly receiving complaints from women workers ranging from non-payment of salaries, unregulated working hours and living conditions to extreme form of physical and sexual exploitation. The measures include an age limit of 30 years, attestation of the identity of the employer and the terms of the contract by the Indian missions, a security deposit of \$2,500 from employers and pre-paid mobile phone connections linking every woman worker to the consulate along with a 24x7 helpline to enable emigrant workers / prospective emigrants especially women to obtain information on all emigration related matters and to seek redressal of their complaints.

Employees can't be forced to work under new management: Supreme Court: *21 November, New Delhi:* Rejecting the argument of Philip's India Ltd, the Supreme Court bench of justices P Sathasivam and J Chelamewar upheld decision of the Kolkata High Court in the appeal filed by aggrieved workers of erstwhile Philip's India Ltd, which had sold its consumer electronics factory at Salt Lake, Kolkata to Kitchen Appliances India Ltd. The erstwhile workers were seeking VRS from the new management which was turned down by the company on the ground that the earlier scheme had lapsed in 1997. The Calcutta High Court while upholding transfer of the ownership on 10 October 2001 directed the management to pay retirement, retrenchment benefits to the workers who were not keen to continue with their association in the company. As the management refused to comply with the direction, the workers appealed in the apex court.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Pakistan: Over 140,000 power workers protest against privatization: *2 November, Lahore:* As many as 1,40,000 employees of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO) demonstrated against privatisation and appointment of private chief executives in electric supply companies on 1 November. The workers demonstrated in Lahore and observed a strike in different cities of Punjab demanding the decision to be withdrawn immediately as it would not only lead to unemployment of thousands of workers but would also increase power prices. The privatisation of the Karachi Electric Supply Company has been a learning experience.

South Korea: KMWU signs Agreement at Hanjin Heavy Industries: *11 November:* 94 dismissed workers will be rehired within one year, and their years of service will be recognised. The dismissed workers will receive a compensation of 20,000,000 Korean won (18,000 US\$) each for the one-year suspension period.

The union and company management will also drop all criminal and civil charges and damages claims against each other.

The Korean Metal workers Union (KMWU) at Hanjin Heavy Industries had started its strike on 20 December, 2010 after the company announced plans to lay off its 400 workers. Kim Jinsuk started her sit-in protest on the top of the giant shipyard "Crane 85" on 6 January 2011.

A provisional agreement between KMWU and Hanjin Heavy Industries was finally reached 9 November on the lines of the conciliatory proposal of the Korean National Assembly. The KMWU then held a workers' assembly for the members of the KMWU Hanjin Local to consider the agreement and vote on it. On 10 November, the provisional agreement was passed unanimously, and Kim Jinsuk came down from the crane after 309 days on it.

Portugal: General Strike against Austerity: *24 November, Lisbon:* Hundreds of thousands of workers, including air traffic controllers, metro workers, teachers and hospital staff, joined the one day general strike against proposed austerity, measures of the government. Thousands of protestors marched on the streets of Lisbon against the government proposal on spending cuts across a broad range of public services, including health care and the armed forces, as well as tax hikes.

Also planned is the elimination of Christmas and holiday bonuses, equal to about a month's pay for most public sector workers, and allowing private firms to extend the work day by half hour without overtime pay.

UK: Public Sector Strike against Pension reform : *30 November, London:* The strike called by more than 30 unions over proposed cuts in public sector pensions started at midnight, leading to the closure of most state schools; cancellation of refuse collections; rail service and tunnel closures; the postponement of thousands of non-emergency hospital operations; and possible delays at airports and ferry terminals. The TUC said it was the biggest strike in more than 30 years. Hundreds of rallies with tens of thousands participating were organised in cities and towns across the country. Unions estimate up to two million people went on strike.

The Unions are opposing plans to make public sector employees pay more and work longer to earn their pensions along with accepting a pension based on a "career average" salary, rather than the final salary. The government says the cost of funding public sector pensions is "unsustainable" as people are living longer. The Union leaders were further enraged after George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that the public sector pay will be frozen for most until 2013, and consequently, pay rises would be capped at 1% for the two years after that.