



UNION POWER

NTUI

A monthly bulletin of the New Trade Union Initiative

December 2011

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

EDITORIAL

As the year comes to a close perhaps, nothing affects the daily existence of every working class family today as does price increase. Never in living memory has inflation and particularly food price inflation been so high and persistent. Today it has been in double digits for 40 months without a break making it longest ever stretch since price records have been maintained in India. The government, with the Prime Minister leading from the front, has issued repeated assurances that inflation will taper off 'next month'. That month is yet to come.

The working class is correct in its intuitive understanding that price inflation is caused primarily by the rising cost of food prices. Food price inflation has never been higher. And it affects working people disproportionately since food continues to remain the largest component of consumption of every working class household. Food price inflation has been persistent since there has been a complete collapse of agriculture. Alongside there is a persistent decline in land under cultivation of food as rich farmers are moving to production of profitable cash crops and protein rich food that are demanded by the better off section of the urban population. As a result there is a decline in the availability of food grain in tune with the growing population. This shortage is pushing up food prices. This shortage also opened the scope for intermediaries and traders engaging in hoarding and speculation in food grains with the objective of gaining higher prices by creating scarcities.

Integration with the global economy has meant that food prices within the country are increasingly linked closely with global food prices that tend to be higher than domestic prices. The urge for high profits is a source of enormous political pressure by the upper peasantry for allowing the export of agricultural products. There has been

a strong and repeated pressure to open up exports, in particular, for rice and sugar, amongst essential food, since profit margins in global markets are particularly high and the quality of Indian produce is amongst the best in the world.

Price increases are however not restricted to food grain and other food products alone. Although there has been a decline in the demand and therefore production of manufactured goods, prices of manufactured goods continues to rise and contributes to inflation. That prices of manufactures is rising in a period of declining demand is indicative of only one thing and that is that manufacturers are controlling prices by creating networks and cartels amongst themselves, thereby concentrating capital, so as to retain profits despite declining sales.

A third factor that is driving price inflation is the cost of petroleum and related products. The import dependence of our economy for these products coupled with their very high cost of as a result of imperialist wars in the global south has made this a persistent factor. The inherent vulnerability of the Indian economy, manifested most recently in the dramatic 20% fall in the value of the Rupee in relation to the dominant global currencies indicates that even if the price of oil products would lower in the coming months our import costs would continue to be high and therefore continue to fuel price inflation. Apart from petroleum products, manufacturing industry is more import dependent than ever before for inputs and this too will contribute further to inflation.

The Indian working class crafted its response to inflation seven decades ago, on the eve of the World War II, by fighting and winning dearness allowance. And yet only a small minority of working people receive DA even today. We must not just fight for the minimum wage but for an inflation indexed minimum wage. Price fixing needs to be fought and not just for food products but in all sectors. The need is for a substantive and effective legal mechanism against price fixing with sufficient restrictions on the export of essential food produce and development of an import substituting industrial economy. And above all there is a need for a universal food security system that regulates both production and distribution at affordable prices.

The fight to stem the decline of the real value of the social wage and begin building an economy that meets the needs of the working class must form our key struggle as we enter the New Year and the NTUI goes forward, with militant energy and determination, to the Third General Council in Kolkata from 6-8 January 2012.

SPECIAL REPORT

Right to Food Campaign launches *Roti Bhaat Satyagraha*

The Right to Food Campaign launched the Roti Bhaat Satyagraha on 1 November to demand for a universal Public Distribution System (PDS) and other food security measures in light of the National Food Security Bill scheduled to be tabled at the Parliament in the winter session. The satyagraha was also in response of the minimalist draft of the National Food Security Bill (NFSB) reducing the entitlements as mandated by the Supreme Court orders and covering only about 75% of the population which was drafted by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.

This proposed draft of the NFSB reduced the entitlements under PDS to 7 kg cereals per person per month entitlement for a priority household and 3 kg per person for general category, from the Supreme Court mandated provision of 35 kg cereals per family per month. The bill also has provision for the Central government to replace food entitlements with cash transfers on its own terms, without any safeguards. It relies on a division of the population into three groups (Priority, General and excluded), without any clarity as to how these groups are to be identified. Further, the bill gives sweeping powers to the Central Government, including powers to modify most entitlements and prescribe binding guidelines for all relevant schemes.

Over the last one month, different groups from different parts of the country have participated in the Satyagraha in Delhi every Tuesday through the month of November and December with protests and demonstrations at Jantar Mantar and at the offices of different Ministries. The Right to Food Campaign is demanding for:

- A Universal PDS.
- Remunerative Minimum Support Prices and decentralised procurement of rice, wheat and other essential food crops.
- Removal of Poverty ratio based ceilings in allocation of resources
- Universalisation with quality of ICDS including the provision of nutritious locally prepared food for all children.
- Entitlements including social security pensions for vulnerable persons- the aged, single women, and persons with disabilities, maternity entitlements, and community kitchens in urban areas must be ensured.

Activists representing the National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM) from eight district of Uttar Pradesh began the *Satyagraha* on 1 November with a *Khali*

Thali rally at Jantar Mantar and later submitted a memorandum with 1000 signatures to Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Chairman of the Planning Commission.

On 8 November over 100 members from Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samiti assembled outside Krishi Bhawan, along with other Delhi groups. A 7 member delegation met K.V. Thomas, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution System and handed him a memorandum listing out the campaign's demands.

Representatives of Children's Right to Food group from Delhi and Rajasthan staged a protest demonstration on 15 November outside the Ministry of Women and Child and submitted a memorandum to the Joint Secretary, Dr. Shreeranjana. The group emphasised the need to include maternity entitlements and have a ban on micronutrient fortified foods and ready-to-eat commercial meals which would open the doors for private and multi-national companies to enter the food chain for commercial benefits.

The Cabinet on 18 December approved the food security bill. It is expected to be tabled in Parliament in the ongoing Parliament session. Food minister K V Thomas said that the total financial liability to implement the law would be Rs 3.5 lakh crore. The bill proposes to cover up to 75% of the rural population, with at least 46% under priority households. Up to 50% of people will be covered in the urban centres, with at least 28 per cent under priority category. The bill seeks to provide 7 kg of rice, wheat and coarse grains to per person per month to priority households at Rs 3, Rs 2 and Rs 1 per kg, respectively. The bill also stipulates that the Centre would reimburse in cash in case of short supply of foodgrains to States because of fall in production on account of natural calamities such as drought and floods. A three-tier grievance redressal mechanism would be set up to deal with issues related to delivery of entitlements. The bill provides for penalty up to Rs 5,000 to be imposed on public servants or authority by the National and State Food Commissions if found guilty of non-compliance.

On 22 November, over 90 members from Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani assembled outside the Tribal Affairs Ministry at Shastri Bhawan. Representatives met the Minister of Tribal Affairs and Panchayati Raj, Kishore Chandra Deo and submitted a memorandum, with an emphasis on universalized PDS in Schedule V areas, demand for inclusion of pulses and oil in PDS, implementation of FRA, and elimination of malnutrition in tribal areas.

A *Jan Manch* was organized on 29 November with over a thousand activists from Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh from gathering at Jantar Mantar demanding a comprehensive NFSB. The campaign's demands were

also supported by D Raja from CPI, Brinda Karat and P Rajeev from CPI(M), Mani Shankar Aiyer, K Keshava Rao and G Vivekananda from Congress and others.

AFFILIATE NEWS

Mulazim Manch Rally in Jalandhar: 4 December, Jalandhar: ASHA workers, Mid-day meal workers, casual and contract workers working in the forest department from Mulazim Manch-Punjab and Chandigarh marched to the Deshbhagat Yadgar Hall on 4 December in Jalandhar. Comrades Germanjit Singh and Paramjit Kaur Mann both spoke against the recent announcement of the Punjab government to grant Rs 800 crores for state government employees. The Mulazim Manch is demanding a monthly wage of Rs. 5200 for ASHA and mid-day meal workers in line with Class IV government employees. The unions are also demanding regularisation, free insurance for a sum of Rs 2 lakh for each worker.

Others present at the meeting were Comrades Bhagmal Rana, Harinder Dosanjh, Amarjit Kaur, Sukhdev Singh, Lakhvinder Kaur and Nachhtar Singh.

Asha and Mid-day meal workers from Mulazim Manch, Punjab and Chandigarh took out a rally on 20 December in Phagwara. The rally was addressed by Comrades Kiranjit Kaur, Harvinder Kaur, Harinder Dosanjh, Jasvir Kaur, Pooja and Balvinder Kaur.



The mid day meal workers are paid a daily wage of just Rs 33. The workers have been demanding their rights for the last 4 years with no results.

Unorganised labour unions demand revision of minimum wages: 8 December, Kolkata: Terming the West Bengal government's approach towards improving the condition of unorganised workers as 'disappointing', the Ashangathit Kshetra Shramik Sangrami Manch demanded revision and notification of minimum wages as per 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) norms. The

Manch released a Report Card on the new Trinamool Congress and Congress government's performance in implementing various labour welfare schemes in its first 200 days in office.

Despite availability of funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the government has not been able to generate the required number of jobs under the scheme. The average persondays created till November 2011 was 15 days.

PHE Pump Operators start Dharna: 12 December, Kolkata: The PHE Water Supply Employees Union sat on a dharna before the New Secretariat Building from 12 December demanding timely payments, regularisation and payment of minimum wages. The PHE Water Supply pump operators, who operate drinking water pumps of the State Government, receive a daily wage of Rs.169. The payment is irregular, with some workers having dues for 12-15 months. The pump operators have been agitating for permanency, higher wages and regular payment for the past 8-10 years.

The union declared that all pump operators would also resort to mass casual leave from 26 December if the Government did not address their demands.

Garment workers in Chennai protest against illegal closure: 16 December, Chennai: More than 100 women workers of Unitex Exports in Ambattur Industrial Estate went on a day long hunger strike outside the Labour Commissionerate at DMS complex demanding immediate lifting of the illegal lockout at Unitex Exports and action be taken against the management for illegal closure of the factory. Workers called upon the labour administration and the government to intervene and ensure that the Unitex management is brought to justice and directed to immediately pay wages. Several of the workers have been working in the factory for more than 25 years on an average salary of Rs.3500 per month.



Unitex Exports which supplies to brands in Europe and U.S.A, closed down the factory without any prior intimation on 1 November 2011 and since then workers have been left without work and wages. Negotiations between management and union proceeded for a month, when the company was forced to pay wages for the last month. However, talks failed on 12 December. The management of Unitex Exports has been inconsistent and changing its commitment to the workers. Finally, they refused further negotiation with the workers' union at the conciliation proceedings before the Assistant Commissioner of Labour.

Moreover, the management has also not remitted Rs. 37 lakhs of provident fund dues deducted from workers wages for the past three years. After concerted struggle by the workers, the Provident Fund department have finally taken notice and attached the property of the company. Workers have been facing other violations including arbitrary delays in the payment of wages, non-provision of ESI cards, etc. Many workers who have resigned the company have also not received their gratuity and other dues.

Comrades M Subbu, Treasurer NTUI and Ravi, State Secretary of AITUC and leaders of Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam addressed the workers at the dharna. At about 11am, the Deputy Commissioner of Labour met with union representatives. The Assistant Commissioner of Labour, who was the conciliation officer dealing with the issue was also summoned. After workers briefed the DCL on the issue, local police were asked to contact the owner and appear for conciliation on Monday without fail. Summons has also been issued to the management to appear for conciliation.

Workers of Unitex Exports have been members of GAFWU since 2010 and have been consistently demanding recognition as the sole union in the factory.

Tea workers stage dharna: Jorhat, 31 December: The workers of Borhat tea estate in Sivasagar district of Assam under the leadership of the Bagicha Shramik Santha staged a dharna on 31 December in front of the Borhat police station, demanding that the management immediately lift the illegal lockout of the garden. An indefinite lockout had been declared in the garden the day before, following protests by workers against the death of a woman worker on 28 December. The garden, under Charaideo subdivision, is owned by Amalgamated Plantations Pvt Ltd. (a Tata plantation).

Over 200 workers under the banner of Chah Janajati Mahila Mahasabha, gathered in front of the police station and shouted slogans against the management and demanded that the garden be opened immediately. They also demanded that manager Pratul Bora and Dr. B K Gogoi be removed from the garden and compensation

be paid to the family of Raimati Majhi, the permanent worker who died due to management's negligence. The workers submitted a memorandum to the officer-in-charge of the police station.

The labour commissioner has been directed to hold negotiations with the management and convince them to lift the lockout.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

CAMPAIGN ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Dharna by silicosis victims: 14 December, Jodhpur: Silicosis victims under the banner of Rajasthan State Mine Labour Union (RSMLU) have been sitting on dharna since last 14 days outside the District Collector's office in Jodhpur demanding compensation and rehabilitation. NHRC had ordered rehabilitation of 48 silicosis affected persons in Jodhpur, but 5 among them died without getting any medical help. 35 workers including the family members of the victims are on dharna since 12 December 2011, which includes 8 workers on hunger strike. Out of 48 silicosis victims who were listed for benefits in the case filed with the NHRC, 16 were re-examined in the same hospital and reports did not confirm silicosis, thereby government disregarding the claim of compensation.



The other demands of the workers are inclusion of silicosis victims in the BPL category and enforcement of maintenance of workers records and safety measures in the mines. The government has ordered mandatory registration of all mine workers in the quarries and mines, violation of which will lead to cancellation of mining lease.

CAMPAIGN ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

People's Forest Rights Rally in Delhi: 16 December 2011, New Delhi: The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest

Rights) Act passed in 2006 completed five years this December. There has been a systematic opposition from government agencies in implementing this legislation. The MoEF and the forest department has opposed the rights recognition process by the claimants. In collaboration with the International Financial Institutions, the forest department has initiated afforestation and plantation programmes that result in violations of rights like the Joint Forest Management along with relocation of people from tiger reserves and diversion of forest land in favour of large projects. Opposition to this is branded 'Maoism' in Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarkhand, Odisha, and Assam.

With the experience of implementation of the Forest Rights Act in the last five years, it is clear that neither the Forest Department nor the political class is ready to implement this legislation. Eligible claimants have been denied rights, particularly in the case of other traditional forest dwellers, whose claims have been overwhelmingly rejected in all States.

It was in this context, that in June 2011, a National Consultation was organised in the Great Himalayan National Park, Banjar, Himachal Pradesh attended by 36 people's organisations working on rights over natural resource. The meeting called for a Parliament rally on 15 December 2011, the day when FRA was passed to demand:

1. The forestland which was taken away from communities and placed under the control of the forest department be returned to the community using the community rights under the FRA.
2. Put moratorium on all joint forest initiatives collaborating with the International Financial Institutions
3. Women should have the ownership rights over the community forest resources.
4. Recognition of all Taungiya and forest villages as revenue villages.
5. Provide ownership rights on Non Timber Forest Produce for the forest communities and terminate all contract systems. Strict implementation of FRA inside the protected areas and implement rights for the Pastoral communities.
6. Fishing rights for fishworkers in the rivers and ponds in the forest areas
7. Mining rights for the forest communities, cancelling all trades with the companies on mines and minerals
8. Withdrawal of all cases imposed on the forest people by the Forest Department, as per the provisions of FRA.

9. Scrap the provision of three generations, one generation equal to 25 years for other traditional dwellers.



A rally of thousands of forest workers representing forest workers, fishworkers, agricultural workers, handloom weavers, and many other people's organizations marched on the streets of Delhi raising slogans for the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and gathered at the public meeting on Parliament Street. The speakers at the public meeting reiterated that the movement to effectively implement the Forest Rights Act is an inalienable part of the struggles for democratic governance. "The challenge before us is to make the government accountable to the people. The political class should show courage to speak for the people and stand by them," said Ashok Chowdhury. "The sea, forest and mountain dwellers' coming together is not just for the sake of it. It is to move towards making a new world order," he said.

NEWS UPDATES

NFF Demands separate Ministry for Fisheries at the Centre: 17 December, New Delhi: A delegation of National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) and support groups in Delhi met with the union ministers at the centre and demanded that a separate central ministry for fisheries be immediately formalized by the UPA Government. The delegation comprised of leaders of NFF, along with Ashok Choudhary of National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPPFW) and Amar of National Hawkers' Federation (NHF), met with KV Thomas (In-charge, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture) and submitted a memorandum to A K Anthony (Minister for Defence), Sharad Pawar (Minister for Agriculture) and the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh. The delegation also met with the Minister for Power, K C Venugopal to demand that the coastal gas pipeline project in Kerala from Kochi LNG Terminal to Kayamkulam Thermal Power Plant be scrapped. The

delegation briefed the Minister about the threat posed by such a project to the sea, the coast and the livelihood of thousands of fishworkers in Kerala. NFF is also demanding ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 188 for Work in Fishing by the Government of India to protect the rights of fishworkers.

Hike in monthly pension: 28 December 2011, Chennai: The Government of Tamil Nadu has increased the monthly pension of workers, who are members of various welfare boards, weavers and practitioners of traditional medicine to Rs. 1000. The pension of members of the welfare board has gone up from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000, while pension of the members of the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Weavers Society has been hiked from Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000. Similarly the family pension of the weavers has also been increased from Rs. 550 to Rs. 1000.

Minimum wages for domestic workers: 31 December 2011, Nagpur: The Maharashtra State labour department has issued a notification on 31 December 2011 for bringing employment in domestic work under Section 27 of Minimum Wages Act, 1948, whereby domestic workers will be included under the schedule for notification of minimum wages. The government has urged citizens to send their suggestions and objections within three months, so they can be considered while finalizing the draft.

The state government had enacted a separate law for domestic workers in 2008. A committee was set up in 2011 for implementing this law. The registration of domestic workers has started in seven districts in the first phase - Mumbai, Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Nagpur, Pune, Nashik and Aurangabad. The remaining districts will be covered in the second phase. The Maharashtra State Domestic Workers Board was formed on 12 August this year to cater to the needs of domestic workers. The registered workers will be eligible to avail the Janashree Bima Yojana, a life insurance cover for rural and urban poor. The board has received Rs 6.3 crore from the state to implement this programme. In addition, after registering with the board, a domestic worker whose children are studying in classes IX to XII will get Rs 100 per month as part of this scheme to aid the education of two children.

Domestic workers will be registered at the office of the labour department. The registration fee is Rs 90 per worker, who can register with the board by producing a copy of ration card, photo identity proof such as voters card/ Andhra card/ election card/ driving license and a written confirmation from the employer stating that the person registering has been employed by the household as a domestic worker.

LEGAL NOTES

'Conciliation officer' duty-bound to ensure settlement of disputes without delay: Madras High Court: 21 December, Chennai: Conciliation officers have to investigate disputes 'without delay' and ensure their quick settlement, the Madras High Court has ruled. These officers might do all such things as they thought fit for purpose of 'inducing' parties to reach a 'fair and amicable' settlement, and if parties were aggrieved, then he could record a settlement u/s 12(3) r/w 2(p) of the Industrial Disputes Act, Mr Justice K. Chandru, ruled disposing of a writ petition filed by SRF Ltd IFB Employees Union, Viralimalai, Pudukottai, praying for direction to Assistant Commissioner of Labour (Conciliation), Mannarpuram, Tiruchi (R-1).

'Dubious' designation of certain newly recruited workers by SRF Ltd (industrial fabrics business) (R-2) as 'Area Leaders' and not as 'work associates' was not fair and proper, the petitioner contended. The petitioner wanted to have adjudication of dispute and hence the writ petition. The judge observed that both the respondents had not filed any counter affidavit, and hence, the court had to proceed on the basis of averments made in affidavits filed in support of petition. The conciliation officer notified u/s 12(1) of the Act, was bound to enquire into such complaints and he must hold conciliation in prescribed manner.

On receipt of report u/s 12(4), the State Government would pass the order referring the dispute, or decline to make reference. If the petitioner was unable to appear before the conciliation officer, he could always depute representative and offer his written remarks on the subject. The conciliation officer had now been empowered u/s 11(4) to enforce attendance of any person, the judge ruled.

The writ petition was disposed of with direction to the R-1 to complete conciliation. If no compromise was reached among parties, he should forward the failure report to the Government. This exercise should be carried out within eight weeks, the judge held.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Italian unions unite against cuts: 14 December: The Italian trade union confederations CGIL, CISL and UIL have unanimously demanded changes in the Monti government's plans for fiscal cuts of 30 billion Euro, to assure fairness. After a resultless meeting with the government the Italian unions called for a week of general strikes starting December 12. The unions are demanding steeper wealth taxes and measures to combat fiscal evasion in place of pension cuts and the new

home tax. Metalworkers affiliated to FIOM CGIL, and CGIL workers in Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia and Ferrara downed tools for eight hours on December 12. FIM-CISL and UILM affiliates also joined in.

In the transport sector the confederations' affiliates called for three hour strikes in ports, freeways, car rentals, goods transports and logistics. Essential public transports were excluded: air transport, local, rail and marine public transport, and emergency services. Bank workers will strike on 16 December and on 19 December; the strike extended to all of the public sector and the Italian Mail service.

"The austerity package must be changed," said Susanna Camusso, of CGIL, "as it hurts workers, pensions and the country as a whole".

IMF Central Committee endorses creation of new global union: Jakarta, 9 December: On the second day of IMF's Central Committee meeting on 8 December in Jakarta, the 300 delegates voted to convene an extraordinary Congress to dissolve the International Metalworkers' Federation and to found a new global union organization, which will unite the workers of metal, mining, chemical, energy and textile industries. The new global union, which will represent 50 million workers in 140 countries, will be launched on 18-20 June 2012 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In a lively debate, delegates expressed hope about building a stronger counter-power to transnational corporations, and more focus and resources for organizing, fighting precarious work and defending trade union rights. Speakers emphasized the need to further improve gender balance in the different structures, including a 30 per cent minimum share of women.

The Central Committee returned the proposal on Presidents of IMF's industrial departments back to the Executive Committee in order to find a better gender and north-south balance.

PRESS STATEMENT

Freeze Nuclear Plants, Democratise Decision making on Nuclear Energy: New Delhi, 8 December 2011: The New Trade Union Initiative supports the day long National Anti-Nuclear protest demonstration being held today at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi in solidarity with the people's struggle against unsafe and costly nuclear power projects and the un-democratic process adopted by the government in making decisions on nuclear energy and on nuclear power projects across India.

Unsafe Technology: The present generation of technology used for the production of energy in the

existing and proposed nuclear power plants is unsafe. While nuclear accidents have large-scale and long-term consequences, even normal operation of reactors expose workers and local populations to radiations that can cause diseases such as cancer, thyroid dysfunctions and leukaemia in the long-term. Further, dealing with nuclear waste is still an issue with no known solution and substances like plutonium, created as by-product, remain dangerously radioactive for thousands of years, creating an inherent long term risk. The NTUI condemns the policymakers, technocrats and the scientific lobby propped up by corporate interest in promoting a technology that is inherently unsafe guided by nuclear armament need in complete disregard of the consequences on local populations and workers engaged in the sites.

Costly Energy: The expansion of India's nuclear power capacity will put a heavy burden on the Indian exchequer as not only is nuclear power expensive, but the industry has a track record to run into large overhead costs. According to an independent estimate, overhead costs of nuclear power plants, between 1995 and 2000, have increased in the range of 176% to 396%. Also, the government intends to limit liability of the operator and exonerate the design, technology equipment suppliers for any of its actions, and hence in case of any accident the financial burden will fall on the people in addition to the catastrophic effect. Hence the argument of nuclear energy being cost-effective falls through.

Renewable vs Non-renewable: With dwindling coal reserves complemented with environmental and health hazards accompanying it and the growing energy requirement in the economy, there is an urgent need for the development of a renewable, sustainable and affordable energy base. India already has more energy coming from renewable sources than from nuclear plants by a factor of 4, albeit still a small 10% of the total installed generation capacity in 2010. This is despite budget allocations being much more for nuclear energy. The Department of Atomic Energy's overall budget estimates for 2011-12 was Rs. 18,481 crore, while the budget estimate of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy was only Rs. 1,212 crore in 2011-12. There has also been a cheapening of the renewable energy technology that makes the expansion of the use of this source more affordable and sustainable. The NTUI believes that India's basic energy needs can be met with renewable sources and calls for the promotion of people centred non conventional and sustainable energy sources. The NTUI believes that this can be achieved through principles of democratic industrialisation that includes the restructuring and decentralisation of the national electricity grid so as to ensure sufficient supply of energy to essential industries and services and to people.

Democratising Decision: People living close to nuclear power plants and uranium mines have raised serious concerns regarding the direct and indirect health hazards, loss of their livelihoods, the technology choices made, the impacts on fragile ecosystems, as well as risks related to the seismic nature of proposed locations, among other legitimate and serious concerns. It is the responsibility of a democratically elected government to respond to these concerns. But, instead of ensuring a democratic and transparent process for addressing these concerns within an accountability framework, people's right to dissent is met with brutal state repression. The NTUI demands a freeze of nuclear projects based on a precautionary principle until a comprehensive review of nuclear policy and practice and an independent safety audit of existing nuclear power plants is undertaken and the findings be shared widely so as to ensure informed public debate. We therefore also strongly demand that any nuclear power generation programme in the country should have as a pre-condition, the formation of a Nuclear Safety Commission that is independently constituted to cover all nuclear power establishments with powers to enforce information disclosures, frame safety rules, risk assessment methodologies and protocols, periodic risk assessment report and safety audit and put it all in public domain. It should have powers to give safety directives including shut down of plants. The commission should include, beside credible independent experts, elected representatives of workers, scientists and professionals working in the industry and all other stakeholders of affected communities.

The NTUI stands in solidarity with the people of Koodankulam - Tamil Nadu, Jaitapur - Maharashtra, Chutka - Madhya Pradesh, Mithi Viridi - Gujarat, Gorakhpur - Haryana and Kovada - Andhra Pradesh and demand a freeze on these projects until a transparent, informed, and participatory decision making process is established.

**6 January 2012
Rally and Public Meeting
College Square to Esplanade**

**7-8 January 2012
Third General Council
Moulali Yuva Kendra, Kolkata**