

# **STEEL WORKERS FEDERATION OF INDIA**

**Against the Anti-Worker, Anti-People and Anti-national Policies of the Central Govt  
To Save the People and Save the Nation  
Countrywide General Strike on 28-29 March 2022  
At the call of Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and Federations**

Dear comrades and brothers and sisters,

The Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations have given a call for countrywide General Strike on **28-29 March 2022** in the process of the ongoing struggle against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of the Govt at the centre and the firm resolve of the joint platform of trade unions is to save the country and the people from the disaster and destruction being sought to be imposed by the present policy regime.

The present policy regime seeks to put the entire country on sale. The desperate and all out privatization bid of all PSUs, including those in strategic and core sector of the economy is a programme to destroy our national self-reliance and economic sovereignty in favour of private corporate, both foreign and domestic. The public sector steel industry, both SAIL and RINL are the major targets. If these succeed, the public sector workers also will no more be safe and conditions of slavery will be imposed on them, besides threatening even the employment of majority of workforce. In fact, such privatization of steel sector is being attempted since long, targeting ASP, Salem. VISL and RINL but could not yet fully succeed owing to resistance struggle in ASP, Salem, VISL and the ongoing struggle at Vizag. Besides, country's united trade union movement including those in private unorganized sector have been fighting against the same through numerous national general strikes and intervening sectoral strikes, agitations, both at national level and industry-level. In the process and continuity of that ongoing struggle, the call for two days' general strike has been given to decisively halt the mad privatization drive. .

The mad drive of privatization has made the Govt so desperate that it has now decided to hand over the public sector to private corporates virtually free through its latest programme of National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP). The initial exercise has started with the infrastructural sector like Railways, Roadways, Port & Dock, Oil and Gas Pipelines, electricity-Grids, Coal and other Minerals etc; these sectors will be handed over to private hands on long-period-lease, who will operate these sectors without making any investment, earn the revenues and profit and share only a small part of the revenue with the Govt. Once this is put on operation, then gradually other PSUs will be put in the same pipeline with a revenue sharing arrangement and the entire workforce, both regular and contract will all lose their employment and job security. More than that, entire national economy will be mortgaged to private corporate, both foreign and domestic. These are all matters of record, published in public domain by NITI AAYOG. Anybody can cross check. Should we allow this to happen ? Should we allow the country, which very much include our workplaces to such disaster and destruction?

And that is not all. To ensure that such crime on nation is not opposed and resisted by organized movement of the people, the Govt of the day has been working overtime to curb democratic and collective rights of the people. The enactment of four Labour Codes, repealing 29 existing labour laws which statutorily defined the rights of the working people and their trade unions, is aimed at demolishing all labour rights and right of the workers to fight collectively for their demands, livelihoods and also against deprivation and discrimination. Further, Essential Defence Service Act has been enacted to prohibit strike in Defence sector with the provision of banning strike in any other sector related to that. These Labour Codes has also empowered the Govt and through them the concerned managements and employers to bulldoze workers' rights, curtail existing benefits, unilaterally change service conditions and in fine to do whatever they like. And all these together clearly signal a programme of imposing conditions of slavery

on the entire working people and their collective organizations. Workers' right to collective bargaining and their protection against any form of unilateralism and vindictiveness by the employers is the main target to be completely demolished through these Labour Codes.

And towards that end, the Govt has been actively working to change the profile of employment of the workers and the public sector industries are the main target for such experiment. The regular employment in PSUs in general is going down and through rampant outsourcing and contractorisation, core operational work of the industry is being increasingly manned by contract workers. As on date, share of contract workers in total manpower is more than fifty per cent on the average in all the PSUs and in some PSUs, it is as worse as 70:30.

Public sector steel industry is no exception. Rampant outsourcing is going on in main operational work in most of the STEEL PLANTS. Latest is the move to handover operation, repair and maintenance of two batteries in Coke Oven of RINL Plant through open tendering for which Expression of Interests has already been invited. Should this be allowed to happen? Certainly not.

Around 70 thousand contract workers have now become integral part of the operational workforce in SAIL and RINL. If they are kept divided, permanent workers will gradually lose their bargaining and striking capacity. The Govt and the management want to keep them divided. That is why in Steel industry we find that management is reluctant to concede to the demands for rights and wage increase for the contract workers; they want to gradually replace the regular workers by contract workers by way of not filling the regular sanctioned posts, virtually stopping recruitment of regular workers on the one hand and maintain a dichotomy in the workplaces, in order to continue ruthless exploitation of both the sets of workers. That is why, it is so important for all of us to fight for the rights of the contract workers. That is why, the stoppage of contractorisation and regularization of contract workers is one of the main demands for the forthcoming two days strike action.

The steel workers, through their own experience are witnessing the menace, these Labour Codes can bring about, once executed fully. The spate of victimization on the workers through suspension, transfer etc in public sector steel plants and establishments, unilateral circular curbing existing rights to ceilingless gratuity, unilateral move to curtail Difficult area Special Allowance, denial and nasty bungling with legitimate rights of full arrears from 1-1-2017, unilateral cut in the agreed rate of pension contribution for the workers, unilateral circular on pension contribution from a prospective date, bungling with the right to wage increase of the contract workers, imposing humiliating discrimination against the workers in terms of service benefits vis-à-vis the top-executives, arrogantly bulldozing the established collective bargaining forum are some of the examples as to how the Labour Codes have emboldened the management in their arrogant authoritarian and unilateral exercise. They have to be replied in the languages they understand. Militant strike action and determination to resist management's authoritarianism and arrogance by united collective actions by the workers en-masse is the only way to decisively halt the attack on the workers and workers' rights. We have to collectively decide whether we will fight or accept the conditions of slavery.

The arrogant denial of Covid compensation and compassionate appointment in case of Covid death, despite wholehearted dedication of the workers in the production process risking their lives and also of their family members are the most novel example of the inhuman cruelty of the management emboldened by the Govt policy regime on Labour Rights expressed through Labour Codes. Entire trade union movement has thus raised the demand of repealing those Labour Codes while calling for two days countrywide strike **28-29 March 2022**.

There are other demands too formulated by the Joint Trade Union Platform. These are all practical achievable demands, provided we fight unitedly and with determination. Our success in the forthcoming

two days' strike action will strengthen our own industry-based struggle in steel industry against humiliation, deprivation, discrimination, victimisation and unilateralism and also against the desperate Govt move for privatization.

We have to unite, fight and win. If farmers could get the firm laws, passed by the Parliament totally repealed workers can also succeed to repeal anti worker labour codes provided be able to fight with the same zeal and determination.

All in united action by the workers is the only way open before us. If workers are united for action, nobody can stay away from that. And victory will definitely be ours. And what does the victory mean? We will save the rights of the workers and we will also save the industry from privatization. We will save the national assets and the economy from being destroyed by the anti-national policy regime. At the same time we will be able to give a befitting rebuff to the nasty display of arrogance, victimisation, unilateralism and discrimination.

**We have to heighten our united struggle resolutely pressing for our demands, particularly for -**

- 1.Scraping the Labour Codes; Scraping of EDSA (Essential Defence Services Act)
- 2.Accept 6-point charter of demands, post repeal of Farm Laws, of the SamyuktaKisanMorcha,
- 3.No to Privatisation in any form and scrap the NMP;
- 4.Food and Income Support of Rs 7500 per month to non-income tax paying households;
- 5.Increased allocation for MNREGA and extension of Employment guarantee Scheme to urban areas;
- 6.Universal social security for all informal sector workers;
- 7.Statutory Minimum wage and social security for Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid-day-meal and other Scheme workers;
- 8.Proper protection and insurance facilities for frontline workers serving the people in the midst of pandemic;
- 9.Increase in public investment in agriculture, education, health and other crucial public utilities by taxing the rich through wealth tax etc in order to revive and revamp the national economy;
- 10.Substantial reduction in Central Excise duty on petroleum product and concrete remedial measure to arrest price rise.
- 11.Regularisation of contract workers, scheme workers and equal pay for equal work for all
- 12.Cancellation of NPS and restoration of old pension; substantial increase in minimum pension under Employees' Pension Scheme

We appeal all the steel workers to rise to the occasion and make the call for two days' countrywide general strike on **28-29 March 2022** a total success-

**TO HEIGHTEN WORKERS' DIGNITY**

**TO DEFEAT ARROGANCE AND VICTIMISATION**

**TO SAVE THE PEOPLE**

**TO SAVE THE NATION**