

[This monthly bulletin is prepared in order to convey the important developments that take place in the realm of closed and 'sick' industries and the environment movement along with information regarding the present activities and future plans of Mancha. The second issue of Mancha Sambad covers a period of two months.]

### By the side of the riot victims

Consequent upon the disgraceful demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 and the outbreak of riots all over the country, including Calcutta, a committee was set up by the eminent people of east Calcutta to help distressed people in and around the city. Members of Nagarik Mancha took an active part in the collection and distribution of relief materials from December 13 last up to mid-January under the aegis of the East Calcutta Riot Victims' Aid Committee.

### At the Calcutta Book Fair '93

Mancha made its first debut at the Calcutta Book Fair '93. A table-space right on the open space, meant for little magazines, was available. "Kolkatar Danga" (Riots in Calcutta), a Mancha monograph, was the best-seller. It created an unprecedented enthusiasm. Besides, other Mancha publications like Public Sector, Against the Wall and Akranta Sramik (workers under seige) drew attention too. A pack of seven booklets and fact-sheets at Rs 10 each had also been received well among the buyers. The total sale receipts of Mancha was Rs 6,500. Mancha enrolled a good number of new friends and associate members. Book Fair was an invaluable experience of interaction with many concerned people.

### Elsewhere

On January 30-31 last, the 18th Annual General meeting of All West Bengal Sales' Representative Union took place successfully at Banga Bhaban, Siliguri.

On February 13-14, the Asansol Civil Rights Association had its annual general meeting. Mr A K Ray, Mr Sunil Basu Ray and others spoke there on trade union rights.

People's Campaign for Secularism, a national forum, had its meeting in Lucknow on February 27-28. Four Mancha members participated there. The English version of Kolkatar Danga was sold there.

### Public Interest Litigation

On the strength of Article 226, Constitution of India, a case was filed by the Mancha against the Calcutta Port Trust at the High Court of Calcutta seeking protection of Mudialy Fish-farmers' right to livelihood and preservation on their nature park and wetland. Dr Ajit Narayan Bose filed the petition on behalf of the Mancha in the court of Mr Justice Tarun Kumar Chatterjee on March 1, 1993.

### On E S I

The Central ESIC declared February 15-March 14 as its security month promising up-to-date clearance all outstanding dues. ESI, West Bengal planned to observe January 25-February 24 as ESI

MONTH although the news reached the concerned on February 18 last. It was planned that the ESI-empanelled physicians would visit the employee at latter's workplaces during the period and conduct medical check-up.

#### New method of medical reimbursement

For the medical reimbursement, prescribed forms will be available at the undernoted ESI Services Dispensaries, area given in brackets:

1) Kalyani (Nadia-1st, 2nd, 3rd); 2) Kanchrapara (PAR-7); 3) Barrackpur (Part 4, 5); 4) Titagarh (PAR-4); 5) Khardah (PAR 3, 4); 6) DumDum Cantt (PAR 2, 11, 14, 15, 16); 7) Baranagore (PAR 1, 3); 8) Garia (PAR 12); 9) Behala (Calcutta, 0, 18, 16); 10) Amtala (13, 12); 11) Nungi (9, 12); 12) Budge Budge (90); 13) Birlapur (9); 14) Beliaghata 99; 15) Bendel (Hoogly 6, 7, 8); 16) Gaurhati (5, 6); 17) Serampur (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11); 18) Belur (5); 19) Liluah (4, 5); 20) HIT Stall (1, 3, 4, 15); 21) Baltikuri (1, 2, 10, 15); 22) Uluberia (8, 7, 9, 13, 19, 23); 23) Sankrail (6, 7); 24) Haldia (Only Haldia); 25) Garden Reach (PAR 8); 26) Naihati (PAR 6, 7)  
N.B PAR-24 parganas; (9)-(14)-CALCUTTA; (15)-(17)-HOOGHLY; (18)-(23)-HOWRAH

Employees, covered by ESI scheme, will collect their forms from their respective services dispensaries fill them up, submit them there itself and take their receipts in return. They will be told there when they will get payments from Calcutta Head Office. Nonetheless, the demands for settling the matter at the district level remains unfulfilled.

For others .....

- \* The rural school building must be repaired and the teachers must take classes regularly;
- \* The hospital and panchayat office must also be overhauled;
- \* The wealthy and influential people must give up the land they have grabbed;
- \* Sanitation must be improved and modernized;
- \* Harijans must get licence for ration shops.

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SITARANM SINGH of Karther village, Hisua block, Nawada district was on a fast-unto-death agitation on the above demands from September 19 to November 15 last for 59 days. He died on the November 15. (Source: Ganyer Katha, Dec 15, 1992)

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#### Victory of 15 casual workers against TOMCO and State Government

When TOMCO and WBIDC decided to jointly takeover the Kalyani-based sick unit, Kalyani Soap Works, the TOMCO management decided that it merge with the only soap factory in West Bengal at Maniktala. Accordingly, 140 of Maniktala's 390 permanent staff got voluntary retirement and the rest joined the Kalyani unit on May 8, 1992 without any protest. Fifteen casual workers put their foot down but TOMCO management refused to take them in. Ostensibly, they were CONTRACT LABOURERS.

Then the TOMCO sales office godown workers' union launched a sit-in stir at the factory gate. They stopped entry and exit of materials to/from the factory. They moved the State Labour Commissioner seeking redressal. The State Government passed the case on to the Labour Tribunal, TOMCO argued at High Court of Calcutta that the 15 "contract" workers were beyond the purview of the Labour Tribunal. The strikers went to the court, TOMCO-State Government collaboration robbed the former of their livelihood. However the state government

had sent the matter to the Labour Tribunal. Meanwhile, the agitation continued with solidarity came from the all-India Union of TOMCO. On February 22, TOMCO verbally agreed to take in the fifteen workers and gave the assurance, that too verbally, that they would work as **watch-and-ward staff** at the factory until the management would work out a **permanent arrangement**.

### The Titagarh conundrum

\*TARIT TOPDAR, CPI(M) MP, had stated at an election meeting in 1989 that Mr GP Goenka promised to take over and reopen Titagarh Paper Mills in three months.

\*ORISSA GOVERNMENT will take over TPM No 3 in Orissa and pay Rs 10 crores to TPM. Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Biju Patnaik will discuss the matter during Mr Basu's stay in Puri (GANASAKTI, February 3, 1990)

\*TPM will shortly reopen (Jyoti Basu, GANASAKTI, July 29, 1990)

\*FIRST it was stated that TPM wasn't happening because of me. Now that it has happened, the blame for delay is passed on to me: Tarit Topdar (GANASAKTI, January 8, 1991)

\*IT HAD been decided that the TPM would be permanently closed down by the BIFR by June, 1992. But once that deadline passed by, the state government declared that the Rs 4-crore sales tax could not be exempted, contrary to the earlier announcement, because the sales tax department had declared the exemption "unlawful" (BUSINESS STANDARD, March 20, 1992)

\*JYOTI BASU and his finance minister, Dr Asim Dasgupta said that negotiations were on with the ITC on reopening of TPM.

\*SIX MONTHS back, Orissa government bought the Chowduar paper mill at Rs 10 crores and handed over the management of the mill to the Thapars.

\*TITAGARH UNIT No 1 has been under lock out since November 1, 1985 and Unit No (Kankinara) since January 1986. None has been reopened.

\*ACCORDING TO the revival scheme, submitted to the BIFR, if TPM is reopened, it will generate Rs 140 crores excise duty in ten production years. West Bengal and Orissa governments will earn Rs 24 crores and Rs 10 crores as sales tax, respectively. The investment by banks and financial institutions, waiving subsidy and interest, can be repaid in the form of sales tax and excise duty. Thus 3,500 workers can be saved.

### Metal Box and the two states

When the Madras unit of Metal Box of India Ltd, which employes 8,000 people, was closed down, the Jayalalitha government in Tamil Nadu declared the closure illegal under section 10B of the ID Act (Tamil Nadu Amendment, 1982).

In West Bengal, when MBTL management sought to convert the arrear sales tax into loan prior to reopening of the units (closed for the last five years) state government showed keenness to consider the proposal. The case of voluntary retirement was discussed at the BIFR. The management has proposed to pay 20 days' salary including all allowances a month. The workers first stuck to 45 days, then came down to 30 (Economic Times, 25, 26 and 29 December, 1992)

### IRBI: the priest and the Indo-Japan Steel

Industrial Reconstruction Bank of India Ltd (IRBI), a financial institution has rejected the Indo-Japan Steel Employees' Union proposal to the BIFR, to let them run the factory under joint management with the employers. The employees have not proposed to take any loan from bank or FI's, a clause the IRBI has found unacceptable. All the Indo-Japan Steel employees have asked for is some extra time



to repay the outstanding dues.

Incidentally, the company has been under joint management. . Although they cannot repay the principal, they are consistently paying the interest. But how can non-expert workers dare to suggest a remedy bypassing the expert "IRBI"? So the IRBI has been continuously putting obstacles for the IJS employees. The Union has written lengthy letters (on January 12 and February 24 last) to the IRBI.

#### EAST CALCUTTA WETLANDS under attack once again

On February 6 evening, anti-socials, clinging to the CPI(M) and CONGRESS (I) clashed at Shantinagar, Basantinagar and Taprightat areas of the South Bidhan Nagar PS, at the crossing of the Beliaghata Main Road and Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. Thirtyfive huts belonging to the wetland workers were gutted, their property and cash looted. More than 100 affected took shelter at Naubhanga Primary School. The CPI(M)'s local committee there held a meeting on the issue and asked the people to vacate the school building.

A memorandum was submitted to the Officer-in Charge, Bidhan Nagar (South) PS on behalf of the 37 affected families on February 15 with a plea for safe shelter. Twenty of those families are Muslims, the remaining 17 are Hindus. Incidentally, in January last, 2800 acres of wetlands in east Calcutta under private ownership was vested in the state government. Since then, the fisheries mafia have been striving to gain control of the easily accessible goldmine.

The 20th annual conference of the CALCUTTA WHOLESALERS MEDICINE DEALERS' EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION was held on February 13 and 14 at the Moulali Yuba Kendra.

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#### SOME FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS OF NAGARIK MANCHA

\*\* BIFR (revised) \*\* Role of IRBI in EASTERN INDIA: A factsheet \*\*  
Industry and Industrial Workers in West Bengal (annual Report) \*\*  
AKRANTA SRAMIK 1993 \*\*

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#### NATIONAL TANNERY - closure continues- m o r e d e a t h s

Staff reporter: After two months of state takeover, National Tannery hasn't reopened. Moreover, during the last two months one more worker, Joginder Ram, committed suicide, being unable to withstand the strains of closure any more and atleast 5 workers died due to severe malnutrition. They were Caitanya Dalvi, Nanda Pyne, Arun Chatterjee, Bisnu Ram and Chander ram.

On November 20 1992, state government had taken over the NT as a sequel to a High court order. Yet the workers have not gone back to their work. For the tannery has not actually reopened, according to Naba Dutta, spokesman of the workers support group. The Mancha has demanded immediate reopening of NT and interim payment to the workers. It has warned that unless the payment is not made within 10 days, the workers will take to the streets, along with their family members. (BARTAMAN, January 22, 1993)

J O I N   M A Y 3   P u b l i c   M e e t i n g   A t   S E A L D A H   S T A T I O N