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Centre flayed for privatisation of ports

• Staff Reporter

CPI(M) says the draft Bill had failed to take the opinions of stakeholders



Red alert: CITU all India general secretary Tapan Sen (left) and State president A. Soundararajan at a press conference in Thoothukudi on Thursday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

The Centre's move to privatise major sea ports was initiated without taking all stakeholders into consideration, said Tapan Sen, MP and national general secretary of Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

Speaking to the press at CPI (M)'s party office here on Saturday, he said the Centre was going ahead with 'The Central Port Authorities Act, 2016', a legislation proposed by Shipping Ministry, and the draft Bill was uploaded on the Ministry's website without taking into account opinions of stakeholders.

It would pave way for opening the board for corporatisation, he said, adding all new ports would come under private sector. He also came down heavily on the Cabinet's approval for setting up a major port at Enayam near Colachel in Kanniyakumari district as a Special Purpose Vehicle by using the surplus funds of about Rs. 1,500 crore from major ports in Chennai, Ennore and Thoothukudi.

"The government's money is being looted to bring ports under the private sector. Ports were crucial infrastructure of our country and it should be safeguarded at all cost. Once they are privatised, the state of the workers would be of great concern," he said.

Over the last three to four years, no new jobs had been created and the Centre's policies had not benefited the people. On the general strike called by trade unions on September 2, he said: "Industrial workers responded well to the strike in most places and normal operations in Bhavnagar Port in Gujarat and many private ports in Andhra Pradesh were affected. However, the government has not yet responded to the strike."

On the Cauvery river water issue, he said the Supreme Court's order should be implemented properly.

Soundararajan, State president, CITU, said the interests of workers in salt industry in Thoothukudi, safety matches industry in Kovilpatti and rubber industry in Kanniyakumari should be protected. The CITU was all set to organise a four-day State-level conference here from September 9.

G. Sugumaran, State general secretary, CITU, T. Narendra Rao, general secretary, All India Water Transport Workers Federation, K. Kanagaraj, State executive council member, and R. Russell, State secretary, CITU, were present.

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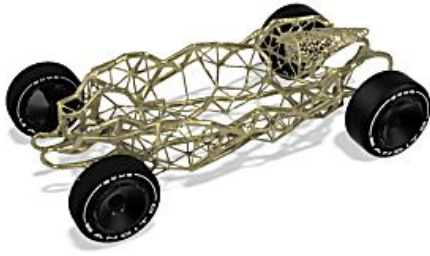
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