

"We condemn the arrest of veteran trade-union leader, Prafulla Chakraborty, and demand his immediate release!"

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The New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) condemns the arrest of veteran trade-union leader, Prafulla Chakraborty. We demand his immediate release!

The New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) condemns the arrest of veteran trade-union leader, Prafulla Chakraborty. Comrade Chakraborty who was picked up from his residence by the police this morning was long associated with the workers movement of Kanoria Jute Mill at Phuleshwar, Howrah. He was charged with IPC Section 326 (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), IPC 324 (Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), and Sections 149,147,120B and 323.(case number 1145/11 dated 9.10.2011). His bail application was later rejected by the Uluberia Court and is remanded in judicial custody till 24/10/2011.

The Kanoria Jute Mill which reopened on 10/09/2011 had absorbed only about 300 workers out of the total workforce of approximately 2000. There was no real commitment either by the new owner Shiv Shankar Pasari or by the Government of West Bengal about the induction of the balance workforce. This automatically led to tension and disquiet amongst workers left out in the wilderness at the mercy of their fate by all parties concerned. It is learnt that Comrade Chakraborty was having a meeting with those workers on 09/10/2011 at the house of Tapan Mallik, a worker still waiting re-absorption, when they were attacked by a group owing allegiance to the owner of Kanoria Jute Mill. A scuffle took place and later a case was registered against Comrade Chakraborty and others by one Shamsher, a worker who is linked to the group which attacked the meeting. This has been supposedly instigated by Shiv Shankar Pasari. There are also reports of clashes between rival groups of Trinamool Congress (TMC). Workers apprehend that this fabricated incident is another ploy by the owner to close the mill for certain vested interests. It is also learnt that the management of the Kanoria Jute Mill prepared a letter which is dated 08/10/2011, the day before the incident, trying to indict Comrade Chakraborty and others for instigating violence, etc.

NTUI demands that Comrade Chakraborty should be immediately released. We condemn the vile attempts of Shiv Shankar Pasari and others to instigate violence and tension amongst workers for the furtherance of their own vested interests. We feel that the Government of West Bengal has full responsibility for the induction of all 2000 workers employed with Kanoria Jute Mill. The Government moreover has to play a non-partisan role in solving the problems that the workers are facing, instead of wrongfully arresting Comrade Chakraborty who is a veteran trade unionist and in a precarious health condition .

We note with extreme alarm the increasing attack on workers, trade-unionists and trade-unions in violation of all the worker-friendly promises made by the TMC in its election manifesto. This has to be resisted at all costs.

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