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Lakhs of workers take part in dharna on prices

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CPI leader Gurudas Dasgupta addressing a rally of trade unions in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

Lakhs of workers and employees of the public and private sectors, industrial establishments, banks, defence, the oil sector, port and dock works belonging to trade unions affiliated to central trade unions on Tuesday staged a nationwide demonstration and were later arrested. The protest condemned the steep hike in the prices of essential commodities and “rampant corruption.”

They also demanded that the Centre pass the Lokpal Bill in the winter session of Parliament.

In some places, the workers took out a rally and tried to break through the police barricade before they were arrested. The other demands highlighted by the protesters include fixing the minimum wages of workers at Rs.10,000 a month, increasing the pension of retired workers, widening the ambit of the health insurance schemes along with bonus and implementation of social security schemes.

Members of 11 major trade unions including the CITU, the AITUC, the HMS, the INTUC, the BMS and the DMK's Labour Progressive Force (LPPF) participated in the programme.

In Delhi, around 5,000 workers were arrested when they tried to march on the Parliament Street, according to AITUC general secretary Gurudas Dasgupta. Barring some lathi charge in West Bengal's Malda district, the agitation was peaceful. Senior trade unionists Dr. Sanjeeva Reddy, Tapen Sen, Baidyanath Rai, S.P. Tewari and Harbhajan Singh addressed the demonstrators in Delhi.

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