

# ML Update: 4-10 May 2010

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## **May Day 2010: Working Class Actions for Wages, Work and Industrial Democracy**

Workers all over the country observed the historic May Day this year with protests against anti-worker policies, price rise and state repression. It has been apparent for some time that we are witnessing growing working class assertion against the erosion in wages, shrinking livelihood and curbing of trade union rights. As working class militancy was being declared a thing of the past, workers from Mumbai to Coimbatore to Gurgaon have time and again demonstrated the indomitable spirit of working class struggles and the power of working class actions.

The AICCTU in Tamil Nadu had declared a working class padayatra (Long March) on the issue of trade union rights, to start from Coimbatore - the scene of Pricol workers' struggle for industrial democracy in the face of repression - and to travel across the state to culminate on May Day at the state capital, Chennai. The TN Government and police, in keeping with their efforts to keep Coimbatore as a 'No-Trade-Union Zone' and 'No Workers' Protest Zone', did all they could to ban the padayatra from being launched at Coimbatore. But the workers eventually emerged triumphant and the padayatra was launched in a huge mass meeting at Coimbatore on April 23. The workers' March then made its way across several districts to culminate in a massive pledge-taking meeting at Chennai on May Day, in which some 4000 workers from across the state participated. The success of the padayatra reflected the working class' determination to uphold their right to unionise and struggle.

In Mumbai, there was yet another demonstration of workers' solidarity and struggle with the railway motormen's hunger strike on the issue of wage revision and filling up of vacant posts. These demands of Mumbai motormen had been pending since January 26 this year, when their first strike was averted by the Railway authorities' assurance that a fast track committee would look into their demands. The motormen had then warned of a strike in May if the demands were not resolved. The fast track committee reportedly did not meet the workers even once and the motormen then announced an indefinite hunger strike. Just a few hours of hunger strike brought Mumbai to a grinding halt. The Maharashtra Government invoked Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), dismissed 10 motormen and arrested 170 - but the workers' action continued nevertheless. The Government was forced to come to the negotiating table, and the hunger strike was called off after Maharashtra Home Minister R R Patil assured that a special fast-track committee set up by the Railways would consider the demands of the motormen and will submit its report by June 15, and that dismissed motormen would be taken back.

The Mumbai strike highlighted the burning wage question in workers' struggles today. In the backdrop of soaring prices, workers' wages, instead of being increased, are shrinking. Wages are being linked with the productivity, recruitments are being reduced and workers are bearing the burden of increased workload and erosion in real wages. In the light of this, AICCTU raised the demand for monthly wages of Rs. 11,000 to be accepted as a national floor level minimum wage and Rs. 2,000 as monthly pension for all unorganized workers.

The signs of growing working class resistance and solidarity are welcome and the revolutionary working class movement must prepare to honour its May Day resolve and wage bigger and stronger battles for wages, livelihood, social security, rights and dignity.

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## **Jharkhand Crisis: New Act in the Political Theatre of Opportunism and Corruption**

Jharkhand is witnessing a new act in the theatre of the absurd that has marked the state's politics in the decade since its formation. In the past ten years, the state saw seven governments, with the state's ruling parties appearing willing to display dizzying political gymnastics in keeping with every opportunistic compulsion. Once again, the Jharkhand government stands racked by crisis and uncertainty as various ruling class political players including JMM leaders, the BJP and the Congress explore new and more advantageous political alignments. In a short span of time, all these political forces displayed their total absence of scruples and principles as they blithely made and unmade partnerships.

The drama began with the Chief Minister and JMM Chief Shibu Soren (who is the Dumka MP and yet to be elected an MLA) unaccountably led his party to vote in support of the Central Government on the cut motion moved by the Opposition. The JMM's alliance partner in the Jharkhand Government, the BJP, reacted to this "betrayal" by announcing its withdrawal of support.

Four months ago, the JMM, erstwhile UPA partner, had struck an alliance with the BJP to form Government. The Government founded on opportunism is now witnessing a series of new opportunistic twists. The BJP, having announced withdrawal of support, was then seen eating its own words. Even as the Congress hinted at a new alignment of the JMM-Congress-JVP, the BJP restored its partnership with the JMM based on the promise of a BJP Chief Minister. Shibu Soren offered an absurd explanation for his cross-over on the floor of Parliament by pleading confusion induced by Alzheimer's! Subsequently, the BJP was seen to reconcile itself to a JMM Chief Minister, and as of now Shibu Soren continues as CM.

Meanwhile a factional struggle within the JMM also unfolds, with various contenders vying for the CM post and five JMM MLAs raising the banner of revolt against JMM's cross-voting on the cut-motion. Time is running out for Shibu Soren to get himself elected to the Jharkhand Assembly - which he must do by June 30 if he is to remain CM. As of now he is finding it difficult to get anyone to vacate a seat for him to contest.

The Jharkhand political drama is far from over. No matter what alignment is in power once the dust settles, the present episode has underlined the self-serving and corrupt character of ruling class politics in the state. Before the last Assembly elections, the multi-crore mining scam involving former CM Madhu Koda had exposed how the entire ruling structure in Jharkhand is mired in

corruption and implicated in facilitating corporate grab of the state's precious resources at the cost of the livelihood and lives of its adivasi people. As Jharkhand's people and its democracy are again the casualty while its rulers continue to indulge in unprincipled and corrupt political gymnastics, the CPI(ML) and its lone MLA in the Jharkhand Assembly are once again the only consistent force in the State to voice the aspirations of the people for justice, development and dignity.

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## **1<sup>st</sup> May - International Workers' Day**

The historic May Day (in 1886, when the workers of the world organised and declared that they will only let eight hours of their labour power to be appropriated by Capital a day) was observed by CPI(ML) and All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) in India with different initiatives.

**Delhi:** Raising slogans to Provide Livelihood & Jobs to All; Rights & Dignity for each member of the Working Class & Peasantry; Guarantee Rs.11,000 in Monthly Wages and Social Security; Curb Price Rise- thousands of workers in Delhi and the NCR organised under the banner of CPI(ML) and AICCTU held demonstrations, meetings and colourful rallies exposing the pro-rich, anti-people and anti-workers policies of the Centre's UPA and Delhi's Sheila Dikshit Govt., and demanding immediate roll-back of these policies and implementation of the promises made to the poor.

Rallies and other May Day programmes were held at Patparganj industrial area and Kondli in East Delhi. Procession was held at Mandawli in the evening (7 pm). At Noida one hundred rickshaw pullers took out a rally with their cycle rickshaws well decorated with red flags and sharply criticizing both the UPA and Mayawati's Govt. While another rally was held at Jaitpur near Badarpur at 9 am. The DTC workers and technicians held gate meetings at Central Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup>) at 12 pm condemning the anti-people transport policies of Sheila Dikshit Govt. and the attempts to privatize the DTC. At Wazirpur and Bhorganh industrial areas (Narela) in north Delhi workers held rallies and meetings at 8 am. It is notable that Delhi State Committee decided to hold May Day rallies and programmes locally at several places in Delhi in contrast to the long practiced joint May Day rallies. This has helped in consolidating our working class membership and also boosted the confidence of workers while simultaneously highlighting boldly the local issues with wider issues. Hundreds of workers and Party members participated in the programmes.

**Orissa:** 100 members of different workers' union participated in a day long programme organised by the AICCTU at the Nagbhushan Bhawan in Bhubaneswar. The AICCTU flag was hoisted by Com. Khitish Biswal Orissa's State Secretary of CPI(ML) followed by a public meeting which gave a call to all unorganised and organised workers for intensification of struggle for fixing minimum wages at Rs.200/day, social security and comprehensive health cover for all workers.

AICCTU also observed May Day at Rourkela, Gunupur, Rajkanika, Bhadrak and Puri. Com. Radhakant Sethi addressed the meeting at Rajkanika and Com. Tirupati Gamango addressed at Gunupur.

**Tamil Nadu:** May Day meet was attended by over 4000 workers from all over the State. The meeting was presided over by Com. T Sankarapandian, State Vice-President, AICCTU. Com. KG Desikan, State Secretary, AICCTU, read out the pledge and the participants repeated aloud the pledge to gear toward preparations for a more vigorous struggle against the pro-corporate policies of the Govt. Party's General Secretary Com. Dipankar Bhattacharya honoured the padayatris and

presented them a set of 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress Documents.

Com. S Kumarasami, PBM and AICCTU's All India President said that the demand for Trade Union (TU) Recognition Act was first raised by Pricol workers and now the Tamilnadu assembly has shown its intentions to amend TU Act to provide for recognition of TU with majority of workers. He said the TN police attempted to decimate AICCTU in TN, but, AICCTU thwarted all its attempt and has successfully completed the journey from Coimbatore to Chennai raising workers issues all through. He said that the attempts of the TN police to portray those disseminating Marxist-Leninist ideology in TN as criminals and the ideology to be something afraid of, the workers vigorous participation and firm adherence to the principles and fight for justice along with CPI(ML) and AICCTU has squarely foiled their designs, and the workers of the State now know that it is their main hope for securing justice and their fundamental rights.

Com. Dipankar said that if the Centre and State governments are relentless in developing no-trade-union-zones in the country, every factory in the Country will become a zone of struggle. He called upon the workers to rise in struggles and let it known that they will not allow the Govt. to hand over the wealth of the country to the corporates and that all mineral wealth must be nationalized. He said that the Pricol workers have taken up the padayatra on the issues of working people of all sections and did not limit it to their own demands and such a move was sure to take the unity and struggle of Indian working class to newer heights.

Uttar Pradesh: May Day was observed in several districts of the State including Lucknow. A large number of construction workers affiliated to AICCTU took out a rally from Gomti Nagar to Patrakarpuram in Lucknow led by Com. Balmukund Dhuria. Meeting followed the Flag hoisting. The extremely exploitative condition of construction workers was highlighted and the speakers held Mayawati Govt. directly responsible for continuation of such situation.

A public meeting was organised by CPI(ML) and All India Agricultural Labourers' Association (AIALA) at Bhadaura and Jakhania in Gazipur dist. AICCTU held a march in Allahabad. AICCTU leaders addressed a meeting of workers following the Flag hoisting at Kanpur. AICCTU and its affiliate Kamgar Union respectively held marches at Ayodhya and Maya Bazaar in Faizabad. Martyrs were paid tributes in many other districts.

**Assam:** May Day programmes were organised with great enthusiasm at many places in the State. At Borgong in Sonitpur dist. the Asom Sangrami Chah Shramik Sangha (ASCSS) mobilized two thousand workers, mostly tea workers. At Tinsukia too, the joint organisation committee headed by AICCTU mobilized more than 2000 workers. Highlight of the programme was 200 ASHA workers in their uniform and specially prepared umbrellas and carrying hundreds of placards and red flags that made the rally very colourful. Many cultural performances were part of the entire procession. The ASCSS and Sadou Asom Gramin Shramik Santha (SAGSS) jointly organised May Day in Jorhat. More than 200 workers each mobilized by ASCSS participated in programmes at Majjan and Tingkhong in Dibrugarh Dist. At Myang and Bonda SAGSS and AICCTU mobilized 200 and 300 workers respectively. Large number of workers from United Workmen's Union (affiliated to AICCTU) gathered at the gates of Guwahati Refinery for May Day meeting. In Nagaon also programmes were held at 2 places.

**Chhatisgarh:** One thousand workers from Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund and other districts participated in the ten kilometer long May Day rally starting from Bilaspur railway station to the DM's office. The rally was organised by Chhatisgarh Mukti Morcha and AICCTU. After the rally the meeting was addressed by AICCTU National Secretary Com. Brijendra Tiwari and CMM's President and AICCTU's National VP Com. Bhimrao Bagde among many others. After the meeting a memorandum and demand letter for the Chief Minister was handed over to the SDM demanding immediate arresting and action on those who kidnapped and assaulted Com. AG

Quraishi, injured workers be compensated immediately among other demands. The speakers said that loot and repression has become a hallmark of the Raman Singh Govt. The Administration tried to disrupt the programme but the participants thwarted their attempt.

Rally comprising 350 workers was held in Bhilai demanding restitution of the workers who were sacked just for demanding payment of minimum wages. May Day was observed in rock mines at Mura in Raipur and Jagdalpur in Bastar where 150 workers participated. TUCI was a joint organiser here.

**Madhya Pradesh:** Meetings of workers took place at Gwalior and Bhind participated by hundred workers at each place. Com. Rajaram attended the meeting at Gwalior and Com. Devendra Singh Chauhan was present at Bhind.

**Gujarat:** At Vilad in Valsad Dist. hundred workers from Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation participated in the May Day programme addressed by Com. Prabhat Kumar, CCM. At Himmat Nagar, headquarter of Sabarkantha Dist. Com. Ranjan Ganguly addressed a meeting of hundred workers on May Day.

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## **Workers' Padayatra Continues**

In the last issue this newsletter reported about Pricol workers' padayatra to highlight the issue of working class in Tamilnadu. Update on that Yatra follows.

Yatra reached Sriperumbudur on April 28. A public meeting was held in the evening in which over 150 workers participated. CITU and AITUC leaders also addressed the meeting in Sriperumbudur. Com. Thamizharima presided over the meeting. CITU leader E. Muthukumar said that Pricol workers have created a model in the working class movement of TN and that they have taken the initiative on TU Recognition Act and on issues of trainees in TN. He also said a joint struggle of AICCTU, CITU and AITUC should be taken up to carry the struggle for these demands forward.

On April 29, padayatris reached Redhills of Tiruvallore district welcomed by the Tiruvallore comrades at the bus terminus. A 500-strong rally and a public meeting were held. Com. S Janakiraman, SCM, presided over the public meet. The comrades reached Ambattur on April 30 at the public meeting venue after a rally held along the areas where unorganized workers live in large numbers. Com. Sekar, AICCTU State Secretary, led the rally and Com. Mohan, AICCTU State Executive Committee member, presided over the public meeting in which 250 workers participated. In all these meetings, Com. Krishnamurthi, President, Pricol Workers' Union and State Secretary, AICCTU, Com. Janakiraman and Com. Gurusami of Pricol Workers' Union addressed the meetings. Com. S Kumarasami, AICCTU's National President, addressed all these meetings.

## **Reports from Puducherry**

A State level Party School was organised by the Puducherry unit of CPI(ML) on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010 on the occasion of the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary (22<sup>nd</sup> April) of CPI(ML). The subject for the School was 'Communist Movement and Maoism'. Party State Committee members, local committee secretaries and its members, branch secretaries, and branch leading team members and a few mass organisations' leaders took part in the Party education camp.

The day long camp was conducted by the CCM Com. V. Shankar, Com. S. Balasubramanian State

Secretary of the Party explained the salient features of the April 22<sup>nd</sup> call and underlined the emphasis given in the call for its effective practice at all levels. A lively debate ensued in the second session with most students participating.

The nationwide general strike called by the Party was implemented in the State with much enthusiasm. All the affiliated unions of AICCTU observed a total strike on that day. Previously the unions issued notice of strike to their respective managements and handed over a 10 point demand charter. CPI(ML) and AICCTU conducted street corner meetings in and around places of Puduchery town appealing people for participating in the strike and making it successful. On the strike day 27<sup>th</sup> April, a protest demonstration was led by the State Secretary of CPI(ML) Com. S Balasubramanian. All the shops in Puduchery and Karaikal regions including Mahe and Yanam were voluntarily closed by the traders. Autoricshaws, private stage carriers were off the road.

### **AIALA's Intervention for Social Auditing of NREGA in Madurai**

The District Committee of the Party has formed three Local Committees in Vadipatti Union of Madurai district. It decided to strengthen the committees by involving them in organizing AIALA work at Panchayat Level. May 1 is the customary day of Social Auditing of NREGA. AIALA decided to intervene in it. A Work Shop on NREGA and Social Auditing was held for selected comrades on 25<sup>th</sup> April. The workshop decided to concentrate in a single panchayat- Kachakatti. We prepared 10 questions regarding implementation of NREGA and distributed leaflets in all the panchayats where we have work. All the leaders of the Local Committee met people in every street, conducted 'thinnai meetings' as summer rain was lashing the area.

On May 1 people started towards the Panchayat Office and found no one there. The Panchayat did not do anything to conduct a Gram Shaba meeting. As more than 200 men and women assembled and the police-Union Officer reached the spot, the Panchayat woke up late and shifted the venue to near by community hall. There were a lot of scuffles as the Panchayat could not answer any of the question raised by our comrades and general public. They said that they measure volume of work allotted to the workers but they never scaled the volume of the work done. When people asked, "and then how you pay by volume?", the Panchayat authorities remained silent. This initiative helped us to thoroughly expose the DMK Government which is ruling one of the Model state in implementing NREGA. AIALA is planning to bring out a leaflet containing the fact brought out during the Gram Sabha. Comrades Muthamma and Pambaiamma were leading the agitations.

### **Party Foundation Day in Haryana**

Party foundation day was observed in Upalana village of Asandh block of Karnal district in Haryana. After Flag hoisting party's call was read and discussed. Comrade PS Gahalawat addressed the meeting. Haryana Pradesh Mazdoor Kisan Sangathan's Asandh block conference was also held on that day in Upalana. The Conference was inaugurated by Com. PS Gahalawat. A five-member body was elected with comrades Ishwar Pal as President, Satpal as Vice President, Secretary Karmavir, and Cashier Satyawan. During the campaign a membership of 795 was achieved in various villages of this block.

### **CPI(ML)-led Struggle is Victorious in Mirzapur**

Mansa Devi's 3-year old son Rohan died due to drowning when she was working at the site digging pond as part of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA work. Had the rules been followed for arrangement of caretaker/balwadi for workers' children at the worksite, Rohan would have been alive and such tragedy may have been avoided. Demanding action against those responsible for violating the rules and compensation for Mansa Devi, CPI(ML), All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and

other mass organisations were on a dharna at Jamalpur block since 27 March 2010. Initially, the Administration tried its best to shrug off its accountability by ignoring the dharna. But it had to relent in the face of continued dharna and compensation was finally awarded and announcement was made for removal of Panchayat Secretary and BDO was publicly reprimanded.

In another incident from Mirzapur earlier reported in this newsletter, where musclemen of Atari village had beaten up women on 17 April on the issue of filling water from a handpump, and that the police adding insult to injury had again got the women beaten up when it came to the village after a complaint was filed against the goons, a couple Usha Sharma and her husband Rajendra Sharma have been critically injured in this repeat assault and are in district hospital for 10 days. CPI(ML) recently organised a protest demonstration at the DC office for urgent action and punishment to the goons and irresponsible policemen.

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**P.S.**

\* ML Updates, The Weekly News Bulletin of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)(Liberation), Vol.13, No.19 4 - 10 May 2010.