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# KCTU Launching General Strike and calling for your solidarity!

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Seoul, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the KCTU, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, with it's 800,000 grass-root members, I'm appreciating to deliver to all of you, the fact that the KCTU has called on a general strike from February 28<sup>th</sup> protesting the passage of a irregular workers legislation by the Parliament environment and labour committee.

Over the participation of the nationwide strike, I would like to tell you that about 150,000 unionists at over 150 workplaces, including 75,000 workers of Hyundai Motors, Kia Motors and Korail, took part in the strike action after 1 pm. During the strike, the KCTU made a massive protest rally at about 10 major cities declaring it would be continued with it's strike unless the Parliament would give up the final passage of the legislation at the plenary session of the Parliament on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The strike has been provoked by the miscalculation of the ruling and main opposition parties at night on February 27<sup>th</sup>. Those members unilaterally approved the legislation aimed at improving the flexibility of employment for temporary and part-time, dispatched workers despite attempts by the Democratic Labor Party to block their package on the grounds of insufficient protection measures for underprivileged workers. The KCTU and its allies strongly confirmed that the legislation would do little to improve the working conditions of temporary workers, while allowing employers to hire more irregular workers and simply lay them off before they have to offer them a better employment status. The legislation has been pointed out its insufficiency in protection for irregular workers by the National Human rights commission since last April. Moreover, many civic groups and NGOs are claiming that the controversial legislation would increase the number of temporary labours, under the circumstance that the scale of irregular workers has upsurged since financial crisis of 1997 and it's number has been already reached to 8.4m out of 15m, vowing to block the final passage at a plenary session of the Parliament.

Although the legislation would expect its negative impact for the vast majority of workers in the future, the ruling party would try to pass it ignoring the worsening plight of irregular workers. Moreover, the National Labor Relations Commission immediately decided to bring the Korail labor dispute to compulsory arbitration at 9 pm on 28<sup>th</sup>. According to the labour law striking workers would be forced to return to work and be banned from taking any collective action for 15 days if the president of the NLRC invokes the decision of arbitration powers. 11 hours earlier than that, Labour, Law and Construction-transportation Ministers alleged that the strike would be illegal and they

would take measure to stop it by their law and order, meaning the impending repression by the mobilised riot police.

I gave you brief information on the Korean tension situation as above, and I hope your strong solidarity and urgent support. They would make the strike strengthening and consolidating and I could anticipate a call-off the attempt of final passage by the ruling party with your global support.

I'm looking forward to your quick solidarity letter.

Yours fraternally,

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President

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