

Pakistan Trade Union Solidarity

Bulletin

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Workers Celebrate May Day in Pakistan

On May 1st, 2024, the Red Workers Front (RWF) and other workers organisations in Pakistan celebrated May Day with a series of fervent and organised activities across more than 30 cities. This year's events were particularly charged due to the severe economic crisis, increasing inflation, and the government's repressive actions against workers and activists. Despite these challenging conditions, the working class demonstrated their resilience and commitment to their cause through various events including protest rallies, meetings, seminars, and literary activities. In major cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Faisalabad, the

celebrations drew significant participation from workers, students, trade unionists, and activists. Each city saw its unique form of demonstrations, tailored to address local issues while collectively advocating for broader national concerns such as resisting privatisation, demanding better wages, improved working conditions, and voicing opposition to government policies perceived as anti-worker. In Karachi, a large rally organised by the RWF featured prominent speakers from various trade



Continued on Page 2

Karachi: The struggle and resilience of Pakistan's coastal fishermen



In Pakistan, particularly across the expansive coastal regions of Sindh and Balochistan adjoining the Arabian Sea, as well as along its rivers, fishing is a widespread profession, practised on both a small and large scale. This industry directly supports the livelihoods of over two million people, with even more involved indirectly. However, the fishing community faces increasing challenges,

Continued on Page 2

Solidarity with Nationwide General Strike of Indian Workers Unions and Farmer Organisations

Indian workers unions (under CTU) and farmers organisations (under SKM) went jointly on a nationwide strike on 16 February 2024. Since the right-wing party BJP, led by Modi, came to power in 2014, continuous attacks on the working class have been ongoing. Modi's government is rapidly pursuing the policy of selling public institutions, especially railways, electricity, communications, highways, and airports, to multinational companies, resulting in the exploitation of workers and an increase in capitalists' wealth. Unemployment and infla-

Continued on Page 2

Economic crisis Continued

unions who addressed the crowd on the importance of solidarity among workers. They condemned the government's economic policies and called for a united struggle. Lahore witnessed a series of seminars and meetings where union leaders and student representatives discussed the historical significance of May Day and the current plight of workers in Pakistan. These discussions highlighted the urgent need for an organised party for workers capable of leading the change. The seminar participants underscored the importance of education and awareness in mobilizing the masses against the oppressive economic policies

of the state. In Islamabad, a peaceful protest march culminated in a sit-in near the Parliament, where speakers demanded the immediate implementation of labor laws and the cessation of privatization efforts. They argued that privatization leads to job losses and worsens the living standards of workers. The protestors also called for a general strike to put pressure on the government to heed their demands. Faisalabad, a hub of the textile industry, saw workers from various factories come together in a show of unity. They organized a literary event featuring revolutionary poetry and songs, which served to inspire and

invigorate the participants. The event emphasized the cultural dimension of the workers' struggle, using art and literature to foster a sense of community and shared purpose. May Day celebrations in Pakistan reflected a steadfast commitment to the cause of the working class. All participating workers organisations successfully highlighted the pressing issues faced by workers and the need for continued resistance and solidarity in the face of economic and political challenges. The events served as a reminder of the enduring spirit of May Day and the ongoing struggle for workers' rights in Pakistan.

India solidarity continued

tion are at their highest historical levels. Modi's capitalist-friendly government has greatly enriched capitalists like Adani, while the class divide between the rich and the poor continues to widen. There is growing public anger and frustration against these anti-people measures of the Modi government. To quell this anger, the working public is being divided on religious and ethnic grounds to foster prejudice. Trade unionists and social activists advocating for human rights, or anyone who raises their voice against Modi government's regressive policies, are imprisoned under the draconian law UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act). The opposition parties led by Congress (India Front) also do not have an alternative to the anti-worker policies of Modi's government.

In fact, the opposition parties too en-

dorse the same anti-workers and anti-farmers policies. PTUS support the general strike of Indian workers and farmers

and stand in shoulder to shoulder with them in this time of struggle. We support their demands.



Coastal fishermen.... continued

with each passing day bringing further decline. The lives of these fishermen are being pushed towards worsening conditions. A primary issue lies in the pricing of their catch. Fishermen spend weeks and months braving the dangers of the open sea, catching hundreds of different types of fish, only to be paid minimal prices by middlemen who then reap substantial profits. When these fishermen

raise their voices against oppression and struggle for their rights, they often face harsh responses from state institutions. Trade union activists under the banner of the Red Workers Front, based on the coastal strip of Ibrahim Hyderi in Malir, Karachi, are initiating a protest movement to recognise fishermen as labourers, recognise their trade union, and fulfil demands linked to job security and salaries. This movement invites fellow mem-

bers of the fishing community to join, empowering themselves, standing courageously, and actively participating in the struggle against injustice. The call is clear: These seas are ours, and the people living around them are ours. United, we can resolve these issues. PTUS stands in complete solidarity with the Fishermen of the coastal region of Pakistan.

“Azad” Kashmir: People won their demands through immense struggle

The people's movement in "Azad" Kashmir has achieved a historic victory against their state government and Pakistani government, creating a new political reality in the region. Hundreds of thousands of working people protested for over a year against rising electricity and flour prices, demanding the return of wealth looted from them. Despite facing various tactics, accusations, and violence from the rulers, police, and security agencies, the people remained united and determined. The movement exposed the brutal oppression and betrayal of the ruling class in Kashmir and Pakistan, who, like their Indian counterparts in occupied Kashmir, did not hesitate to use force against their own people. The Rangers were deployed, resulting in the murder of three young men and dozens injured. The people of "Azad" Kashmir faced these attacks with

courage and resilience, gaining strength from each challenge. The movement has also shown that electricity and flour prices can be reduced without causing economic collapse, exposing the government's lies and fraud. It has inspired workers across Pakistan to organise and fight against inflation and unemployment, following the example set by the people of Kashmir. Women played a significant role in the movement, participating directly and in large numbers, providing funding, food, and encouragement. The movement's success relied on the people's own resources and unity, rather than on politi-

cal parties, wealthy individuals, or the establishment. The formation of people's action committees and their democratic functioning were crucial to the movement's success. PTUS supports the struggle of the action committees in "Azad" Kashmir, and this model of organising workers, students, and communities is essential to achieving demands.



Quetta: Protest demonstration against the death of 13 workers in a coal mine in Harnai

In a tragic incident two days ago, 13 workers lost their lives in a coal mine explosion in the Zard Alo area of Harnai district, Balochistan. The Red Workers Front and the Pakistan Workers Federation organized a protest demonstration in front of the Quetta Press Club on March 23 to condemn the incident and demand justice for the deceased miners. The protest was attended by representatives from various labor unions and organizations, who held placards and banners with slogans against the Harnai tragedy and chanted in solidarity with the miners. Speakers at the protest highlighted the frequent loss of lives in the mining sector in Balochistan, blaming the incompetent rulers, corrupt bureaucracy, coal mine owners, and contractors for their apathy and greed. It was noted that whenever such incidents occur, fellow workers take it upon themselves to rescue their colleagues, while the administration remains mere spectators. In 2022, more than 70 miners lost their lives in 55 accidents in the coal mines of Balochistan, with most deaths caused by methane gas explosions. The dangerous

pillar and room mining method, which has been discontinued worldwide, is still prevalent in Balochistan. Campaigners and researchers have emphasized the need for modern mining methods and personal protective equipment for miners. PTUS demands immediate safety measures and financial support for the

families of the deceased miners. They stand in solidarity with the struggling mine workers and aim to organize them to ensure their right to safe workplaces. Workers Memorial Day, observed globally on April 28th, commemorates those who lost their lives while working.



Lahore: Unpaid and Undervalued — the Plight of Paramedics at Sheikh Zayed Hospital

The salaries of the paramedical staff at Sheikh Zayed Hospital, located in the city of Lahore, have not been paid for two months. Prior to this, hospital workers had to struggle to receive their salaries, after which they were paid for two months, and now, once again, their salaries for two months have not been paid. This issue is not only limited to the workers of Sheikh Zayed Hospital but is also prevalent in other hospitals in Punjab, where salary payments are delayed in the same manner, and after two months, only one month's salary is paid. In addition to hospitals, the salaries of railway workers are also being delayed by two months. Furthermore, such problems are increasingly occurring in other public institutions, whether it involves the elimination of allowances or the cessation of new recruitments to work with fewer staff. There is increasing exploitation of healthcare staff in hospitals and care centres. Full time work is converted into short-term contracts. PTUS demands the immediate payment of salaries for the employees of Sheikh Zayed Hospital and commits to stand shoulder to shoulder with the employees in this struggle.

Protests across Punjab by AGEGA!

On 15th May, at the call of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Punjab, protests were held in every district of the province by the employee organisations included in AGEGA, in support of their demands. The demands of the protesting employees included an increase in salaries in proportion to inflation, an end to anti-worker changes in leave encashment and pension rules, and an end to the proposed privatisation of thousands of government schools across the province. In Lahore, a protest was held in front of the Civil Secretariat, in which activists and workers participated. Following this, on 17th May, the central leadership of AGEGA, which included the federal and all provincial leaderships, held a press conference at the Islamabad Press Club where they presented their demands regarding the 2024-25 budget. These included a 100% increase in salaries, a 200% increase in house rent, medical and conveyance allowances, an end to anti-worker amendments in pension and leave encashment rules, an end to privatisation, regularisation of all ad hoc

and contract employees, and setting the minimum wage for workers at fifty thousand rupees. Furthermore, the leadership conveyed the message that if the government does not accept their demands, the employees of the federal and all four provinces will stage a protest sit-in in Islamabad before the budget. PTUS fully supports all these demands of AGEGA and reaffirms its determination to always stand shoulder to shoulder with them in the struggle of employees and workers.



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