



Flashes FROM WFTU

AUGUST, 2010

(Vol. IV, Issue-VIII)

New Delhi



AT THE CALL OF WFTU

**INTERNATIONAL ACTION DAY
ON 7th SEPTEMBER, 2010**

WE WANT

- o Workers not to pay for the crisis. Dismissals to be prohibited.
- o To stop the expenditure on military equipments and this money to be granted to the unemployed and the poor.
- o To take action now on erasing the debts of Third World Countries.
- o Free Public health, education, food and water for all.
- o Public investment for the creation of jobs. Satisfaction of workers' current needs.

*** SUPPORT THE CALL OF WFTU**

*** WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

ALWAYS ON THE SIDE OF WORKERS

**PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS
ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE NEW DELHI**

THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE FLOODING IN PAKISTAN: Urgent call from the Pakistan Trade Unions for international workers solidarity

i) ALL Pakistan Trade Union Federation

"At the very beginning of the tragedy that has struck our country, our union federation All Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF) set up a special union committee in charge of getting back in contact with our unions and their members in the regions devastated by the floods: NWFP, Southern Punjab and Sind.

According to the information gathered, in one of these regions alone, 7 children of our members have died. Our members tell us that they have lost all their goods and livestock: goats and buffaloes. According to the committee report, the disaster is getting worse day by day. The flooding has devastated practically the whole of the country. The disaster began in the country's Northwest Frontier Province. The damages caused to the country are uncountable, both on the material and the human levels. These events have occurred at a time when the weak and unpopular government is already struggling to cope with a faltering economy and a brutal war waged in the north of the country, which has already claimed the lives of thousands over the past few years.

The number of victims continues to grow. It has gone above 14 million which is more than the combined total of the three big calamities the world has known in the last decade. (the total number of victims caused by the Asian Tsunami in 2004, the earthquake in Cashmere in 2005 and the Haiti earthquake in 2010, was estimated to be 11 million). A great number of people had to leave their homes to save their lives. Their lives, properties and belongings are at stake. Actual figures are not available but it is estimated that approximately more than 4,000 people have lost their lives. 6,000 people have lost their homes and were displaced. 80% of food reserves have been destroyed by the flooding which also caused massive damage to livestock, roads and overall infrastructure. The damages are estimated at 225 Billions. 400 villages were totally smashed and lost in Peshwar and 50 in Dera Ghazi Khan. But the worst is that this situation

of generalised disaster and negligence by the authorities is identical to what happened 5 years ago, after the earthquake of 2005. As then, it is the poorest who pay the price of the catastrophe. What has been done during these past 5 years? Nothing has changed.

The State reacts as it always has. And the poor suffer. The mainstream media are busy politicizing every issue. Exploiting a tragic situation, food prices climbed up. The speculators and the market makers will feed a few poor to console their conscience. They'll use the law of supply and demand and maximize profits.. In these conditions, citizen volunteers are called into action.

A cursory look at the prevailing situation exposes the validity of all the reports and surveys presented in recent years. When people aren't killed by floods, they are killed by poverty or commit suicide. Those who survive live in miserable conditions and must face daily hardships. As for the State's role, it is the bad management which has brought the situation to the verge of disaster. In Khyber Paktoon Kwa more than 3 million people were displaced. Flooding damaged installations like refineries, power providers, and cement and fertilizers plants. However infrastructure losses for power transmission and distribution, banks and telecommunication sector remain to be seen. There is a wide gap between the official response to the disaster and the massive challenge on the ground to provide rescue, food, clean drinking water, medicines and shelters.

One of the most common criticisms is that there had been very little preparation for the state of natural catastrophe. When the floods hit, only five helicopters could be dispatched to scour the affected areas for rescue. Later, the army stepped in, raising the total fleet to a much needed though still inadequate 30 choppers.

Now, people say that the government is doing nothing while people are dying in the floods or from the damages caused to the infrastructure. Later they will die of hunger because of the destruction of crops, or from epidemics caused by lack of clean water. The

damage is so great that it will require many years of permanent commitment to the victims to rebuild their future. In such a situation our people respond, as they always have, by mobilising exceptional solidarity, both within the country and in the Pakistan Diaspora.

What are the APTUF and its activists doing?

Because of our limited financial means, we cannot provide shelter. The most urgent is to be able to call on doctors and to supply medicine due to the threats of epidemics. We call on international workers solidarity so that the union may fulfill its tasks.

ii) ALL PAKISTAN FEDERATION OF UNITED TRADE UNIONS (APFUTU)

Dear Comrades,

Here is an appeal of APFUTU (Pakistan)

"THE All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU) has launched its relief and rehabilitation operation to help the flood affectees in Punjab, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Kashmir, and set up a special fund for relief & rehabilitation of flood affected people.

This was announced in a meeting of APFUTU Executive Council with Choudhry Salman Riaz (Advocate) in the chair.

The meeting announced that the APFUTU had set up relief camps throughout the country including Lahore, Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Multan, Gujrat, Muzaffar Garh and Bahawal Nagar asking people and friendly organisations all over the world to deposit their donations in cash and kind for the needy.

Secretary General APFUTU Pirzada Imtiaz Syed told the meeting that tent settlements were being set up and relief goods dispatches had begun for the flood affected areas. He appealed to the friendly organisations & people to deposit their donations at APFUTU Account No. 0111090 - 2, United Bank Limited, G.T.Road Branch, GUJRAT (Pakistan). Also he appealed to friendly organisations all over the world that this time our nation is passing through a very painful period. So we request to all of them that they send their valuable donations for the relief and rehabilitation of flood affected people. As their homes demolished due to heavy rain and flood, they get shelter under the trees, very costly lives have been loosed in flood.

The meeting was attended by Syed Musawar Hussain Naqvi, Rana Fayyaz Ahmad, Ahmad Nawaz Anjum, Rana Farooq Mahmood, Sajid Mahmood Bhatti, Iftikhar Shah Bokhari, Jawad Hamid, Javed Iqbal Qadri, Sahif-ur-Rehman Saad, Haji Ilyas and Haji Manzoor, Rana Ayub Ali Khan Deputy Secretary General, Mujhaid Hussain Kazmi, Provincial President, Sohail Akhtar, Joint Secretary, Nizam Ud Din Gujar, provincial Secretary. Muhammad Jamil Cashier, Zia Syed International Secretary. Mr. Ali Raza, Mrs. Saira Bano, Chairperson Women Wing, Mr. Abdur Rehman, organizing secretary Youth Wing, Farhan, Dost Muhammad, Zulfiqar Ali."

iii) URGENT-APPEAL FOR SUPPORT IN RELIEF WORK BY PLF

"Pakistan is facing yet another emergency situation due to severe flooding caused by heavy rainfall which, according to UN reports, has directly affected 12 million people so far. More than 12 million people have suffered due to these floods. More than 650,000 houses have collapsed, mainly in villages. Thousands of acres of crops have been destroyed due to flood water. Houses, live-stock such as cattle's and goats, household goods, clothes, shoes and other items have been destroyed. Residents of villages are currently without drinkable water, food, shelter and in need of cloths.

In particular, the situation is dire for children and women and they are in desperate need of food and clothing. Disease is spreading fast in the areas affected due to lack of drinkable water. In particular, flu, fever, diarrhea, cholera have been noted and are spreading. Pakistan Labour Federation, is actively engaged in providing and coordinating relief to those affected across Pakistan through its partner community based organizations in all over Pakistan.

We would like to appeal to all to help us in raising funds. Your contribution will be highly appreciated and will be used to set up medical camps and purchase goods necessary for immediate relief such as food items, medicines and clothing. The funds will later be used for the particular needs of communities based on a reassessment of the situation.

**All donation send to Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF)
Habib Bank Ltd (HBL) Batapur Branch,
Lahore. Pakistan
Branch Code 0522, A/C# 1090-83.**

AROUND THE WORLD

IRAN / IRAQ:

Statement from Ashraf Labour (Society of Trade Unionists of Camp Ashraf) "Save trade unionists and residents in Camp Ashraf"

Pressure on the labor movement in Iran has been on the rise in recent months. The world has witnessed conditions worsening in the past few years and even family members of labor activists are arrested, harassed and abused. A number of labor movement activists have fled Iran due to the atmosphere of fear and a terror and have joined PMOI in Camp Ashraf in Iraq.

A year has passed since the Iraqi security forces launched an unprovoked attack against the defenseless residents of Ashraf on July 28th and 29th, 2009. These attacks left 11 residents dead, 500 injured and 36 others taken hostage. The hostages were freed in critical conditions after a 72 day hunger strike and an international campaign of protests calling for their release.

After the July 2009 catastrophe in Camp Ashraf, United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, UNAMI established a monitoring office in the camp, depending on protection provided by the presence of US forces in Ashraf. Due to the policy of gradually withdrawing from Iraq, US forces evacuated Camp Ashraf on July 2nd, 2010. As a result, UNAMI closed down its office in Ashraf and the residents are presently facing a very dangerous situation.

The residents of Ashraf are currently enduring very severe conditions. Therefore, the European Union and the Iraqi diplomatic society, and especially the United States must guarantee the protection of Ashraf residents. They must call on the Iraqi government to respect the rights of Ashraf residents under the International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Also, the Iraqi government must quickly and unconditionally put an end to the inhumane blockade enforced on Ashraf residents since the beginning of 2009.

The Response from WFTU APRO

Dear Br. Asghar Eslami,

Thank you for your mail dated 3rd August on "Save trade unionists and residents in Camp Ashraf".

The details explained in your letter with the appended document appearing in the International Herald Tribune are really horrible, deserve condemnation as well as support to the people who are suffering.

We are sending this information to all our affiliates and friendly organizations in the Asia Pacific Region for their information and solidarity. This will also be published for worldwide publicity in our next issue of "Flashes from WFTU".

With warm greetings,

Fraternally,
(H. MAHADEVAN)
Dy. General Secretary, WFTU
Incharge Asia-Pacific Region

Letter of thanks from Mr. Asghar Eslami, Chairman, Ashraf Labour

Dear Mr. H. Mahadevan

I would like to express our gratitude for your solidarity with our campaign for human rights of residents and labors of Ashraf. Please find attached an important Urgent Action issued by Amnesty international to prevent execution of Mr. Ja'far Kazemi. He is prosecuted because he has visited his son in Camp Ashraf two years ago. Six other people with alleged links to the residents of Ashraf are said to be under sentence of death.

Please accept our warmest Greetings from Camp Ashraf.

AROUND THE WORLD

ii) The Ministry of Interior orders to the armed forces across Iraq, to be ready to attack or arrest the unionists in electricity sector, in case of refusing the evacuating of their headquarters, according to the orders of the new Minister of Electricity Hussein Al Shahrstani. Minister closes all union offices in Police raided and shut down electricity unions across Iraq in mid-July, carrying out an order from the Minister of Electricity. The order prohibits "all trade union activities at the ministry and its departments and sites" and authorizes the police "to close all trade union offices and bases and to take control of unions' assets properties and documents, furniture and computers." The leader of Trades Union Congress has called upon the Iraqi government "to withdraw the order, and allow unions to operate freely, underpinned by a fair, just and ILO-compliant labour law."

The Iraqi trade union movement is calling on trade union members everywhere to raise their voices in protest.

Hussain al-Shahristani, Oil Minister of Iraq, who was also appointed Electricity Minister, issued a decree that

- 1. Prohibits all trade union activity and ceases all forms of cooperation and official discussions with the electricity sector unions;**
- 2. Directs management to help police enforce the closure of union offices and confiscation of documents, furniture, computers and anything else present;**
- 3. Orders all enterprises to take immediate legal action against anyone who threatens or uses force or causes any damage to public property under the 2005 anti-terrorism law; and**
- 4. Orders all departments and enterprises to repeal any benefits and privileges union members have gained.**

FRANCE

*** Air traffic controllers' strike causes major disruption**

"Air traffic controllers took strike action July 21 to protest plans to merge the country's 4,000 controllers and 8,000 other DGAC personnel into a European-wide system. Condensing the 27 separate air traffic systems in the European Union into nine hubs

will result in huge job cuts. The strike caused serious disruption to domestic and European flights. One in five flights from Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris were cancelled, while half of flights from Orly are grounded.

The industrial action is the third major airport strike in France this year. Budget airline Ryanair made a provocative call to the government to deploy the army to break the strike. The company said the government should "intervene in future strikes... if necessary by calling out the French military to operate air traffic control."

*** Strike! Against Retirement Age / Pension Reforms : Steel workers from the nearby Fos-sur-Mer ArcelorMittal plant join a protest in Marseille, southern France, on Thursday. French transport workers, teachers, postal workers and others are on strike to protest President Nicolas Sarkozy's plans to raise the retirement age to 62. Paris commuters crammed into overcrowded buses and subway trains where many drivers were on strike. Disruptions and some cancellations are expected at Paris' Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports because of strikes by air traffic controllers. Some 200 marches and protests are planned for several cities over a broad pension reform that includes raising the retirement age. The government says the reform to the money-losing pension system is an "obligation," given France's burgeoning deficit and its aging population. (AP/ Claude Paris)**

*** French unions strike to keep right to retire at 60**

Strikes across France delayed flights, closed schools and frustrated commuters. As workers protested government plans to raise the retirement age past 60 - one of the lowest even in Europe. President Nicolas Sarkozy says retiring "so young" is now untenable given growing life spans, but unions see his planned reforms to France's over-stretched pension system as yet another blow to Europe's cherished social model.

His government wants to raise the retirement age to 61 or 62 - reforms that have been under discussion since well before the current European debt crisis. Sarkozy has called them his main priority this year. Despite the protests, France's retirement plans pale before the harsh austerity measures instituted

AROUND THE WORLD

by other European nations, including Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Spain and Italy have also announced recent austerity plans as a debt crisis that started in Greece has weakened the euro and raised questions about the future of currency shared by 16 nations. Some unions say France's pension budget shortfall could be reduced by raising workers' monthly contributions.

Germany recently raised its retirement age from 65 to 67 to offset an aging population. Many EU countries have 65 as the general retirement age, though some allow for earlier departures for women and those in professions considered arduous.

To express their anger, French workers for the government and private companies from Nestle to oil giant Total walked off the job and planned scores of protests in Paris and other cities and towns. Striking train drivers reduced commuter traffic around Paris, although international train routes did not appear to be affected. Aviation authorities expected flights at Paris' Charles de Gaulle to be reduced by 10 percent and those at Orly airport by 30 percent because of the strikes.

About 14 percent of teachers nationwide were on strike, and about 8 percent of hospital workers. The French government, which had long danced around the retirement age issue, has been increasingly bold in recent days. "It is totally logical that the government follow this option, we will push back the legal age" of retirement, Labor Minister Eric Woerth said. France is only slowly emerging from its worst recession in decades, and labor relations are tense after waves of job cuts.

Polls show most French voters think something must be done to keep the pension system from collapsing. For two decades, successive governments have made gradual money saving measures, but ambitious changes have been thwarted by protests.

The government is also considering raising the number of working years required to receive a full pension. Currently 40 years are required for most professions, rising to 41 in 2012, but that could go higher in a new pension reform. French life expectancy in 2007 was 77 for men and 84 for women, several years above the European average, according to UN statistics.

ITALY

Doctors on 24-hour strike

The country's public-sector doctors carried out a one-day strike on July 19, in protest at government austerity measures that will freeze hiring at hospitals and not renew many temporary contracts. The medical workers also protested outside the parliament building in Rome. The strike action led to the postponing of 40,000 surgical operations.

Administrative employees and public-sector veterinarians also joined the strike, which did not affect emergency services. Massimo Cozza, head of the doctors' union affiliated with the CGIL federation said, "We apologise to the citizens for the disturbances, (but) the precious good of public health is at stake."

The Italian Senate last week approved a two-year austerity plan for cuts totalling ?24.9 billion aimed at reassuring financial markets. The lower house Chamber of Deputies must vote on the plan, which will slash budgets by 10 percent by the end of the month. Unions say the hiring freeze will lead to a shortfall of an estimated 30,000 doctors and health workers over the next four years. The health-sector branches of most of the country's smaller unions backed the strike, but the two other main unions, the Catholic CISL and the social democratic UIL, did not.

UK

Rail drivers take solidarity strike action on July 20, 77 tube train drivers, took 24 hours of strike action at Rickmansworth after one of their colleagues was unfairly dismissed. The incident that led to the dismissal occurred when a woman passenger was trapped in a door, injured her leg and was left on the platform. Work colleagues believe that the driver, who has "33 years unblemished service" and is being held responsible, is not at fault. The incident is said to have been caused by safety deficiencies, especially concerning mirrors, which had been reported regularly to management.

Acting General Secretary for the union, Simon Weller, said, "It is utterly wrong that one of our members should be disciplined because management failed to react to our warnings. Our members are perfectly entitled to react against this flawed judgement-which is why 90 percent voted in favour of the action."

AROUND THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Pakistan workers strike amid state repression



On the 20th of July, over 100,000 power loom workers in Faisalabad struck closing down over 20,000 worksites. In spite of local ordinances that forbids gatherings, and a massive police presence that attacked the demonstration, the workers took over the centre of town.

The strike was organised by the Labour Qaumi Movement, with the main demand of the workers being the implementation of a 17% increase in the minimum wage as recommended by the government for the private sector.

Earlier in week, the LQM lost two of its organisers when Mustansar Randhawa, and his brother Mr. Naseer Randhawa were both killed by unknown gunmen in their union offices. Both had received death threats previously.

In a separate industrial matter, over 10,000 workers from the ship breaking industry in Gadani, Balochistan province, staged a strike and demonstration over better pay and conditions. The ship breaking industry is one of the most dangerous industries in Pakistan with workplace injuries and deaths very common.

AUSTRALIA

Lex Wootton free but under a ban order

Lex Wootton, a 41 year old indigenous man from Palm Island in northern Australia, sentenced to six years jail in November 2008 for inciting a riot, was recently released on parole.

The riot erupted after the release of a post-mortem examination on a local indigenous man, Mulrunji Doomadgee, who had died while in police custody. Lex's parole conditions are unprecedented as he is banned from attending public meetings or speaking to the media. Lex's supporters have vowed to fight on.

Melbourne workers win dispute

Workers at Kennon Auto in Melbourne were successful in achieving their demands after a 20 day strike.



They won the right to be represented by a collective union agreement which included significant back pay, annual wage increases and reinstatement of workplace conditions. The Kennon Auto workers would like to thank all comrades and supporters for the solidarity shown during the dispute.

CAMBODIA

Cambodian garment workers strike over minimum wage

Up to 20,000 garment workers went on strike in Cambodia. The strike was organised by the Coalition of Cambodian Apparels Union. The workers were demanding a bigger increase in the minimum wage than the 9% offered by the Government.

AROUND THE WORLD



They are seeking for the minimum wage to be set at US \$93 a month, instead of the present US \$61 a month. The Cambodian garment industry employs about 350,000 workers, most of which are women.

MEXICO

The Electrical Workers Union versus President Calderon: Class, Struggle, Repression and the Rise of Narco-Power James Petras

“We are confronting a monster; a force that ridicules, deceives and wants to destroy us”. Miguel Angel Ibara, member of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, (SME) on the 80th day of a hunger strike. (La Jornada July 18, 2010). There is a direct relation between the rise of criminal gangs, the deepening of neo-liberalism and the repression of social movements and trade unions.

Mexican President Calderon’s firing of over 44,000 unionized electrical workers is the latest in a series of repressive acts which have shattered the social fabric of society. The denial of meaningful, well remunerated employment and the criminalization of legitimate trade unions like the Mexican Electrical Union (SME) has led to mass immigration and to an increasing number of young people joining the drug gangs. State repression and electoral corruption has prevented Mexican workers from redressing their grievances through legal channels and has aided and abetted the rise of a parallel narco-state which controls vast re-

gions of the country and which recruits young men and women seeking to escape poverty.

Over the past 25 years, Mexico has regressed socially, economically and politically as a result of the neo-liberal offensive, which began with the stolen election of 1988 in which Carlos Salinas robbed Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the presidency. Subsequently, Salinas signed the free trade agreement, NAFTA, which led to the bankruptcy of over 10 million Mexican farmers, peasants and small urban retail shop owners, driving many to immigrate, others to join social movements and some to revolt as was the case with EZLN. Over 10 million Mexicans emigrated since NAFTA.

By the turn of the new millennium Mexico’s experiment with neo-liberal “reforms” deepened the systemic crises – inequalities widened, the economy stagnated and poverty increased. As a result, millions of Mexicans fled across the border into North America or joined popular movements attempting to change the system. Two powerful social and political movements emerged, which sought to reverse Mexico’s slide into political decay and social disintegration. On the political front Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the Presidential candidate of a broad citizens coalition, led millions to an electoral victory in 2006 – only to be denied through massive voting fraud perpetrated by supporters of Calderon. The second force, a coalition of trade unions and social movements, led by SME, fought to preserve the public social security system and state ownership of the electrical system from privatization and exploitation by the voracious predator foreign and domestic capitalist class.

Mass mobilizations involving hundreds of thousands marched in Mexico City and throughout the provinces, while millions of consumers expressed their solidarity, as did all of the major trade unions in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere. What was at stake was not merely the jobs of the unionized electrical workers and the social security system but one of the most effective social movements defending a social safety net for the working class.

By attacking SME and the social security system, one of the last major social institutions providing social cohesion, Caldera and the judicial system were further denying Mexicans legal political and social

AROUND THE WORLD

instruments through which they could aspire to defend their living standards.

Neoliberal stagnation, state repression of democratic popular movements and the repeated theft of electoral victories by peoples movements in 1987 and 2006 has led to widespread and profound disillusion with politics as usual. Even more ominously it has turned thousands of Mexican youth into enemies of the state, and toward membership in the numerous violent narco-gangs. The Mexican states' rejection of peaceful electoral changes and its repression and denial of the rights of social movements like the SME has left few outlets for the mass frustrations which are percolating under the surface of society.

In the last four years over 25,000 police, soldiers, civilians and narco members have been assassinated in every region of the country. Despite Calderon's militarization of the country, the 40,000 soldiers in the streets have failed to prevent the escalation of violence, clearly demonstrating the failure of the repressive option to end violence and prevent the disintegration of Mexico into a 'failed state'. The recovery and reconstruction of Mexico, begins with strengthening the social fabric of Mexican society – the promotion of the urban and social movements and in particular the mass democratic trade unions like the SME.

These movements and trade unions are the essential building blocks for the transformation of Mexican society: the end of neo-liberalism, the repudiation of NAFTA and the reconstruction of a powerful public sector under workers control. To fight the twin evils of the corrupt militarized neo-liberal state and the violent parallel narco-state, which currently exploit and terrorize the country, a new mass based political-social movement which combines the solidarity of the trade unions like the SME and the popular appeal of political leaders like Lopez Obrador must coalesce and offer a radical program of national reconstruction and social justice. The alternative is the further disintegration of the Mexican state and the descent into a condition of unending generalized violence, where the rich live in armed fortresses and the poor are subject to the violent depredations of the military and the narco terrorists.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa strike: Nearly 1 million government workers set to take action

It's now official: More than 900,000 South African government employees will go on a strike beginning Aug. 10.

The strike will include teachers, nurses, immigration officers, Home Affairs ministry clerks, and customs officials in an industrial action that some worry could be as bad as the 2007 strike, which brought all government departments to a standstill. "We have now come to a firm conclusion that we will go on strike," said Fikile Slovo Majola, the Secretary-General of the National Education, Health, & Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU). "As part of the preparations, we will start with a build-up program of pickets, marches, and demonstrations. We will have two national marches in Pretoria and Cape Town on Tuesday the 10th of August."

The government workers are demanding an 8.6 percent wage increase and a 1,000 rand (\$137) housing subsidy while the government is insisting their 6.5 percent offer is enough. Speaking at the same function, South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) Secretary-General, Mugwena Maluleke, said the 245,000-member group would join the strike. "SADTU has resolved to embark on a strike," said Maluleke. "All the provinces overwhelmingly rejected the 6.5 percent offer ... and showed strong support for the strike." He said the teachers tried their best to avert the strike by looking for an amicable solution.

"We are committing ourselves to being available to engage with the employer for 24 hours and seven days a week but our pleas were not taken seriously". The impact of the strikes will be "severe," says South African businessman and former World Bank economist, Mutumwa Mawere. "Imagine what would happen if a teacher stops going to school? Children will be sidelined. This is a very unfortunate scenario."

* Public service unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) on Wednesday resolved to go on strike over wages.

"The unions met today ... we have now come to a firm conclusion to go on strike," Fikile Majola, General Secretary of the National Education, Health, and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) told

AROUND THE WORLD

a media briefing in Johannesburg. "We will serve government with a notice to strike today."

The unions, representing 56% of the 1,3-million public sector employees, included Nehawu, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu), the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa, the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union, the South African National Defence Union, the South African Medical Association, the South African State and Allied Workers Union and the Public and Allied Workers Union of South Africa.

The unions rejected the state's offer of a 6,5% wage increase, demanding 8,6% and a R1 000 housing subsidy. The state showed no willingness to move from the 6,5% wage increase, R620 housing subsidy and the implementation date of July 1, said Majola. The unions had initially demanded an 11% salary increase across the board and R1 650 housing subsidy backdated to April 1. "During the negotiations our members were reading daily of government's wasteful expenditure on cars, hotels, parties and World Cup tickets, amounting to millions of rands. "This was sending a wrong message because we were told that there was no money." The unions appreciated the country's economic difficulties and had a lot of patience during the wage negotiations. "We have done our utmost best to avoid going on strike, even revising our earlier demand. "We have reached a point where we feel we want to go on a full-blown strike," said Majola. He said the impact of a public service strike was unlike any other strike because it affected everyone, especially the poor and most vulnerable, who were sorely dependant on government services for their daily survival. "All government departments, including schools, home affairs offices, hospitals, traffic offices and the country's ports of entry, will be affected by the strike."

Sadtu general secretary Mugwena Maluleke said his union, representing 250 000 teachers, would participate in the strike regardless of its timing. "We understand that schools were closed for some five weeks for the June holidays and the World Cup, but we have no choice. This is our last resort. "There is no correct time to go on strike, even if it was in the beginning of the year it still would have impacted on the year-end results," said Maluleke. Majola said Cosatu had not asked for a political intervention from the ruling ANC on the deadlock. "We are not going to ask the ANC to intervene but their intervention would

be welcomed." He said the planned strike would be "worse than the 2007 public servants' strike which was arguably the biggest ever in the sector".

The unions would meet Public Service and Administration Minister Richard Baloyi at his request in Centurion on Thursday afternoon. "We do not know whether he will bring a new offer to the table or not, but we will listen to him". The unions committed to ensuring discipline and a peaceful strike action. They emphasised that they were not part of the strike by the Public Servants Association. -- Sapa

UNITED STATES

103 US banks collapse within months

The count of bank failures in the US has crossed the century-mark in 2010 and as many as 17 entities have folded up so far this month.

Mostly small and medium banks are bearing the brunt of the collapse, as they continue to wobble under the prolonged sluggishness in financial conditions. On an average, nearly 15 banks have bit the dust every month so far this year.

According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures deposits at over 8,000 banks, as many as 103 entities have gone out of business so far this year. In 2009, a staggering 140 banks were shut down.

On July 23 alone, authorities seized seven banks which would result in an expense of about USD 431 million for the FDIC. The seven entities that failed were Southwest USA Bank, Home Valley Bank, Sterling Bank, Williamsburg First National Bank, Thunder Bank, Crescent Bank and Trust Company and Community Security Bank.

Seventeen banks have collapsed so far this month while the count stood at just eight in June. The highest number of bank failures for any month in 2010 happened in April, when a whopping 23 entities had collapsed.

As per the FDIC, the number of 'problem' banks -- those at risk of failing -- climbed to 775, the highest in nearly 17 years, in the first three months of 2010. The count stood at 702 at the end of 2009.

Even as the US economy is on the recovery path, high unemployment levels are resulting in higher defaults at small and medium banks. The jobless rate touched 9.5% in June.

AROUND THE WORLD

BRITAIN

Britain to scrap retirement age at 65

At a time when one in five 16-24 year olds in Britain are unemployed, the government has decided to scrap the default retirement age of 65 years from October. This means employers cannot tell workers attaining the age of 65 to leave their jobs.

CUBA

International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5

"ACT NOW!"

For over a week Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo has been held in the Hole At Victorville Prison without committing any infraction. Once Again the US government has imposed another cruel punishment against Gerardo Hernandez, one of the Cuban 5 imprisoned in the US for fighting against terrorism.

On July 21st, without committing any infraction, Gerardo was taken to the hole. The hole is an inhumane windowless space of 7 x 3 feet reserved for prisoners who the prison authorities, for what ever reason, want to isolate. Gerardo is sharing this small space with another prisoner and there is very little ventilation because the air comes from just a small vent on the top of a wall. Temperatures in Victorville are running as high as 105 degrees now and in the space of this tiny cell it is around 95 degrees. He is not allowed to take a shower and is being taken outside in a cage only one hour every other day. Gerardo has been seen by his sister Isabel through a glass with a phone. Although Gerardo is still young, 12 years of living in high security penitentiaries is taking its toll and recently Gerardo began experiencing some health issues including high blood pressure. In April he requested a medical appointment and finally on July 20, three months later, he was seen by a doctor. Currently there is a bacterium that is circulating through the prison with some of those cases being serious. The doctor had prescribed a blood test for Gerardo but instead of receiving that he was abruptly taken to the hole the next day.

This new harassment against Gerardo takes place at a critical time when he is preparing his Habeas Corpus presented to the courts in June. It is alarm-

ing that this is the third time that Gerardo has found himself in the hole while preparing for an appeal.

The violations against Gerardo are endless and it has to stop immediately. During 12 years he has been denied the basic right to receive visits from his wife Adriana. Gerardo like his four brothers is innocent and the United States knows that his only crime was to defend his country against terrorist attacks.

Instead of freeing them and sending them back to their homeland and their families, as has been demanded by the Cuban people, 10 Nobel Prize winners and thousands of people from all over the world, the Obama Administration has picked up where Bush left off by punishing Gerardo at every turn.

Along with the Cuban people and the international community we hold the US government responsible for the life and physical integrity of Gerardo.

It is very important for every supporter of the Cuban Five and all justice loving people who receive this message to call, fax, mail or e-mail immediately to the numbers and addresses below to demand that Gerardo be:

- ***Returned immediately to the general population***
- ***Receive urgent medical attention***
- ***Allowed visits by his wife Adriana Perez***
- ***Given space and respect as he prepares for his appeals***

US State Department

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520
Phone Number: 1-202-647-4000
Fax Number: 1-202-647-2283

Federal Bureau of Prisons

Director Harley G. Lappin
320 First St., NW,
Washington, DC 20534
Phone Number: 202-307-3198.
E-mail: info@bop.gov <<mailto:info@bop.gov>>

President Barack Obama

White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500
Phone Number: 202-456-1111
Fax Number: 202-456-2461.
E-mail: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

AROUND THE WORLD

US Justice Department

Attorney General Eric Holder
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001
Phone Number: 202-514-2000
Comment Line: 202-353-1555
E-mail: AskDOJ@usdoj.gov

DPR KOREA,

Pyongyang, August 4, 2010

GFTUK

To: All national and international trade union organizations

Dear friends,

We pay our regards to you who are actively working for defending of the true rights of the working people, peace and security of the world despite of the difficult condition.

For the present, the anti-DPRK confrontation and war maneuvers of the U.S. and the South Korean group have been frantically perpetrated on an extremely adventurous phase. The U.S. and the south Korean puppet group kicked off the largest-ever joint naval exercises to invade the DPRK in the East Sea of Korea from July 25 to 28 with ultra-modern war hardware involved, such as the super nuclear-powered aircraft carrier "George Washington", talking about the "demonstration of deterrent to contain north Korea" and "military display". They announced to stage war exercises for aggression against the DPRK, the Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercise in mid-August and such a large-scaled military exercises from September till end of this year in the sea, air and ground.

In the meantime, the U.S. and the south Korean group held what they called "talks of diplomatic and defense chiefs" in Seoul when their plot to cook up a "resolution on additional sanctions against the DPRK" went bust. At these talks they hatched a new plot against the DPRK and, on this basis, discussed on what they called "plans for separate sanctions" and a war scenario in a bid to escalate the confrontation with the DPRK. This action is another serious provocation to the DPRK and a blatant challenge to the peace-loving public opinion at home and abroad.

All the movements of the U.S. and the south Korean forces, in diplomatic and military aspects, go to prove that the final examination of Washington's scenario for a war of aggression against the DPRK has been over and is set to enter the phase of actual actions. They plugged the Japanese reactionaries into the anti-DPRK smear campaign and the racket for confrontation with the DPRK in a bid to tighten the military nexus among the U.S., Japan and south Korea. They are translating the plan to create a "tri-partite military alliance" into reality by inviting even Japan's "Self-Defense Forces" to participate in the on-going joint naval exercises under the cloak of "observers". All facts go to prove with added clarity that the case of the sunk warship "Cheonan" of the south Korean navy is a hideous conspiratorial farce orchestrated by the U.S. in an effort to stifle the DPRK, invent a pretext for launching a war of aggression against the DPRK, bolster up the force to dominate Northeast Asia and knock into shape a "military alliance" for aggression.

If they ignite a war in any waters of the East Sea or the West Sea of Korea, this war will spill over not only into the Korean Peninsula but into the rest of Northeast Asia and rapidly develop into a new global war. In order to eliminate the source of war and ensure a lasting peace in the Korean peninsular, it should put an end to a hostile policy of the U.S. toward the DPRK, change an armistice agreement into peace agreement, halt the aggressive joint military exercises and reinforcement maneuvers of armies and withdraw the U.S. army from the south Korea.

The people and workers of the DPRK will vigorously struggle to smash the maneuvers of the U.S. and the south Korean puppet group to provoke a new war and ensure stability of the Korean peninsular and peace of the world, upholding the Songun policy of the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il.

We believe firmly that you who love justice and peace will condemn the maneuvers of the U.S. and the south Korean puppet group frantic in confrontation and war maneuvers against the DPRK and actively support our people and workers in their struggle for realization of an independent reunification of the nation at the earliest date by united power of the whole nation under the banner of the June 15 north-south joint declaration.

USA

OBAMA FAILS TO GALVANISE AMERICA BEHIND ECONOMY SLOWS, DEFICIT RISES, JOBS MEAGRE

By S. Sethuraman

US economy, the world's largest, is failing to sustain a firm recovery in 2010 igniting fears of a double-dip recession, given weak growth, persisting unemployment at 9.5 per cent, and lacklustre consumer spending. A strong job-creating revival is not on the horizon nor the woes of the housing market, which triggered the financial meltdown in 2008 with disastrous spill-overs globally, have diminished. All this has taken a toll on the popular rating of young, charismatic President Obama, despite his remarkable legislative accomplishments to lay the foundations for a new economy rid of boom-bust cycles. *"We are headed in the right direction (but) it will take years to fully repair the damage and we cannot bring back all jobs (over eight million) lost (in the recession) and restore our economy to full strength overnight", he told the American people on July 24.*

The great question now is whether President Obama, who is already in a campaign mode, would be able to reverse a seemingly rising tide against Democrats with belligerent Republicans out to wrest control of the Congress from Democrats in the mid-term November elections. They have, over the last 18 months, consistently rebuffed the President's gestures of bipartisanship, and voted against the massive fiscal stimulus to combat recession with tax cuts for middle class to stoke recovery, health care reform and other crucial bills to extend relief to unemployed and provide loans to small businesses which create most jobs.

To an extent, in a milieu of despondency with lost jobs not being restored, the Conservatives have succeeded in raising doubts about the effectiveness of all the Obama measures which, they contend, would expand the Federal Government and run America deeper into deficit with soaring debt. At stake in the November 2 elections are the 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 36 of the 100 -member Senate. Democrats tend to be defensive against the Republican onslaught in touting their own achievements beginning with President Obama's massive fiscal stimulus, which helped to bring the economy back from brink in the aftermath of the worst-ever

financial and economic crisis, and the historic health care and Wall Street reforms. Many Democrats pin their hopes on President Obama's standing and proved ability in coping with the inherited challenges including the worst recession, trillion-dollar deficit and two wars. And the President strikes an air of confidence in all his utterances and declared that the Republicans "will not be handed over the keys".

Americans are more concerned with the state of economy today of the world's richest and powerful nation. The latest assessment of US economy by IMF notes that post-recession recovery remains slow by historical standards, despite the extraordinary measures of monetary accommodation -- Fed maintaining interest rates close to zero and asset purchases to ameliorate financial strains -- and the Administration's fiscal stimulus equivalent to 5 per cent of GDP during 2009-11. Though economic growth has been positive for four weeks consecutively since the latter half of 2009, it dropped disappointingly to 2.4 per cent in April-June, from 3.7 per cent in the first quarter. The sovereign debt crisis in Europe has elevated the risks for both EU and USA.

IMF noted the "outlook remains uncertain, private demand sluggish and unemployment rate receding only modestly". Also, US financial system seems to be slowly recovering after "the most devastating financial crisis in a century" leading to massive costs in terms of jobs lost and significant damage to economy with spillovers to the rest of the world. The Administration's "bold and aggressive" response has been commended by IMF as well as mainstream economists while the Obama Administration is equally underlining its commitment to fiscal stabilisation, bringing the level of deficit down from the present 10 per cent to 4 per cent of GDP by the middle of the decade.

The President expects by the end of the year the recommendations of the bipartisan Fiscal Commission on ways to balance the budget and stabilise the debt-to-GDP ratio at an acceptable level once the

economy recovers. IMF has, however, called for social security and other entitlement reforms for longer-run fiscal sustainability. But all this cannot detract from the larger picture of America stumbling for years to restore growth that would help to make a real dent on unemployment to shrink it to the US average level of 5 per cent. There are no quick fixes to overcome what IMF calls the nation's "major fiscal and generational imbalances".

US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner acknowledges that there is a long way to go to address the fiscal trauma and damage across the country but by taking "aggressive action to fix the financial system, reduce growth in health care costs and improve education, we have put the American economy on a firmer foundation for future growth". Now and then economic data give mixed signals, such as manufacturing and consumer spending which was stagnant in June. But the Administration maintains that business investment and consumption -- two keys to private demand -- are getting better than last year and the first quarter of 2010.

The President has lately highlighted the turnaround in the automobile industry which had to be bailed out, initially by the Bush Administration and later substantially reinforced by the Obama Administration. Of the Big Three, only Chrysler, which was almost turning bankrupt and General Motors received

solid though conditional loans and they have now turned leaner and generating profits. Ford has been doing relatively better but auto sector as a whole registered higher sales in July. According to US Treasury statement, major banks, forced by the stress tests to raise capital and open their books, are stronger and more competitive. Now, as businesses expand again, "our banks are better positioned to finance growth". However, they face spill-over risks from European debt crisis. Exports are gaining while private job growth is slow.

Overall assessment by the Federal Reserve is that the economy is not rid of uncertainties and has a long way to go to achieve a full recovery for job growth. The recession battered the budgets of state and local governments, as revenues declined sharply and they cut their programs and work forces. Fed is considering options to ease conditions should the economy continue to falter in the second half of the year besides maintaining its interest rates around zero. Fed's Open Market Committee meeting on August 10 may throw up signals on its future course of action, considering the persisting level of unemployment.

WFTU ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING AT COLOMBO ON 26th & 27th OCTOBER 2010

- All invited affiliates and friendly organisations are requested to attend.
- Central theme of our discussions in the Regional Meeting:

"ROLE OF THE PROGRESSIVE WORKING CLASS IN THE CHANGING ECONOMIC & POLITICAL SITUATION UNDER 'LPG' - OUR FUTURE NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TASKS".

Further details will follow

Contact person: Com. JANAKA ADIKARI -

E-mail: <adikarij@gmail.com>.

Fraternally,
(H. MAHADEVAN)
Dy. General Secretary,
WFTU & Incharge Asia-Pacific Region

Subscription Enrolment Form

Dear Brother,

I send by money order/enclose a DD in favour of WFTU for Rs. _____ towards _____ number of Annual Subscriptions to FLASHES. The mailing address is given below.

Yours sincerely

Address ()

Subscription Rates

Inland	: Rs. 5 per copy Rs. 50 per annum Rs. 100 for 2 years
Abroad	: SAARC countries US \$ 5 per annum
Others	: US \$ 10 per annum

Order From:

WFTU Asia-Pacific Regional Office
4/7, 2nd Floor, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi- 110 002.
Tel: +91-11-23258683; +91-11-23258685
Fax: +91-11-23258684
E-mail: wftuasiapacific@vsnl.net

OBITUARY

COM. MADHAVAN ATCHUTHAN IS NO MORE

Condolences messages

World Federation of Trade Unions

Athens, August 9, 2010

On behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions we convey warmest condolences to the family of Comrade Madhavan Atchuthan who passed away August 3 and we share your pain and sadness.

The WFTU family is mourning the loss of a true fighter and a devoted comrade who spent his life inside the trade union movement of India and of the world.

With our struggles we will remember and honor comrade Atchuthan always.

He will be on our side.

George Mavrikos

WFTU General Secretary

WFTU ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE

We express our heartfelt condolences on the demise of Comrade Madhavan Atchuthan, a former Secretary of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) for several years. Comrade Atchuthan's service to the national and International trade union movement was very great and he was a pillar of the WFTU movement in the yesteryears in its Headquarters.

Simple, unassuming, polite but knowledgeable in the international TU movement, Comrade Atchuthan played a very solid and constructive role having been associated with the WFTU Hq.

The World Federation of trade unions, Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau, along with the affiliates and friendly organizations in the Region once again offer the condolences to the departed leader.

Yours fraternally,

(H. MAHADEVAN)

Dy. General Secretary, WFTU & Incharge Asia-Pacific Region.



WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

16th World Trade Union Congress

Athens, (Greece), 6 to 9 April 2011.

- All Affiliated and Friendly trade unions are requested to decide their delegates who would attend the Congress and inform WFTU Hqr, without delay.
- Have you rendered your contribution, as was requested by WFTU?
- Have you sent your proposals & observations etc. – Please do so before 30th Nov. 2010.
- Popularise the WFTU posters – publish the Message, extensively in your organization, in your country, amongst the working class.

Contact E-mail: <wftu-16congress@hotmail.com>

Fraternally,

(H. MAHADEVAN)

Dy. General Secretary, WFTU & Incharge Asia-Pacific Region.

WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos in Latin America



WFTU General Secretary in Latin America



With President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez



PANAMA



EL SECRETARIADO



NICARAGUA



COSTARICA



Acto de celebracion del 65 aniversario de la FSM organizado por la UNETE