

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2172>



Sri Lanka

Trouble brewing on Govt's HR and TU policies

- IV Online magazine - 2011 - IV437 - June 2011 -

Publication date: Tuesday 7 June 2011

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The Government is pressed from two sides. Firstly, the government is pressed to go forward in giving a real space to the Tamil nationality in Lanka. On this issue, the recent increase in dictates from the Indian government has become a real headache for Mahinda. As a puppet of Delhi, he thought he will be protected by India against the pressure from elsewhere.

Even in the case of Darusman report he appealed to Delhi to indicate how to face the associated campaign. Instead of protection now Delhi has increased its own demand for devolution with police and land powers.

TNA has got the message and rejected the proposal for a senate; the ludicrous attempt to fool the Tamil people got it back, with venom. On the other hand the Tamil Diaspora has increased the drum beat. They are now elated with the victory of Jayalalitha.

One report said

â€˜The 17th session of the HRC will be starting on May 30, 2011 and continues until June 17. It may become the starting point for action. This is the proper path for various reasons. The recent resolutions on Libya and Syria in the HRC were good examples of successful action. The resolution on Libya was adopted by consensus without a vote and a resolution on Syria was adopted after a vote: 26 in favour, 9 against, 7 abstentions, and 4 absent - Angola, Bahrain, Jordan and Qatar.'

If Mahinda thinks that he can get away with genocidal attacks, political prisoners, emergency rule and large scale corruption, he could be sadly mistaken.

While such trouble is brewing in the Tamil corner on the worker's side things are no better. JTUA, after having a successful May Day mobilization, continued its campaign against the treacherous pension bill by work place mobilizations.

Hundreds turned out to sign petitions against the so called pension bill, expected to be passed in June. Many trade union leaders who supported president in the presidential election have come out strongly against Mahinda's bogus pension bill. One report said "The Employees Pension Benefit Fund Bill will be taken up for debate in June, according to government sources.

Common cause

The Supreme Court has determined that the Bill is constitutional, but many trade unions oppose the Bill and want it withdrawn. President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who had a meeting with media editors on Tuesday, said those who opposed the Pension Benefit Fund Bill were persons with vested interests while those who cared about the welfare of the workers supported the Bill."

However pro- JVP Inter Company Employees' Union launched a lunch hour demonstration opposite the Labour Department, Colombo in protest against the proposed private sector pension scheme. During this protest President of the ICEU Vasantha Samarasinghe said that all unions, political parties and civil organizations had been invited to make common cause against the government's move to bring in a pension scheme for the private sector by utilizing

the workers' savings in employees provident and trust funds.

He said further;

"We have commenced a campaign to collect signatures at workplaces for a petition demanding the government to withdraw the proposed pension scheme and bring in legislation to introduce a pension scheme that protects workers' rights and savings."

The campaign has affected the divided UNP too. JTUA sources said that the UNP trade unions including the branches of Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya may join the fight against the bogus private sector pension scheme. The workers are angry that the government has taken an open anti working class attitude.

While the government refused to increase the salaries of workers, the allowances of managers of state enterprises have been increased substantially. Senior level officials in more than 230 state-owned enterprises will get more than double their allowances from this month. The biggest beneficiaries will be chairpersons of category A state-owned enterprises (SOEs) such as the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPA), the Ceylon Electricity Board and the Ports Authority.

Indirect privatization

Their monthly allowance from May 1 will be Rs. 90,000, up from Rs. 40,000. The executive and working directors of SOEs in this category will receive a monthly allowance of Rs 70,000, up from Rs. 30,000. The chairpersons of category B SOEs such as the Mihini Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, the National Lotteries Board and the Urban Development Authority (UDA) will get a monthly allowance of Rs 70,000, up from Rs. 35,000 while the executive and working directors of these institutions will get an enhanced allowance of Rs. 55,000, up from Rs. 25,000. There are 34 such institutions.

Chairpersons of category C SOEs such as the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital, the Lankaputra Development Bank and the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation will have their monthly allowance increased to Rs. 60,000, up from Rs. 30,000 while Executive/Working Directors of these institutions will receive Rs45,000, up from Rs. 20,000. There are 40 institutions in this category. In all these enterprises of various categories indirect privatization is taking place.

While the professionals of the state enterprises in leading positions are so well looked after, the university teachers are pushed around like dirt. This has strengthened the belief that government is preparing to do away with free education. The academics' salary figures publicized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) were manipulated to benefit their excuses for not granting the demanded pay hike, Federation of University Teachers Association (FUTA) charged.

FUTA President Dr. Nirmal Dewasiri told media that the figures which the UGC had released contain numbers higher than what the academics actually get paid.

"For example the figure of a senior professor's salary according to the UGC is about Rs. 30,000 higher than what is actually paid. The numbers they have released are nothing but a statistical gimmick to support their statements," he said.

Thus one could see various components of mass opposition are developing in this country. In spite of the split in the UNP, the main capitalist party in opposition, the opposition to the government is developing in all directions. Both the

Trouble brewing on Govt's HR and TU policies

UNP and the JVP are tied to the chauvinist campaigns launched by the government. They in fact voted for the emergency powers and for war expenditure in the entire history. Only in the recent past that they made noises against the war and continuation of emergency.

* <http://www.nssp.info/ninawwa/bahusc...>