

ASIAN WORKERS NEWS

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May 29, 2005

MWs Hoist the Flag of Their Trade Union

Migrants Trade Union sailed.

On April 24, Equality Trade Union Migrant Branch held a general meeting and decided to disband the current union and declared a new start for the Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants' Trade Union (MTU). About 20 migrant workers participated in the general meeting on that day.

As the chairperson of the union, Mr. Anwar Hossain from Bangladesh was elected and he has worked as the settlement division manager of Equality Trade Union.

The Migrants Trade Union starts as a trade union affiliated with the Korean Confederation of Trade Union(KCTU) with about 100 migrants members.

The Chairperson of MTU remarked clearly that the migrants trade union fights for winning the basic legal rights of laborers; the freedom of shifting work places; the complete establishment of Employment Permit System(EPS).

*Background of the Foundation

The migrant workers branch office under Equality Trade Union affiliated with Democratic Labor Federation was established in May, 2001. There has been an indication that the organization seemed so small that they need to have their own independent and constructive union.

The foundation of the present MTU has



been based on the sit-in strike asking for the complete legalization of undocumented migrant workers and working visa in front of Myeongdong Cathedral for 380 days over the years 2003 and 2004.

*Opposed voices from the small and medium-sized business owners

Although the KCTU announced a welcoming statement toward the newly organized migrants union, the reaction of the small and medium sized enterprise seems cold. However, the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business (KFSB) took an opposite position, saying on the 24th that with the beginning of MTU social costs such as labor management of domestic small and medium-sized business and inroads into domestic labor market will increase soon.

*Can the Labor Ministry legalize the MTU?

The Labor Ministry suggested that it is allowed to organize the union by legal migrant workers on the 25th. According to the Munwha Ilbo on April 25, a high official of the Labor Ministry said, if the migrant workers of the union entered under the governmental EPS, they are accepted as lawful workers by the labor law. Moreover, he added, "If the

establishment report of the union is received, we will examine it positively. However, if it is a trade union organized by undocumented migrants for political purposes, it is another matter. Furthermore, he said, "Undocumented workers' labor is illegal, and naturally the trade union organized by them must not be accepted at all.

The MTU and KCTU claimed, the organization of trade union is not only a lawful right, but should be recognized because even undocumented workers can be workers protected by the Labor Standard Law. The MTU side submitted the report for union organization to the Ministry of Labor on May 3.

According to the present Labor Acts, as long as there is no possibility of leaking or ignoring information, it is supposed that the government office should legally recognize the union.

Migrant workers of the metropolitan area and the local migrant workers as well showed an interest in organizing MTU. Mr. Shagor, who is staying in Gyeongnam area, remarked, "I hope that MTU can be a nationwide migrant trade union, and I would like to join it to work together."

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EXCHANGE RATES

Date : May 24, 2005

US Dollar is ;

Country	Currency	Rate
Korea	Won	1,002
Philippines	Peso	54.60
Thailand	Bhat	40.00
Indonesia	Rupiah	9,366
Sri Lanka	Rupee	99.78
India	Rupee	43.00
Bangladesh	Taka	63.65
Pakistan	Rupee	59.46
Nepal	Rupee	70.74
Russia	Rouble	27.78
Burma	Kyat	6.42
Vietnam	Dong	15,835
China	Yuan	8.28
Nigeria	Naira	133.25
Ghana	Cedi	8,975

Voice of FWR

Reaffirming the Solution on UMWs'

By Kim Min-jung, Secretary General of FWR

The Korean government's ways for fixing the problems of undocumented migrant workers seem to be in a dark tunnel.

It has been 15 years since the migrant workforce was introduced. Since then, there has always been the problems involving the undocumented workers, but the government's policy has been like either "the doctor after death" or unsolvable suggestions. In fact, the policy that seemed to show the mercy to the undocumented was sugarcoated.

Because of almost about 200,000 undocumented migrant workers, the government recently announced the policy to let them leave Korea voluntarily. The government measures is against the people who will be under the undocumented status by the end of August this year, who got E-9 visa in 2003 through EPS. The government seems to have the soon-undocumented people in mind when they made this decision.

However, many undocumented workers don't trust the government policy, and make their position clear they keep being undocumented. The reason is that lots of disastrous cases happened; some people trusted the latest government policy to induce them to leave Korea voluntarily and to guarantee them to come Korea again, and then they left. Unfortunately, Some of them couldn't come to Korea again even though they applied for EPS.

The policy is the problem itself, and the ongoing crackdown is causing the problems as well. Without the emergency protection warrant, the illegal and violent crackdown incessantly happens. By physically hurting migrant workers, it infringes on their human

rights. Currently Seoul Immigration Office didn't have any moral hesitation, and they forced Vietnam undocumented worker to leak out 20 names of undocumented workers, then the government would let the informer discharged.

On May.11, Network for Migrants, the nationwide migrant workers supporting group, held a workshop to solve the problem of undocumented workers. About 50 activists from 20 groups participated and suggested various ideas. However, the fundamental principle to solve the problem was all the same. Although worrying and hammering out the ideas for long time, we ended up reaffirming that the principle, which is irresistible, is the very solution to truly solve the problem. The principles we agreed,

First, the government can never solve the problems of undocumented workers with crackdown and banishment policy.(only to cause infringements on human rights)

Second, the only way is to get undocumented workers to be completely legalized.

Third, after legalization, the government should pave the way to long-term labor permission. (it's important not to be undocumented again.)

Forth, the government should actively make the systems and study the ways for citizenship.

Fifth, on the government level, they should establish the policy, such as technical education, to foster the return.

There are no better ways. Following these principles, the government should set up the policy for solving the problems of the undocumented all over again.

Day breaking

Peace Museum – Dreaming Others Except Stuff Communication

By Park Eui-young

In every nation, in every city there is a 'museum'

Museums and memorials can be found easily to remember people and history and to communicate through those memories. Especially, Korean has few communicable museums although there are some museums from what show stuffed history to what aggravate dread by classifying 'we' and 'enemy' in the war.

So, it's the time to concentrate on not 'Museum' but 'Peace Museum' movement to keep pace with 'Peace movement' despite unfamiliarity. This is for making 'Peace Museum' which communicates wholly with the intentionally excluded truth and memory, not for 'museum' which forces stuffy communication with one-sided gaze.

Now in Korea, the 'Peace Museum' movement are coming into view with a visible purpose of establishing 'Peace Museum' and with a consideration of what it should be. Starting from apologizing for being an assaulter in the Vietnam War, this movement got into stride with the some money which ex-comfort woman donated to.

Therefore, we can say that this is made up with small but precious hearts. Because this movement started from the introspection of the war in spite of agony, it's far from some discourse such as 'gigantism', 'greatness', 'nation' and 'race'.

This is connected with, that is, Peace movement resisting against 'War memorials' which interpret only with the gaze of winner or loser and also makes another violence.

In the other side, we are cautious that 'Peace' is regarded as omnipotence solving every conflict and violent structure. This

means 'Peace' as a process and method not as a trouble-solving broker. In this meaning, Peace Museum can be a social place for 'peace', display and education in a combination—the communicable place for diverse social subjects.

So, the style of Peace Museum can be diverse. It's not a simple facility, it's a place for exhibition of 'peace' and talk which each subject wan to remember – we call it Living Peace Museum. Through living Peace Museum which every subject are making spontaneously, we can make a brand-new communication place for local society and local community.

Living Peace Museum – still unfamiliar to us – don't have to take some space. It can be a wall of citizen's party, a bookstand or even a corner of a auditorium. It's just a Living Peace Museum itself if the hope of peace and usual talk can be shared and expressed.

Last December in the MIZI Center(Youth Cultural Exchange Center), there is a exchange program between Korean youth and Japanese. It was not a showing program by the authorities, it was a real own program of participants who decided the subject and made steady progress by themselves. There subject was "peace" and they had a program of making Museum of Peace. There future place for Museum of Peace is a corner of "Korea Museum"—which is made by overseas Koreans to announce common history of North and South Korea— at the Korean town in Tokyo. I was worried about their Museum of Peace in a such particular place which has intactly remained concept of 'race' overcoming the boundary of the race...

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Friction Tricks in Seoul Immigration Office

In the interview with Joint Committee for Migrant Workers(JCMK), it is revealed that the Seoul Immigration Office placated a migrant worker to betray fellow undocumented workers on condition of setting him free.

On May 21, a Vietnamese, Ngu Nguyen Thin (pseudonym, 31) disclosed that he reported 18 undocumented migrant workers' whereabouts to the immigration office with the officers' appeasement in the press conference in Anguk-dong, Seoul.

Ngu Nguyen Thin said he was arrested on May 11 and heard from officers in the immigration office, "If you let us know 20 migrant workers' whereabouts, we will release you." And so the next day, he pointed factories where 18 undocumented workers were hiding as they were driving on a truck. He asserted that he was told not to worry, and that he could live in Korea when they set him free from the office. He has received threats from fellow workers and suffered from guilty conscience since he was revealed as a betrayer among fellow migrant workers.

The JCMK notified that 9 people out of 18 that Ngu Nguyen Thin reported were already deported forcefully and the rest are held in the Hwasung Probation Center under the MOJ. The JCMK submitted a petition to the National Human Rights Commission asking for undoing of their forced deportation. The JCMK criticized by saying, this action reminds us of the friction tricks under the military regime. It is an absolutely immoral behavior that a vulnerable migrant worker was branded a betrayer.

In response to this, the Seoul Immigration Office said, "the illegal overstay period of Ngu Nguyen Thin was relatively short as 6 months. So, when we set him free, he was willing to provide some information, and we arrested 14 people."

<Hankyoreh 2005-04-21>



Govt. State Foreign Labor Force Should be Coordinated as EPS

On foreign labor force system, the government stated that they will remove Industrial Trainee System and unify as EPS.

Yet, the period and other conditions will be decided later through the final agreement with related departments.

The Industrial Trainee System has been criticized for producing more undocumented workers and violating human rights. Although the government announced that they will unify foreign labor force systems till 2007 as EPS when they introduced EPS, they haven't decided and progressed it because the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Energy and a few other departments have opposed to it.

MWs' Voice on the Air

Media sending out migrant workers' voice are getting activated. RTV (<http://rtv.or.kr>) will telecast a program called "The World of Migrant Workers" at 9 pm every 3rd Saturday and the program is planned and produced by migrant workers themselves.

RTV is an alternative media that social minors who could hardly voice out can learn how to produce and telecast what they have planned. Internet Broadcasting System for Migrant workers (<http://migrantsinkkorea.net>) was designed to solve migrant labors' problems with netizens and intended to approach the problems with various cultural codes rather than with dark perspectives.

Regionally, the Sungseo community is now preparing a media program for migrant workers (<http://www.scnfm.or.kr>). The main program on migrant workers of Sungseo FM starts 9 pm to 11 pm and covers Asia weekly news, labor human rights counseling, and Korean language class for migrant workers.

Various Asian languages will be served on the air: Sri Lankan on Monday; Chinese on Tuesday; Indonesian on Wednesday; Bangladeshi on Thursday; Pakistani on Friday; various national music and Nepalese on Saturday. This program is expected to begin this coming June.



MWs, Compulsorily Join Health Insurance from 2006

From 2006 migrant workers should take out national health insurance (NHI) compulsorily. Accordingly, migrant workers will be covered with benefits just like other Korean residents.

The government and the URI party made it public on May 8 in the national assembly that they reached an agreement to pass a revised bill of the national health insurance applying to migrant workers in June.

According to the revised bill, migrant workers who enter after this bill was passed in June will benefit from the NHI, and from next year workplace where a migrant worker is hired should take out NHI compulsorily. The existing dual system of choice & obligation becomes a compulsory system.

At present only migrant workers with E-9 visa join the NHI system. The rest of them can join the insurance on a voluntary basis, so most of them could not benefit. So far, 40% of migrant workers joined it. 204,000 out of estimated 500,000 migrant workers in Korea took out the NHI.

Migrant workers who enrolled in the NHI program are employees insured (131,000), those having E-9 visa (43,000), industrial trainees, trained employees, foreign language instructors and etc.

An official of the Ministry of Health and Welfare explained, Main target of this revised bill is migrant workers who the government allows to be employed and industrial trainees. Regardless of their status of stay, all migrant workers will receive NHI benefits, if they are employed in a workplace which enrolled in the NHI program".

However, it is certain to be a hot issue because it is based on increased burden on employers.

An official of the National Health Insurance Corporation said, "Since migrant workers' salary is relatively lower than that of Korean workers', it gives great burden to their financial situation.

<Financial News April 8, 2005>



Strong Claim of Entrapping the President of MTU

First of all, I am very sorry to be in this situation, and not to take my responsibility toward our members. I was entrapped and couldn't bear my anger.

This incident is a clear showing of attacking and persecution against migrant workers and Migrants Trade Union(MTU), which fought against deportation. I will fight till the end by doing everything I can in this Immigration Probation Center. I want our members not to be shaken or feared; rather, struggle for a life worthy of man and workers through overall legalization of migrant workers, Anwar Hossain (34) said over the phone. He is the president of MTU in Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon area. He was forcefully taken to Cheongju Immigration Probation Center by immigration office supervisors of the Ministry of Justice on May 14 at the Tuksom subway station. After being taken into the Center, he left these messages.

MTU hold a joint press conference with KCTU at the KCTU conference room on May 16, 11 am. The Union strongly accused the Korean government that it clearly targeted the chairperson Anwar and took him to the center by mobilizing 5 cars and 30 supervisors at dawn. This is a clear showing of persecution against the trade union.

Kaziman (41, Nepalese), head official of the union, reported the incident, On May 13 at night, president Anwar was on his way home handcuffed at the entrance of Tuksom subway station. At that time, about 30 immigration controllers were standing by there. On May 14, at around 1 am, he was arrested and got a serious bruise on his legs, face, and head in this process.

Acting for the president, Shakil (30, Bangladesh), announced, the Ministry of Labor informed us of releasing the employment information of the union members on 9, even though we have the right to associate the trade union. It shows their clear intention to attack the union, and finally president Anwar was forcefully taken. We will fight against the discrimination, exploitation, and oppression targeting 400,000 migrant workers without any regression.

Shakil insisted that the Korean government admit the labor right of migrant workers, stopping attacking the union, and promptly releasing president Anwar. He warned that if the government did not take proper and prompt action on our demand, we could not help but pretest anti-government campaign along with the Korean NGOs and civil organization. The trade union left for the Cheongju Immigration Probation Center to meet president Anwar accompanying with lawyers of law aiding team today morning.

Participating in the joint press conference, about 10 presidents

of labor human rights organizations expressed their cooperation of releasing Mr. Anwar and protecting the trade union. Therefore, legalization of Migrants trade union is likely to be a hot issue in Korean society.

Vice president of KCTU, Shin Seung-chul, said it was so regrettable that migrant workers were still targeted on control and investigation only for the reason of their undocumented status under so-called open administration. He said KCTU would prepare subsequent campaign to complete the establishment of MTU. On the other hand, it would organize other supporting groups to confront the governments purpose to oppress and topple the trade union, he said.

After the press conference, labor Human Rights organizations held a conference to find countermeasure. Starting a protest rally on 19 in front of the Seoul Immigration office, they would request the direct meeting with the minister of the Ministry of Justice, protesting against the targeted arrest. In addition, they will complain to the ILO and UNHCR and find legal and systematic approach home and abroad, raise the international concerns about the inhumane labor discrimination through the international solidarity, and put the pressure on the Korean government in public through joint protest with the related human rights organizations.

President Anwar is now detained in a solitary cell. It was reported that he required the center to give him proper medical treatment for his wounds and investigation with his lawyer present, by rejecting the unilateral interrogation by the government.

On the other hand, the union said, with regard to the registration of the trade union foundation, on May 9, it was requested to submit the whole lists of the board and union members, the factory location and employers name of the members, and the general meeting minutes to the Labor Ministry by 20. <OhmyNews 2005-05-16>

Interview with Anwar (Chairperson of MTU)



Would you please tell us the foundation background of MTU?

▶There had been a migrant union as a form of branch office under Equality Trade Union in Seoul, Gyeonggi and Incheon area. Yet, migrant workers movement should be independent and be fighting for our own rights by ourselves. To obtain our rights we must organize and act for ourselves.

It must have taken a long time to organize the union. How was the preparation period for it?

▶The idea of organizing an independent migrants trade union popped into our heads first when we had a sit-in strike at Myeongdong Cathedral. At that time, there were migrants union branch under the Equality Trade Union, Nepal strikers, individual migrant workers, and support groups all together. There has been a plan that we should united into one union out of many separate organizations since 2004. Since then, migrant workers in the metropolitan area and local representatives have had meeting regularly and prepared till now.

MTU started on April 24. Then, what would you do with the Migrants Union of Equality Trade Union? Has the higher office of MTU been chosen yet?

▶Before MTU begins, the Migrants Union of Equality Trade Union was decided to be disbanded. Therefore, the higher office of MTU is the Korea Confederation of Trade Union (KCTU).

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►From page 4

The issue of human rights and legal improvement for migrant workers staying in Korea is not just for migrant workers, but for Korean workers. In this view, how do you think of organizing a trade union with Korean workers rather than having an exclusive union only with migrant workers?

►The key point of organizing an independent trade union is that we should no longer be dependent and followed, but we should try to win our own rights and fight for better conditions for ourselves.

We sometimes have different issues from domestic workers. For example, forced crackdown and deportation are not connected to Korean workers issues. However, we will make a solidarity with Korean workers always.

Who are the full-time activists and where are they working?

►There are 4 full-time members working now at an office of KCTU: I, the general manager from Nepal, the vice chairperson from Bangladesh, and the Korean deputy secretary-general.

How many union members are there and what about the rate of undocumented members?

►There are about 100 union members now. And more than half of them are undocumented migrants. Yet, most of the current legal members who hold E-9 visas legalized in 2003 will soon be in undocumented status. Nevertheless, all of us think that it must be done to win our own rights whether it is legal or illegal.

Do the union members mostly from Equality Trade Union Migrant Branch?

►There are some from ETU-MB, but some new members, too. The number of union numbers is increasing now with the circuit demonstration in the capital area, provincial build-up, visiting plant complex, and meeting migrant workers.

Isn't it burdensome for you to conduct your job as an undocumented stayer.

►Anyways, our activity should not be hidden. Someone should lead the union. (laughing) Things are going to be fine. Even if I have to leave, it should not be stopped and someone else would take the job for sure. So, the burden is not that heavy for me with the belief.

It is reported that the MOL showed disallowance to the union organized by undocumented migrants. Have you got any contact from them since you applied for the legal certificate for union establishment?

►I believe we will get the reply from them tomorrow.

What about the future plan since MTU sailed?

►As we have been busy preparing for May Day events, we haven't had specific schedules for our future campaign. First, we are expected to expand our union structure and attend a nationwide meeting related to MTU in KCTU this coming second half of the year.

Do you have any difficulties in your activities?

►At first, as an undocumented migrant, activity is quite limited. Then, there is a difficulty in communication because we migrant workers have various nationalities. Although many migrant workers still experience suffering, the government keeps ignoring and oppressing us. Moreover, they used to pin us on the group of terrorists without any evidences last year. They even tell Korean people to report by phone when finding undocumented migrants. We came to Korea not to fight but to make money and live with family in our home country; however, the Korean government makes us fight against them.

How about forthcoming plan?

►I want to keep fighting for migrants rights. I think we are

going to be better off. EPS is a totally failed policy. The government still think that they can solve the overstaying migrants' problem by the forced crackdown, but it is revealed that their ways have abused migrants human rights and made Korean images negative. I believe we can change them right with our own endeavors: freedom of shifting workplaces, recognition of overstay and labor visa, no exclusive nationalities by signing MOU among nations, guarantee of labors 3 major rights.

Any messages to all migrant workers staying inside Korea?

►About 70% of the entire migrant workers are living in the Seoul-Gyeonggi area. But, in the local as well as capital area, there are too many migrant workers whom we don't know yet. We know that most migrant workers have lots of problems and they have always dealt with their suffering and problems by themselves. However, lets not solve the problems alone! We MTU is here. Our rights must be won by ourselves. The labors rights should be protected by our own solidarity. Although MTU initially starts in the metropolitan area, we are planning to go for a nationwide union. We would like to keep meeting migrant workers and hope they are interested in MTU.

****Anwar Hossain****

He had been a student activist in Bangladesh during his college years. He had also been a soccer player. He entered Korea with a travel visa in 1996. It was his first migrant employment in Korea. The reason he chose Korea is that he had heard about Korea much and learned about its economic breakthrough due to 88 Olympic Games. He originally planned to work in Korea for 2~3 years and return to his home country, but he couldn't make enough money at all though he worked hard. So, he decided to stay longer here. And he wanted to do something for all migrant workers in Korea at that time. He happened to pass Myeongdong Cathedral and got migrant-related leaflets whose messages impressed him much in 2002. So, he decided to join the ETU-MB and worked there since then. Now, here he is the chairperson of MTU.

From page 2

On the opening day of Peace Museum, they just brought a picture of cartoon character and some dolls of boy and girl. Suddenly I felt embarrassed and bumped because I expected, at least, such forms. And I had to admit that it was the most shameful moment in my life. I mean I already made a boundary of the form of Peace Museum in scales, contents and display effects.

Maybe their individual history and agony seemed to be not important to me while i'm not aware of it. They said they wanted to express 'peace' and 'anti-peace' in their juvenile memory. They just wanted to revoke the memory of children that boys had to play with soldier toys, girls had to with a doll in an apron and a dress and the memory of watching cartoon in which the main character always destroyed the 'enemies'. They only wanted to express their own history that they had enthusiasm for those things and sensibilities which they had commonly – the unpeaceful dichotomy of men and women, the sensibility that they were forced to have in common.

The male doll in an apron with a mustache and the soldier toys without guns seemed like the result of communication among them with their own history and sensibility. Surely, I was also touched by their courage and sensitivity who expressed 'peaceful communication' among human-beings in spite of the require of special identification.

Like this, the point that my own memory can meet with other's and the point that the truth can be accepted, amicableness can happen despite some pain is the Peace Museum in our hope. Also it's the Living Peace Museum that we can express 'peace' usually, communicate wholly. (<http://www.peacemuseum.or.kr/>)

Release Anwar Hossain, President of MTU

On May 14 at 1:00 a.m. Anwar Hossain, President of the Migrant Trade Union, KCTU, was forcibly arrested by over 30 police officers, on his way home. During the process he suffered injuries to the head and the hands. He is currently detained at an immigration detention center in Cheongju, two hours south of Seoul.

The Migrant Workers Trade Union (MTU), an affiliate of the KCTU, was formed on April 24, 2005. The MTU, which is in fact a merger of several migrant workers unions and groups in Seoul, Incheon, Kyongido, is an effort by migrant workers in South Korea to organize and fight for their rights. The roots of MTU can be found in the Equality Trade Union Migrants_ Branch formed in 2001, to address discrimination and labor abuses suffered by migrant workers and the unjust immigration policy of the South Korean government.

HISTORY OF THE MIGRANT WORKERS TRADE UNION

In April 2002, over 1000 migrant workers protested against the South Korean government's unfair immigration policy in several rallies and demonstrations. As a part of this campaign the Equality Trade Union Migrants_ Branch (ETUMB) conducted a sit-down demonstration in front of Myongdeung Cathedral for 77 days and two key leaders of the ETUMB carried out a hunger strike at the Hwa Sung immigration detention center after they were arrested for labor activities.

On July 31, 2003, the South Korean government passed a new migrant worker management system, entitled, the Act on Employment of Foreign Laborers or otherwise known as the Employment Permit System (EPS). The law, which took into effect on August 2004, along with the Industrial Trainee System is basically South Korean's version of a slave system. According to the new law, migrant workers can work in South Korea for only three years and for only one employer. Since migrant workers cannot change their work place, the employer basically has complete control over the wages and working conditions of migrant workers; thus these workers are bound to the employer like slaves. The ETUMB and other migrant workers were outraged by the South Korean government's actions thus they conducted a sit-down demonstration in front of Myongdong Cathedral from November 15, 2003 to November 28, 2004.

Through these actions, migrant workers who were _invisible and voiceless_ were finally able to have their issues to the forefront of South Korean society. More importantly, it led to the formation of the Migrant Trade Union, an independent union organized and lead by migrant workers.

CRACKDOWN AGAINST MIGRANT WORKERS

From the beginning, the South Korean government refused to recognize the Migrant Workers Trade Union (MTU) and publicly announced that the MTU could not have the three basic labor rights—the right to organize, the right to strike, and the right to collective bargaining. In addition, the South Korean government launched an all-out campaign to repress the MTU. During a press conference held by the MTU to announce its formation, immigration officials secretly videotaped the proceedings in an effort to specifically target migrant workers participating in the MTU. Clearly, the arrest of President Anwar is a direct attempt by the South Korean government to repress the MTU and crackdown against migrant workers in South Korea.

The recent repression by the South Korean government is not new. The government has consistently targeted migrant workers activists who have been arrested and deported. In 2003, many migrant workers were labeled as _terrorists_ and forcibly deported. Samar Thapa, a key leader of the ETUMB and the Myongdong sit-down

demonstration was _kidnapped_ in broad day light by immigration officials and deported in an effort to stop the mobilization efforts by migrant worker.

Like all workers in South Korea, migrant workers should be treated with dignity and respect. Migrant workers should be guaranteed the same fundamental labor rights that are enjoyed by native workers. Despite the government crackdown and threats of deportation, the MTU will continue to organize and fight for the rights of migrant workers. On behalf of more than 400,000 workers in South Korea the MTU calls on the South Korean government to stop the crackdown against migrant workers and recognize the labor rights of migrant workers.

Release Anwar Hossain, President of the MTU!
Stop the Crackdown Against Migrant Workers!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please send protest letters to President Roh Moo Hyun at the Blue House: 82-2-770-1690 (Fax) or e-mail at president@cwd.go.kr

You can also send letters to the Minister of Justice, fax : +82-2-2110-3079

Please send copies of letters to the KCTU and MTU at inter@kctu.org and migrant@jinbo.net

Australia Asia Worker Links

PO Box 264 Fitzroy Victoria 3065 Australia

Tel: 61 3 9663 7277 Email: aawl@aawl.org.au Web: www.aawl.org.au

Malaysia : MWs Fall Prey to Abuse

Even some who have received international protection as refugees have been caught up in the sweeps instead of receiving protection. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been able to secure the release of over 500 refugees and persons of concern who were detained during the crackdown began. However, UNHCR still seeks the release of 1100 individuals determined to need international protection. Approximately 400 are currently being prosecuted, and 60 have been sentenced to caning, imprisonment and fines.

Similarly, trafficking victims and migrants whose employers committed labor rights violations and crimes against them risk being prosecuted under Malaysia's immigration laws instead of receiving assistance. Many of them have been victims of physical and sexual abuse, forced confinement, and employers' refusal to pay wages. Suhakam, the national human rights commission, has found that many foreign women in Malaysia's prisons are trafficking victims.

Malaysia is one of the largest importers of foreign labor in Asia. Approximately 20 percent of its workforce is comprised of migrants, primarily employed in construction, palm oil plantations and domestic service. Nearly half a million migrants, mostly Indonesians, left Malaysia during an amnesty period ending February 28, causing severe labor shortages and losses to industry that run to hundreds of millions of dollars.

More than 90 percent of Malaysia's 240,000 domestic workers are Indonesian. Recently, Malaysia has shown interest in recruiting domestic workers from Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Thailand because labor agencies have recruited only 12,000 Indonesian domestic workers in the previous six months instead of the typical 60,000.

The significantly lower pay and poor working conditions in Malaysia compared to other common destinations like Singapore and Hong Kong have fueled the shortage. While Malaysia excludes domestic workers from most standard labor protections, Hong Kong ensures domestic workers' rights to rest days, a minimum wage, limitations on hours of work, and to join unions.

<Reuters, 17 May 2005>

MW's Hospital To Provide Operation

Opened in July 2004, the Migrant Workers' Exclusive Hospital in Garibong-dong, Seoul, was not able to provide patients with normal medical treatment because it had a shortage of medical staff and was not equipped with operating equipment.

According to volunteer doctors' schedule, the hospital opened from 1 pm to 9 pm. Fearing for patients' driving in, it could not even promote widely. They had to send a patient who needed an operation to a hospital complex.

However, since April, 19 when the Ministry of Health & Welfare dispatched public health doctors, its situation has been changed. Now it became possible to provide subdivided treatment in pediatrics, internal treatment, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology.

Accordingly, a treatment system of the hospital was largely reorganized. From June it plans to provide medical service from 9 am to 6 pm. Also it will provide the first medical examination or simple examination such as blood test and urine examination free of charge.

Medical equipment in an intensive care unit was largely reinforced. An operating room was equipped with an anesthetic & washing equipment. Twenty beds were prepared with an artificial respiration equipment in an intensive care unit. A space for delivering was separately prepared. It was possible thanks to an anonymous donor who donated 27 million won early this year.

Rev. Kim Hae-seong of the Migrant Workers' House said, "Dispatching public health doctors to the hospital clearly shows that a point of view of government towards migrant workers has been changing".

Dr. Hwang Jong-ha, a public health doctor, said, "I thought there would be many difficulties in providing migrant people with medical treatment, though, I don't have any, because they speak Korean well and many volunteers help us. Most of all, I am personally so happy to help other people".

Kookmin Ilbo April 27, 2005

Crossed Responses on Return Support Program

Regarding the return support program for migrant workers implemented on April 21, there are mingled feelings of joy and sorrow among workers classified as overseas Korean residents and the rest of the migrant workers.

A return program for overseas Koreans is popular among Chosunjoks. On the contrary, only a small number of migrant workers participate in a return program for the rest of the migrant workers. So it is criticized as 'a half program'. This is because procedures of departure and re-entry for Chosunjoks are comparatively easy, but procedures for other migrant workers are complicated and re-entry is not guaranteed.

In case of migrant workers except overseas Koreans, those who are due to leave by August should receive a reference of registering on a list of job seeker as a voluntarily leaving worker, from the Ministry of Labor. The Ministry established an MOU with six countries such as Thailand and the Philippines so that those workers could be included in a list of employment permit system and they could re-enter six month later.

Mr. Kim Gyeong-tae, head of the Daegu Migrant Workers' Counseling Office, pointed out, "For Chosunjoks a certificate of departure is like a visa. So their re-entry is relatively easy and their status is clearly guaranteed. However, for the rest of the migrant workers it turns out a return persuasion program".

According to Mr. Kim, even though the MOL issues a reference to ask voluntarily departed migrant workers to be registered in a list of job seekers, when it comes to foreign country's circumstances, it is difficult to get this favor. "Migrant workers are

reluctant to return to their country because it is difficult to get a job in their country and they hope their period of stay in Korea will be extended".

In fact, 13,000 migrant workers went back to their countries through the return program. Most of them were Chosunjoks and 68 migrant workers who departed from the Daegu International Airport were also Chosunjoks. An official of the Daegu Immigration Office said, "In case of migrant workers except overseas Korean residents, this benefit goes only to those whose countries established an MOU with Korea, so not many of workers want to join this program". *Maeil Newspaper April 22, 2005*

Govt. To Consider Accepting Immigration

The government was known to be seriously considering accepting immigration as a measure of settling a low birth rate matter. The Vice Minister of the Office for Government Policy Coordination said, Current low birth rate is caused by several reasons such as increased women's social activities and economic matter. However, social trend has been changed: people avoid marrying; and married couple do not want a baby. Since policies of encouraging birth and of raising children have a limit, accepting immigration like a developed country could be rational.

German, a representative country of low birth in Europe, worked out its problem by accepting immigration of high skilled human resources as well as strengthened national competitiveness. It's time for us to discuss whether we need to allow this kind of immigration, the vice minister added.

The government started to give careful consideration of immigration policy because low birth rate and reduced labor population may cause difficulties in industries, and in the long term national finances and national defense can come to a crisis such as financial death of national pension, reduced revenue of the central & local governments and reduced national defense military force. It is also related to a government's policy of heading for a hub of finance & logistics in Northeastern Asia by accepting overseas human resources.

So far, Korea has emphasized on a unitary nation, and has allowed immigration in limited cases such as international marriage or introducing sports players.

Mr. Lee Gyu-yong, an expert from the Korea Labor Institute, suggested, As seen in cases of developed countries, a policy of encouraging birth shows its limit. So from now on we have to prepare a policy of accepting immigration gradually, and ten to twenty years later, it will bear fruit. For the first few years, in order to reduce cultural and national antipathy, a policy of immigration enlargement of overseas Korean residents should be implemented. Low skilled labor force should be continuously introduced through the EPS". According to him, an immigration policy of attracting high skilled human resource should be done in no time, since developed countries has introduced this policy competitively.

Kookmin Ilbo April 20, 2005



Migrant Support Organization



- Seoul Migrant Workers' Center -

Migrant workers are human beings. When they come to Korea, it is natural to think over its successive matters; such as family, children, the relationship with their families in home country, the dwellings, their health, the future, and so on.

All of these aspects should be looked at with the right perspectives and positions. A single country cannot solve the migrant workers' matters. All migrant workers in the world and their supporting associations should tie all together.

On top of this, to protect the migrant workers, "the International Convention on the protection of migrant workers and their families" should be sanctioned. Then we should try to apply those agreements in our real life.

The Seoul Migrant Workers' Center does the following works to make all mankind, who had were molded from God's figure, enjoy human rights.

- Protect & support foreign migrant workers' human rights & its extension policy
- Medical, labor and life counseling for foreign migrant workers
- Survey, study, education, and public relations to media
- Shelter for emergency
- Organize the return & settlement program of migrant workers
- Multi-cultural living experience program
- Internationally related works

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Office

1. By subway : Line 1 or Line 2, Sinsel-dong Exit 11.

Come down approximately 80m, to the direction of Dongdaemun, there is a convenient store, C-Space, then get in the right alley, 20m down the alley, there is the building. Line 6, Dongmyo, Exit 2 direction to Sinseldong Rotary

2. By bus : Soongin-dong bus stop

3. By car : From the direction of Dongdaemun, at Sinseldong Rotary, make a U-turn, then take the road to the C-Space. Get in the alley. To your left, there is a toll parking lot.

/ From the direction of Cheongnaygni or Koryo Univ.: pass through the Sinseldong Rotary to the C-Space, convenient store. Then take the alley. In front of the building, there is a toll parking lot. 4FL, **AWN**



By Seon-kyong, FWR Counselor

Industrial Accident Insurance for UMWs

Q I'm Jeon from China, and E-9 visa holder. I suffered from an industrial accident and was applied the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance. Now I need more time for treatment, but my visa will soon be over. I'm afraid of becoming an undocumented worker. These days many undocumented workers are caught in the crackdown of the Immigration office.

A If you have been treated by the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance till now, you can change your visa to G1 visa and stay during a given period of a time.

To change visa, you need to produce evidences about the industrial accident you suffered from. So you need to prepare "a notice of treatment recognition" or "an application for treatment" published by the Korea Labor Welfare Corporation.

In addition you must have a reference that can stand guarantee for you. The following are qualified as reference. : a person of legal age who is having regular occupation and taking up his/her residence in Korea, in article 79 of the Immigration Law, a responsible person for application (parents, supporter in fact, brother/sister, or inmate), if applicant belongs to a certain organization, reference is the leader of the organization generally.

However, G1 visa is not visa for working, so if a G1-visa holder works, he may be subject to control or crackdown against the law. G1 visa is visa for stayers who catch a certain disease or are injured then need to be treated. For example, if you call for clearance of overdue wage in the Labor office or court, you can apply to have your visa changed to G1. **AWN**

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