



Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples

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HOTLINE ASIA

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“For his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights”, the prominent Chinese political prisoner, Liu Xiaobo, was awarded the Nobel Prize Award on 8 October 2010. The Award has affirmed Liu’s efforts, as well as many others who have been striving for basic human rights and democracy. However, the Communist party government has strongly criticized the decision of the Nobel Prize Committee and blocked the news within the country.

While we are celebrating the award to Liu, let us be reminded of many others who are suffering not because of wrongdoings but for justice and peace. To realize justice and peace on the earth, it needs everyone’s concern and participation. Although accessibility of information is getting easier with the improved communication technology and prevalence of internet, a network in solidarity is still essential for us to exchange the news about our brothers and sisters, and to overcome the information flood and subtle information control of authorities.

The coming events for solidarity in Justice and Peace are:

- 16 October** World Food Day
- 17 October** International Day for Eradication of Poverty
- 24-30 October** Disarmament Week
- 6 November** International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict
- 16 November** International Day of Tolerance
- 25 November** International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

UA100324(4) - INDIA Safeguard Agrarian Sector and Rich Biodiversity

While the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill is still pending, other threats undermining the regulation of agrarian sector are rising.

The amendment of the Seed (Control) Order 1983, was to be tabled in July 2010. Although the move was ceased after Andhra Congress leaders met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Sonia to press for more changes in the Bill, it has implied that legal framework could be misused as tools to monopolize the agrarian sector.

The amendment of the Seed (Control) Order 1983 proposed regulation of the quality of seeds for sale, import and export but left alone the pricing of seeds. It also proposed that the state governments would have no authority on registration, price controls and regulation on seeds used by farmers within their state area.

Experts are concerned that the Bill would be easily abused by the vested-interest groups and the seed companies, such as Mahyco, Monsanto and Proagro. If only a few kinds of seeds are qualified under the proposed Bill, the seed companies can monopolize the market easily. Even worse, there will be no price control according the proposed Bill.

To raise the awareness on the BRAI Bill which threatened the freedom of expression and would undermine the safeguard on food safety, *ACPP* has issued *UA100324(4)* in October 2010.

Sources: *Times of India, India Express*

UA090604(4) - IRAN**International Call to Stop Persecution of Baha'i Community**

Since the 7 Baha'i leaders in Iran were sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, governments and human rights organizations around the world, such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the President of the European Parliament, have all expressed their opposition.

They have been calling for the release of the Baha'i leaders and annulment of the judgment. Iranian government was also urged to demonstrate a fair trial in line of international standards.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada said that his country was "deeply disturbed" by the sentences that were "passed without either written judgments or due process." France stated that Iranian authorities should stop persecuting Baha'is and other religious minorities and "respect the freedom of religion and conscience as defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran has freely signed up."

Human rights and humanitarian aid at Germany's Foreign Office said Iran must annul the judgment and "provide a fair and transparent court procedure." Human Rights Watch demanded the Iranian judiciary to release the seven immediately because of no evidence.

ACPP had issued UA090604(4) in June 2009 to raise concern about the persecution of Baha'i Community and its leaders in Iran.

Sources: Baha'i World News Service, news.baha.org

UA070711(4) – INDIA**Halt Land Grabbing In The Name of SEZ**

Residents in Uttan-Gorai waged a rally on 8 August 2010 to protest against the proposed Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Bill of Mumbai state government and to reiterate their disapproval of the SEZ Acts which has been passed in 2006 at the national level. The protest blocked the traffic towards Gorai for 90 minutes.

Although the design of SEZ aimed to attract foreign investment, it has resulted in legalizing land acquisition from poor farmers, indigenous people and tribes, hence causing serious damage to residents' livelihood,

The newly proposed Bill in the state, once passed, will not only give the investing corporations 25-year waive-off on sales tax, value added tax and registration charges, but also guaranteed them complete control over governance of the area to privatize the use of water and power supply with the authority to determine its rates.

The decision to stop traffic was part of a nationwide protest against the SEZ Act. Similar protests have been planned in different places of the country, such as Rajgurunagar, Nagpur, Pen, Sinnar and Aurangabad.

Even though the SEZ Act was passed, residents' strive to repeal the Act and alleviate the damage brought about by the SEZ has never ceased. To support the local campaign for the genuine sustainable development of the area, instead of merely economic growth, ACPP issued UA070711(4) in November 2007 to urge authorities to scrap the SEZ Act.

Source: Hindustan Times

UA061122(9) – INDIA**Ensure Justice to Dalit Murder Victims,
Respect Rights of Dalits**

The sentences of the 6 convicted of the Khairlanji murder were commuted. While 4 of them were commuted from death penalty to 25-year imprisonment, the other 2 kept their life sentences.

In the investigation, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was criticized for its neglect of a number of evidence which indicated the murder as a caste-discrimination. The Bombay High Court has refused to invoke the provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes

(Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and insisted the case as a “revenge murder”.

While civil society, especially human rights groups, disapproved death penalty as an effective way to prevent similar tragedy, they criticized that the court, the state government and the investigation agencies have intentionally neglected the discrimination based on caste system, which mainly intrigued the murders. This neglect of the caste-discrimination has connived the caste-based atrocities.

In the Khairlanji murders, a Dalit family, Bhotmange, was killed on 29 September 2006, with some family members raped, by higher caste villagers. However, local media has failed to report the crisis of humanity. To magnify the voice of the vulnerable and to demand justice for the Bhotmange family, *ACPP* issued *UA061122(9)* in November 2006.

Sources: *Asian Human Rights Commission, zeenews.com and Daily News and Analysis*

UA041008(9) – INDIA

Prevent Widespread Suicides of Farmers

With National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as the sole official source of farmers’ suicide data, the figures reported by different authorities varied. Responding to the number of farmers’ suicide in Vidarbha since January 2010, while the Union Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, informed the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the Parliament of India) on 7 May 2010 that there were just six cases, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan, reported the figure of 343 and Agriculture Minister of Maharashtra K.V. Thomas counted at 23.

For the figure of farmers’ suicide in the period of 2006-2009, once again, different authorities cited different figures. Union Agriculture Minister has claimed 3,450 cases for the whole country; while Maharashtra Revenue Minister Narayan Rane reported 5,574 cases in Vidarbha only, with 7,786 cases for the whole country.

It was found that while gathering statistics for farmers’ suicide, many cases were omitted, for example, land entitlement of Dalits, Adivasis and women were denied, young people were not registered as land owner yet in the official department. In other words, therefore some of the peasants who lost their lives because of poor climate and inappropriate policies were not counted.

According to local news report, the Union Agriculture Ministry even create new categories of “Eligible” and “ineligible” suicides. Only the former would be counted as “farmers’ suicide”. “Now we can't even commit suicide in peace,” a neighbour of a farmer who has committed suicide in Malaga said. There are some 40 clauses on the inquiry list the suicide would be eligible and be compensated only if all the clauses were complied.

The controversial figure of farmers’ suicide has raised concern whether the Indian governments were able to understand the real trend of farmers’ suicide and hence handle the situation. Moreover, the credibility of NCRB has also been criticized. Ministries of state have started citing research conducted by academic institute instead of the NCRB.

There has been a trend that peasants committed suicide due to the extreme poverty, since the Government changed its policy in agricultural sector in the mid 90’s. *ACPP* issued *UA041008(9)* in October 2004 and *UA060815(6)* in August 2006, to urge the central government to take immediate action to alleviate the farmers’ predicament and establish concrete measures to prevent the widespread of farmer suicide.

Source: *the Hindu*

