

Editorial

Imphal Monday, May 8, 2017

Consumers' rights

More often than not, the immediate necessity for the preservation of the self and family (read: staying alive) in these uncertain times have relegated a very vital issue which should have been of much concern for the people of this state to a mere inconvenience. Perhaps, the rising sense of desperation or the expectation of worsening social conditions has made the public alter its sense of priorities. The issue; the rights and interests of the consumers of the state and measures to protect them. The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted to provide a simpler and quicker access to redressal of consumer grievances.

However, in India, it has been found from a number of independent analyses carried out over the years that the agencies at the district level are working more efficiently than those at the national and state level. Therefore, there is still need of agencies functioning at state and national level to dispose of the pending cases as early as possible by creating supplementary benches as per the provisions of Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Consumers are very often at the receiving end of the poor, inefficient and negligent services and substandard goods on offer. Modern technological growth and complexities of the sellers techniques, existence of a vast army of middlemen and unethical and untruthful advertisements as well as hoarding and creation of artificial scarcity during difficult and troubled times in the society have aggravated the situation of consumer exploitation. And yet, these blatant exploitations can be brought down or at least curtailed only with proper awareness and involvement of the consumers about their rights.

Under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, Redressal Forums have been established at three different levels namely District Forum, State Commission and National Commission or National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. A complaint can be filed with the district forum by a consumer, any recognized consumer association, a group of consumers or The Central / State Government as the case may be, either in its individual capacity or as a representative of interests of consumers in General. Moreover, any person aggrieved by an order made by the District Forum may appeal against such order to the State Commission within a period of 30 days from the date of the order. The State Commission may entertain an appeal after 30 days if it is satisfied that there was sufficient cause for not filing it within that period. The same process can be repeated with the national commission if the consumer is still not satisfied with the rulings of the state commission.

It must be said that there already exist a strong setup designed to protect the interests and rights of the consumers of the state, at least in principle. The state forum situated at the Food & Civil Supplies complex at Sangaiporou have started functioning, and the public should avail of the legal and other assistance which can be had from this centre if there is any instance where the sellers of goods or providers of services are felt to have used unfair means or cheated the consumers. It is we the consumers whose proactive ways can send a clear message saying that no one can shortchange us.

EXCL: Indian army retaliates to Pak atrocities, bunker debunked in 60 seconds

Time Now
J&K, May 8: The Indian armed forces have started sporadic counter-operations across the Line of Control (LoC) in view of the recent attacks perpetrated by Pakistan. Exclusive video footage accessed by TIMES NOW shows a Pakistani bunker along the LoC was destroyed post mortar fire –

launched by India – near the Krishna Ghati sector, where the neighbours had attacked earlier, killing and mutilating two soldiers of the Indian armed forces.

The bunker was destroyed less than 60 seconds, and Indian soldiers can be heard saying that the target had been hit successfully.

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By :- Sh. Ajit, Khongman.

The origin of May Day is indissolubly bound up with the struggle for the shorter workday – a demand of major political significance for the working class. This struggle is manifest almost from the beginning of the factory system in the United States. Although the demand for higher wages appears to be the most prevalent cause for the early strikes in this country, the question of shorter hours and the right to organize were always kept in the foreground when workers formulated their demands against the bosses and the government. As exploitation was becoming intensified and workers were feeling more and more the strain of inhumanly long working hours, the demand for an appreciable reduction of hours became more pronounced. Already at the opening of the 19th century workers in the United States made known their grievances against working from "sunrise to sunset," the then prevailing workday. Fourteen, sixteen and even eighteen hours a day were not uncommon. During the conspiracy trial against the leaders of striking cordwainers in 1806, it was brought out that workers were employed as long as nineteen and twenty hours a day.

The twenties and thirties are replete with strikes for reduction of hours of work and definite demands for a 10-hour day were put forward in many industrial centers. The organization of what is considered as the first trade union in the world, the Mechanics' Union of Philadelphia, preceding by two years the one formed by workers in England, can be definitely ascribed to a strike of building trade workers in Philadelphia in 1827 for the 10-hour day. During the bakers' strike in New York in 1834 the Workingmen's Advocate reported that "journeymen employed in the loaf bread business have for years been

suffering worse than Egyptian bondage. They have had to labor on an average of eighteen to twenty hours out of the twenty-four."

The demand in those localities for a 10-hour day soon grew into a movement, which, although impeded by the crisis of 1837, led the federal government under President Van Buren to decree the 10-hour day for all those employed on government work. The struggle for the universality of the 10-hour day, however, continued during the next decades. No sooner had this demand been secured in a number of industries than the workers began to raise the slogan for an 8-hour day. The feverish activity in organizing labor unions during the fifties gave this new demand an impetus which, however, was checked by the crisis of 1857. The demand was, however, won in a few well-organized trades before the crisis. That the movement for a shorter workday was not only peculiar to the United States, but was prevalent wherever workers were exploited under the rising capitalist system, can be seen from the fact that even in far away Australia the building trade workers raised the slogan "8 hours work, 8 hours recreation and 8 hours rest" and were successful in securing this demand in 1856.

Eight-Hour Movement Started in America

The 8-hour day movement which directly gave birth to May Day, must, however, be traced to the general movement initiated in the United States in 1884. However, a generation before a national labor organization, which at first gave great promise of developing into a militant organizing center of the American working class, took up the question of a shorter workday and proposed to organize a broad movement in its behalf. The first years of the Civil War, 1861-1862, saw the disappearance of the few national trade unions which had been formed just before the war began, especially the Molders' Union and the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' Union. The years immediately following, however, witnessed the unification on a national scale of a number of local labor organizations, and the urge for a national federation of all these unions became apparent. On August 20, 1866, there gathered in Baltimore delegates from three scores of trade unions who formed the National Labor Union. The movement for the national organization was led by William H.

May Day

Sylvius, the leader of the reconstructed Molders' Union, who, although a young man, was the outstanding figure in the labor movement of those years. Sylvius was in correspondence with the leaders of the First International in London and helped to influence the National Labor Union to establish relations with the General Council of the International. It was at the founding convention of the National Labor Union in 1866 that the following resolution was passed dealing with the shorter workday:

The first and great necessity of the present, to free labor of this country from capitalist slavery, is the passing of a law by which 8 hours shall be the normal working day in all states in the American union. We are resolved to put forth all our strength until this glorious result is attained. The same convention voted for independent political action in connection with the securing of the legal enactment of the 8-hour day and the "election of men pledged to sustain and represent the interests of the industrial classes."

The program and policies of the early labor movement, although primitive and not always sound, were based, nevertheless, on healthy proletarian instinct and could have served as starting points for the development of a genuine revolutionary labor movement in this country were it not for the reformist misleaders and capitalist politicians who later infested the labor organizations and directed them in wrong channels. Thus 65 years ago, the national organization of American labor, the N. L. U., expressed itself against "capitalist slavery" and for independent political action.

Eight-hour leagues were formed as a result of the agitation of the National Labor Union; and through the political activity which the organization developed, several state governments adopted the 8-hour day on public work and the U. S. Congress enacted a similar law in 1868.

Sylvius continued to keep in touch with the International in London. Due to his influence as president of the organization, the National Labor Union voted at its convention in 1867 to cooperate with the international working class movement and in 1869 it voted to accept the invitation of the General Council and send a delegate to the Basle Congress of the International. Unfortunately Sylvius died just before the N. L. U. convention, and A. C. Cameron, the editor of the Workingmen's Advocate, published in Chicago, was sent as delegate in his stead. In a special resolution the General Council mourned the death of this promising young American labor leader. "The eyes of all were turned upon Sylvius, who, as a general of the proletarian army, had an experience of ten years, outside

of his great abilities – and Sylvius is dead." The passing of Sylvius was one of the contributing causes of the decay which soon set in and led to the disappearance of the National Labor Union.

First International Adopts the Eight-Hour Day

The decision for the 8-hour day was made by the National Labor Union in August, 1866. In September of the same year the Geneva Congress of the First International went on record for the same demand in the following words:

The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvements and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive....The Congress proposes 8 hours as the legal limit of the working day.

Marx on the Eight-Hour Movement
 In the chapter on "The Working Day" in the first volume of Capital, published in 1867, Marx calls attention to the inauguration of the 8-hour movement by the National Labor Union. In the passage, famous especially because it contains Marx's telling reference to the solidarity of class interests between the Negro and white workers, he wrote:

In the United States of America, any sort of independent labor movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new vigorous life sprang. The first fruit of the Civil War was an agitation for the 8-hour day – a movement which ran with express speed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California.

Marx calls attention to how almost simultaneously, in fact within two weeks of each other, a workers' convention meeting in Baltimore voted for the 8-hour day, and an international congress meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, adopted a similar decision. "Thus on both sides of the Atlantic did the working class movement, spontaneous outgrowth of the conditions of production," endorse the same movement of the limitation of hours of labor and concretize it in the demand for the 8-hour day.

That the decision of the Geneva Congress was prompted by the American decision can be seen from the following portion of the resolution: "As this limitation represents the general demand of the workers of the North-American United States, the Congress transforms this demand into the general platform of the workers of the whole world."

A similar influence of the American labor movement upon an international congress and in behalf of the same cause was exerted more profoundly 23 years later. (To be contd.....)

National and International News

ISIS Afghanistan head Abdul Hasib killed: US, fghan officials

AFP
Kabul, May 8: The head of Islamic State in Afghanistan – believed to be the mastermind behind several high-profile attacks including an assault on a military hospital that claimed at least 50 lives – has been killed, US and Afghan officials said.

Abdul Hasib, whose group is affiliated with IS in Iraq and Syria, was killed last month in a targeted raid by special forces in the eastern province of Nangarhar, the presidential palace in Kabul said in a statement.

"He had ordered the attack on 400 bed hospital in Kabul that resulted in the death and injuries of a number of our countrymen, women," it said.

"The Afghan government is committed to continuing its operations against Daesh and other terrorist groups until they are annihilated," it added, using another name for IS, which is also referred to as ISIS. NATO commander in Afghanistan General John Nicholson confirmed the killing of Hasib and warned that "any ISIS member that comes to Afghanistan will meet the same fate."

First emerging in 2015, IS's local affiliate in Afghanistan overran large parts of Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, near the Pakistan border,

but their part in the Afghan conflict had been largely overshadowed by the operations against the Taliban.

The group has claimed responsibility for a series of bloody attacks, including an audacious assault on Afghanistan's largest military hospital in March, when gunmen dressed as doctors stormed the heavily guarded facility and threw grenades into crowded wards.

According to the US Forces-Afghanistan, the local IS presence peaked at between 2,500 to 3,000, but defections and recent battlefield losses have reduced their number to a maximum of 800.

Last month, the US dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb on the jihadist group's hideouts in eastern Afghanistan, triggering global shockwaves. The GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast, dubbed the "Mother of All Bombs", killed at least 95 jihadists, according to the Afghan defence ministry.

After a steady downing of US troop numbers since 2011, US military commanders say they need to strengthen the numbers on the ground to better support Afghan forces and help retake territory lost to the Taliban, which is considered a bigger threat than IS.

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