

LETTERS

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in India is the world's largest public work scheme. In 2011 around 45 million workers were directly employed, half of them women. By decree, the scheme consists of labour intensive work, e.g. breaking rocks and digging earth for rural road construction.

With the deepening of the global crisis, the debate about 'state-managed work schemes' acquires a relevance, which goes beyond the national framework. In symbolic terms the 'multi-national' character of MGNREGS was expressed during a recent G20 summit, when labour ministers applauded the 'Indian work-scheme as an example of innovative legislation'.

One of the features of modern work-schemes, which distinguishes them from labour schemes of the past, is the claim that they will strengthen the 'community', rather than being a mere work-house for the poor. Centrally designed work schemes are supposed to invigorate the local state and local 'civil society' structures—this reaches from the idea of the 'Big Society' community initiatives in the UK, to the gram panchayet (village council) and 'social audit' projects in India.

Whether seeing the scheme as a battlefield of a rights-based movement or 'critically co-managing' them—there is a lack of debate on the left, i.e. one which could locate these schemes within wider capitalist re-production, the current crisis and unrest, and the state's attempt to deal with the latter.

The starting point of a critique of the work scheme has to be the experience of workers themselves—and their fluid existence between being both 'surplus population' and 'productive work-force'.

GWN, Gurgaon

“OPERATION HAKA”

The CPI(Maoist) in a statement of March 24 alleged atrocities by security forces on tribals during the anti-Naxal operations in Abujmad, a densely forested area extending from south Bastar in Chhattisgarh to Gadchiroli in Maharashtra.

The North-Bastar Divisional Committee (NBDC) of CPI (Maoist) alleged that security forces had unleashed reign of terror against tribals in Abujmad, said to be the Maoist capital, under the pretext of the anti-Naxal operations in a week-long campaign during March 13-18, assaulting scores of innocent tribals, leading to death of one of them, torching their houses and looting their foodgrains.

The outfit alleged that tribals in the villages of Godelmarka, Ikonor, Jetwaya, Podenar, and Toke particularly suffered the most due to the excesses by the forces.

The statement alleged that one Durga was lynched while another tribal Jaini Gotta was injured in the police firing in the village of Toke.

Similarly, the police tortures left Boe, Raju, Pali, Malu and Mangi seriously hurt in Kechhapal village.

The outfit further alleged that Sonu Podadi, and Bekte Bodde, residents of Ikonor and Lalsu Bodde, and Bitiya Bodde, inhabitants of Godel Marka, and Dadama Karu, from Kodenar were arrested during the period. However, they were not yet produced before the court. "Security forces have launched anti-Maoist operations in Abujhmad to pave the way for the Army to set up training centres in the area," the statement charged. The anti-Maoist operations, conducted under the code name, "Operation Haka" (meaning driving out the wild animals in tribal Gondi language), were launched simultaneously in more than one dozen villages of Narayanpur and Bijapur districts of Chhattisgarh and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, in which around 3000 jawans of CRPF, CoBRA battalion and the police forces of the two states participated.

A Correspondent, Raipur