

Against the Current

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? TWO YEARS LATER

Two years have passed since Khatami came to power as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He promised people that if he were elected, he would give them political freedom and other right concerned of people. In addition, he would solve economic and financial problem people are facing. Two years have passed since then. Khatami, on September 2, appeared in a TV-programme to talk about his two years report as president and to tell some promises as future plans. The reporter said: " Two years ago, the cabinet of Mr. Khatami, president of the Islamic Republic began its work. In activities, speeches, discussions and announcements of plans before the victory ... specific programmes mentioned on different issues. Today, two years after these, it is probably the time to evaluate those programmes and the result achieved by the government."

Khatami, talked in hours but did not mention which programme of his has come to action. He did not say any thing about which freedom has provided to people? He did not say which economic problem of people has solved? Actually, he had nothing to say. The reason is he has done nothing but deepening the crises and change the situation for the worse. He, in addition to a long talk about what had happened in past, mentioned the reason for his failure on economic issues as, " Is it possible to go forward in field of economy when we have a society which is backward in the fields of science and technology? ... Is it possible that we achieve economical growth and development when the society is not involved in it?" " Involvement can only be achieved when we have political progress." Though, the reason that the economical problems remain unsolved and the situation has been deteriorated is that the political progress has not been achieved. But what stops political progress then? Why no freedom has been given to people? Why "people's ruling", which according to Khatami " was a phenomena accepted in Islam and is a part of the constitution" and it was promised by him before the election, has not happened? Mr. Khatami says," There are two obstacles, first historic mentality and second, interference of strangers." What about "people 's rule" and "political progress"? " It should be investigated" he says, " Now, intellectuals and writers should investigate about the reason that in this society, the people's rule has not become emasculate, instead of making troubles for each other and to bring about conflicts." These are comments from the Islamic Republic's president on why economical situation has changed to worse, why people's political freedom and rights have been forgotten and finally, it is disclosure of his empty promises. The president of the Islamic Republic says all these nonsense because he can come up with some thing better. In the field of economy, the situation has become worse than before. Stagnancy of economy is so grave that the real rate of national row production has fallen below zero. Due to the stagnancy, during the last two years, hundreds of thousands of young people have been unemployed. Hundreds of thousands of young people who are supposed to come to the labour market are still without any job. According to the official statistics published by government it self, the number of unemployed has increased from 1,5 to 3 millions during the last two years. The prices for products and services that people need in daily bases have increased and according to the same source, the rate of inflation is 24%. The out come of this economical situation is that the living standard for workers and other hard working people has got worse, poverty among these groups has grown dramatically and finally social miscarriages have increased. In the field of politics, there is still dictatorship and strangulation ruling. People not yet have political freedom and their fundamental rights as human beings and citizens have denied. During the presidency

of Mr. Khatami, as in other previous periods, any protest is subject to punishment. If we just review the past few months, then we can see: barbaric suppression of Kurds, particularly in Sanandaj, suppression of university students and suppression of people's and student movements in Tehran and Tabriz. The number of political prisoners has increased and just now all the jails are full of political prisoners. The suppression is so intense now that the regime's political police cut the head of their political rivals at their own home, have kidnapped freethinking writers and have killed them.

On the issue of women and their rights, the situation not only has not improved but some new laws have legislated. Agitators of the Islamic Republic and those who were singing about " Khatami's reforms" used the permission to issue of some pro- regime newspapers belonging to this and that fraction, as a proof to Khatami's "freedom loving" and to the regime's liberal changes. But today, two years later, it should be said that even some newspaper that were published during Rafsanjani's time and were not directly attached to the regime, are closed now. It is during the presidency of Khatami that the reactionary law of mass media has reviewed. This did neither reduce limitations and obligations nor did it take away pressure on them, but legislated new points and paragraphs so that the pressure would be intensified. These are the out comes of his presidency. These are the result of actions taken by the president of the Islamic Republic in the fields of politics and economy. This result shows clearly the failure of Khatami and his policy. But this failure is not just Khatami's. This is also failure of those who had hopes for changing the regime by liberal reforms. This is also another failure of the regime as a whole. This failure has proved once again that no improvement in people's situation is possible within the frame of the Islamic Republic's regime. Khatami, in summarising his period, has come to the same conclusion but not consciously. He says that in order to solve economical problems and in order to " achieve economic growth" " the society should be involved". "Involvement is only achieved" when we have " political progress" and "people's rule". This has not happened and to say it clearly the Islamic Republic can not possibly achieve it. And now, the "intellectuals" and " writers" should go "and investigate why a system for people's rule has not established in this society". This is a confusion and that the Islamic Republic and Khatami can do nothing.

STUDENT MOVEMENT CANNOT BE STOPPED BY SUPPRESSION

The Islamic republic is really worried about the growth of students' protests and struggle, and political up-downs at universities. Recent student movement has shown the Islamic regime that the present situation is so unpleasant that it can lead, any moment, to an explosion by which hundreds of thousands university students may come on streets and millions of school students follow them. In this way, the political position of the regime can be jeopardised. Therefore regime's leader and its suppressive organs have taken in measure some plans of action in order to control this movement. All these plans involve different suppressive actions. The reason is so obvious, the Islamic Republic, from very beginning, has only intensified suppression and strangulation as a measurement taken in order to confront people protest actions. Same measurement has taken against the recent student actions. The Islamic regime

has a false hope that by suppression, militarising universities, increasing number of intelligence agents and militant "basiji", arrest, imprisonment and execution, can frighten students and though have control over student movement.

It is due to such policy that during last few months, the pressure and suppression have intensified and students have become targets for them. Hundreds of students have been arrested and imprisoned all over the country. Regimes court work very fast in order to prosecute cases of students who have arrested and are opposed to the regime. All these cases are products of regime's intelligence organ. Verdicts are being issues One after another. In Tehran, hundreds of students have sentenced to jail. Regime's court has sentenced four students to death penalty in order to frighten students. These sentences are officially announced in massmedia. In Tabriz, the head of regime's court announced that 260 students and other hard working people have been arrested, of them, 21 persons have sentenced to 3 months up to 9 years jail.

Many students have also arrested in other cities but no One has heard anything from them. Universities have opened recently for a new study year. During these very first days, the Islamic Republic's suppressive organ has started a compaign in order to tickle religious feelings of people and mobilise those who are not politically aware against the students in the name of "Profanity". Such action was not successful, even religious people did not pay any attention to regime's propaganda in defending "holy belief". It was only regime's and clergy's organisation's employed "people", together with bourgeois took part in "protest action". Even though, four students were arrested and imprisoned. In spite of the fact that the regime has conducted all these reactionary and suppressive actions, they could not and won't be able to control the student movement. That is why they are still frightened for upraising of student movement once again. The fact that in spite of all suppressions, there are still dissatisfaction and protest shows the reality that the regime's suppressive methods have no longer the effect they had before. The regime cannot any more get over of control of people's protests and student's by suppression, arrest, mobilising Hezbollahies on streets, etc. Student movement in spite of all obstacles will be continued in different forms. But it is worth to mention a fact. It is not realistic to expect that this movement go forward as fast as it went under a period in month of July. This movement, similar to any other people's movement, goes forward and backward due to circumstances and due to new situations may choose different forms. But One fact is clear and that is, this movement can mainly continue it's struggle in a direct and open form, all due to the present political situation which carries out a political crisis. The student movement continues it's protest actions but only then workers and other hard working people rise for a final struggle against the regime, this movement can play it's important role. In order to achieve the desired goals and demands, the student movement has no other obtion rather than helping the upraise of massmovement of workers and other hard working people.

Labour Movement In 1998/99

(Part Two)

Our study concerning the forms of workers struggle shows that after protest rallies, sending protest letters and petitions to the press, government offices and authorities makes up a relatively high figure and reaches 26 percent of the total of workers protest actions. The same study indicates this form of workers' protest has been used more so in smaller units generally and or it has been utilised in the other production units. It has sometimes been in continuation and sometimes to progress and in conjunction with other forms of workers struggle. For example, the workers at the same time as holding a protest rally in Nazpoosh factory at Anzali, sent a protest letter to the press; or the workers of scrap metal industries, Nakhkar factory, Keyan Charkh and some other production units also have employed a combination of writing letters and signing protest petitions with other forms of struggle. In any case the subject and stated demands in the letters are principally reaction to employers and capitalists' assault. The possibility of liquidation and or stoppage of production unit, temporary contracts, redundancy and dismissal has been the subject of protest in these letters. They have been accompanied with demands such as continuation of the work of the factory, reinstatement, payment of delayed wages and such. Although the general rule has been according to what has been mentioned but exceptions are also observed as follows. In a few production units, the workers at the same time as using the mentioned form which is a primary and defensive form, have put forward demands that go further. For example, the workers of Kabood Koh No.1 Oil well, project workers of Abadun Oil, Gachsaran Oil and Kermun Copper have put forward demands such as collective bargaining agreement, implementation of the job classification programme, wage rise and complete allowances in their protest letters. However, after sending protest letters and petitions and holding protest rallies, the greatest number and method of workers struggle in the last year has been to strike.

Strikes:

The main form of workers protests in 1998/99 has been stoppage of work and resorting to strike. Tens of thousands of workers throughout Iran, in spite of economic and political restrictions and pressures that the regime has imposed on workers and to prevent strikes, stopped work and struck to confront employers and capitalists. Thus they demanded the realisation of their demands. This form of workers' struggle has been mainly employed in the larger units and factories where workers have enjoyed a greater experience and awareness in the struggle against employers. Although the strikes have been principally singular and not connected to the one another, the workers in these numerous strikes, both in short and one to two hours and in several days and sometimes up to two weeks and more strikes, have shown some aspects of the power of their unity. Among the most important strikes in the past year we can refer to the following.

The Metal Smelting factory workers strike in Yazd in late April, Rasht Blankets workers strike in the same month, Isfahun Steel Smelting (tall furnace) workers strike in April and June, 5000 Muzandarun textile workers strike in May. Two thousand cotton textile factories workers strike in Tehran in June, the strike of 1800 cotton textile workers of Behshahr in August, 2000 Shafa Rood Jungle company workers strike in the same month, the strike at Barsilon thread mill in Khoramabad in November, 2500 textile workers strike in Muzandarun (Ghaem Shahr) in the same month, the strike of 800 Hamedun Glass workers in December and 700 workers of Siporex company strike in March. In these strikes and tens of other strikes, the strikers

have demanded payment of delayed salaries, job security, improvement of working conditions, wage rises, implementation of the job classification programme and such.

We must refer to two points in relation to workers strikes. First, in some cases the strikes have gone further than stopping machines and stoppage of work and have had other particularities. For example, in the Hamedun glass works where workers had stopped work in protest to the policies of the management, they prevented the deputy manager from entering the factory and demanded his dismissal for his insulting approach to workers in continuation of their protest action. And or the textile workers of Muzandarun, who while striking and occupying the factory also detained the managing director and or the blanket weaving workers in Rasht, who during strike and stoppage of production, in order to extend their voice of protest to others, resorted to blocking the Fooman to Rasht road. In another case where the workers of Abadun, Bandar -e - Abbas and also Bandar -e - Mahshahr and Masjed -e- Soleimun refineries, in a joint and co-ordinated action, warn the government should the wages not be increased in line with inflation and collective bargaining contracts not be implemented, they would strike in alliance. Almost at the same time, the workers of Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahun also issued similar ultimatum to the government!

The second point that must be referred to is the subject of quantity of strikes. In the previous part of this article we pointed out 21 percent of workers protest actions took the form of stoppage of work and strike. But the subject that must be taken notice of here is, the 21 percent figure merely covers the number of strikes where workers have stopped production only by refusing to work without resorting to another form of struggle that affects the form of strike. In those cases they have started work again after ending the strike. In the last year many of the workers protest actions have taken place as protest rallies in front of the factories and or government centres. This form of gatherings also in any case has required workers stopping work, that is strike. In this group of workers protest actions which we may call "strike rallies", in order to hold a protest rally and to presumably gather in front of an office or administrative centre, clearly workers would have had to stop work in advance of the rally. Obviously this kind of protest could have only taken place in the factories that are still functioning. If we ignore that group of production units and factories that are completely stopped and closed and as a result the workers of which are unemployed and face an uncertain situation and therefore in protest to the problem and for the continuation of the factory's work and reinstatement and such have resorted to protest rallies; in the rest of the cases, protest rallies initially would have depended on stopping work and striking.

The study shows from the total of 54 workers protest rallies, 29 cases, that is more than 50 percent, took the form of "strike rallies".

The same applies to workers' marches and demonstrations and also to the case of sit-ins by employed workers. The workers who have resorted to march and demonstration and or sit-in in resistance to employers and for realisation of their demands, have had to stop work and strike before hand. About half of this group of workers protest actions have also been in the form of strike demonstrations (four cases) and strike sit-ins (four cases).

Now if we add these figures (4+4+29) to the 28 cases referred to in the previous article, the result would be 65 cases of strikes, be they pure strikes or in combination with other forms of workers struggle. The meaning of these figures is that in the last

year nearly 50 percent of the total of workers protest actions have emerged in the form of strikes. This is a very important and attention worthy matter. Emphasis on the importance of this form of workers' struggle is worthy of attention from two aspects.

One is the Iranian workers have resorted to strike and used this advanced form of struggle against the employers, while firstly according to the standards of the Islamic republic strike is an illegal action and its least punishment is suppression and dismissal. Secondly, in the conditions that even without striking workers were being sacked en-mass, strike more than any other time would have resulted in losing work, arrest, detention, dismissal and homelessness. Thirdly, the workers have been deprived of any kind of supportive organisation such as union and independent workers organisation and even strike fund, as a well established workers custom and tradition, is still not current in Iran. Fourth, the employers and government know strikes rise the level of workers' awareness, open worker's eyes and ears and for that reason they are terrified of it badly. Not only through their connected organs and their policing-spying structures disrupt and sabotage strikes and formation of strikes, but also resort to most brutal methods of violence and suppression against strikes and strikers to wipe them out.

The other aspect of the importance of workers strikes is within the strikes themselves and the educational aspects of this form of workers struggle. When workers withdraw their labour, all machines stop. Strike before anything introduces collective power of the workers to the workers. Employers and capitalists who generally try to show themselves as "philanthropist" and those connected to the government and their large and small servants also try to assure the workers that the Islamic system and Khatami's "serving government", do every thing that is appropriate for "social justice" and "respect for humanity", and are thinking of workers; expose their character better and more clearly during strikes. Strike involves every body. Security, "revolutionary guards", army, Islamic council and society, Friday prayer leader, court and all stand against the workers. It provides the facility for workers to know their worse enemies and also the vacillators, elements connected to the government, employer and saboteurs. Strike teaches workers they should not only think of their employer and colleagues but to consider all workers and all employers! Strike teaches the workers if they unite they can resort to effective struggle against capitalists and realise their demands. Strike opens the eyes of workers not only to the character of the capitalists but their government and its laws more than before. It teaches them to think of the struggle against the Islamic republic and the capitalist class! Yes, strike from these aspects -and other aspects- has played and plays a principal role in the struggle of workers against the capitalists and their government. Finally, is it not that "strike is the school of war" and "behind every strike sleeps the dragon of revolution"?

2 **Sit-in, March and Demonstration**

Sit-in, march and demonstration are the other form of workers struggle in the last year. In their struggle and confrontation with the employers and capitalists they have also used this form of struggle. Although generally they have combined it with other forms, specially protest rallies and strikes. From among the most important workers sit-ins we can refer to the Isfahan Iron Smelting (tall furnace) workers sit -in in June, Sari cotton textile workers in October demanding payment of delayed salaries, 150 sacked workers of the Zaiandeh Rood Machines sit-in at the Isfahan Regional Water Organisation for reinstatement and workers of the Ghods Road main office sit-in at the

mosque of the office demanding payment of delayed salaries and job guarantee. From the total of workers protest actions less than 7 percent are sit-ins. Among the important workers marches and demonstrations in the last year, after the magnificent demonstration and march of 2000 workers in Kashun against the transfer of social security hospital in January, we can refer to the following: march and demonstration of hundreds of Abadun Oil project workers demanding permanent employment and wage rise and the demonstration of workers of Porsun factory (military industries) in Rasht during August. In the latter, the workers initially gathered at the factory and resorted to demonstrating, then marched and closed the Fooman road by setting barricade of tyres on fire. The workers' demand was payment of delayed salaries, end of year bonus and continuation of the work of the factory. During the protest action the workers threatened should their demands not be dealt with, they would set themselves alight. And finally the march of nearly 500 workers of Nakhkar textiles demanding payment of delayed salaries and continuation of the work of the factory. This form of struggle too, although on the one hand is reflective of the degree of pressure on the workers and is principally the reaction to the employers and capitalists' assault, but at the same time it is also about the struggle of a section of workers coming onto the streets. Nevertheless this form of struggle in comparison to the other forms constitutes a meagre number and from the total of the workers protest actions only 5 percent are in this form. Now that we looked at the main forms of the workers struggle and also all of the general demands of the workers, before summarising the labour movement for 1998/99, it is necessary to say a few words about the protest actions of the unemployed and sacked workers.

Movement of the Unemployed workers and Workers on the Verge of Dismissal

As we have mentioned before, through liquidation of companies, stoppage of factories and also slackening of some other production units, a great mass of workers have been made unemployed and another great mass of workers faced uncertainty and were on the verge of dismissal and unemployment. In response to this assault and pressure from employers, the workers immediately reacted and rose to a heated struggle against the employers. This section of workers in their struggle to fend off attacks and to maintain their previous positions, although used various forms of struggle like, march and demonstration and at times resorted to sit-in, but the main form of their struggle in the first instance was to hold protest rallies in front of the factory and government centres. They resorted to signing petitions and sending letters to the press, officials and government centres in the following stage. Our study shows a great number of worker's rallies held last year and also a greater number of protest letters sent concerned the workers threatened by dismissal and or the workers whose dismissal and unemployment was made inevitable. Thus about 19 cases from a total of 53 workers protest actions have been in the form of holding protest rallies (about 35 percent) and 15 cases from the total of 35 protest letters (about 43 percent) concern this section of Iranian workers.

The demands this section of workers have propounded in their rallies and letters principally reflect the particular situation and condition of these workers. Our study in this respect indicates that apart from payment of delayed wages that have been mainly propounded by the workers under the threat of dismissal and or the workers of recently closed units, workers demands principally include job security (16 cases),

reinstatement (15 cases), continuation of the work of the production unit (11 cases), rescinding dismissals (protest against dismissal 7 cases) and entitlement to unemployment insurance (3 cases). The worker's demands in all cases, other than 3 for unemployment insurance that could indicate workers giving up hope of continuing work in the former unit, shows that workers have not accepted dismissal and unemployment and more or less want to continue their former jobs.

In regards to the unemployed and their protest actions it must also be said although here too actions and protests have taken place, but they are not comparable to the previous section and have been rare. In spite of this the protest actions of the unemployed too indicate that the unemployed are also entering the arena to gain their rights and what they are entitled to little by little. Among the most important protest actions of the unemployed was the protest of the unemployed in Dezfool in front of the labour office of the town. When the Dezfool unemployed who were seeking work and employment did not get a positive reply, they attacked some of the establishments of the mentioned office and smashed their windows and doors. Also in Andimeshk, Shushtar and Kashun similar protest actions took place. Through these protest actions the unemployed demanded work and or entitlement to unemployment insurance. Nevertheless the unemployed workers protest actions were nearly all limited to that, not because the unemployed have no protest against the existing situation, incidentally they are intensely against it, but like an explosive gun powder store, they are silent for now!

A Short Conclusion

The Iranian working class faced the most difficult years of its life during 1998/99. All directional assault of capitalists put the Iranian workers under severe and back breaking pressure from every direction and before anything from the economic and earning direction. Mass dismissals directly effected the labour movement such that the most general character of the labour movement in the last year was to stand against this very assault in order to prevent further capitalists advance. Facing the heavy and barbaric assault of the capital, the labour movement stood to defend itself in this unequal war to at least save the former trenches and situation. While the workers were compelled to retreat they fought bravely and struggled in various forms against the employers and the capitalists. In spite of workers using various forms of struggle, the protest rallies and strikes that in majority of cases extended to outside the factory were the most important form of workers struggle. This more than anything showed the general will and tendency of workers, specially the sections whose degree of sustaining damage facing the capitalists' assault were high, to a struggle further than the framework of factory and production unit and to increase its degree of effectiveness. Having tens of strikes and protest rallies, the quantity and quality of these struggles, indicate they have been organised to a certain degree and been independent of the organisations connected to the regime. Although these struggles still have not totally rid themselves of the organisations connected to the regime, but in the shaping and organisation of these struggles, active and vanguard workers have played an important role.

Workers protest struggles in the last year have had a considerable growth quantitatively and are not only significant in terms of numbers, protest actions firstly have not been unique and limited to a town or a city but spread throughout the country. Secondly the numbers of workers taking part in these protest actions have

also been high. In spite of all that, it must be admitted that regardless of the vast dimensions and spread of these struggles and the huge number of workers taking part in them, these struggles have principally been disparate and separate from one another. Workers' protests have occurred every where and throughout Iran, but they have not been as one and national. In spite of existence of general demands of a very large section workers, the demands have not been followed by a co-ordinated and one-piece struggle in national dimensions. That is due to workers being deprived of their independent and national organisations. Workers struggles and their spread, although have been able to create obstacles on the path of capitalists advance and propound workers general demands to a very large extent, been unable to or still have not been able to make the capitalists retreat, specially in the scale of the whole country! Workers' demands also in spite of their variety, in their totality have been economic and trade related. Except for rare cases, most have had a defensive character principally. Although there is also no precise information regarding their results and no news broadcast about them, it seems these demands have not also been realised generally. Regardless, the workers managed to reach the ears of other toilers to win their support and the support of the public opinion by striking, holding rallies and bringing their struggle to the front of the factory and from there to the cities and streets and in front of government and state centres. Such they were able to put greater pressure on capitalists and government to reply to their demands. In their direct confrontation with these government establishments they raised the political aspects of their struggle. From the passage of workers confrontation with a single employer and capitalist to confrontation with government establishments not only the political aspect of labour movement was being strengthened but the issue also left direct influences on figuring the real character of the government and raising the level of workers awareness. When the oil workers resorted to strike and protest in several refineries at the same time and or warned of strike and collective protest, when the workers of Nakhkar factory openly pushed the Islamic council aside and organised their protest independent of the organisations connected to the regime and finally when the workers stood against the capitalists excuses, about loss making in order to stop and close the factory, and declared their readiness to take control of all the business of the factory.....,they demonstrated the labour movement has taken a few steps forward even during the capitalists assault. They showed the capitalists' assault and intensification of pressure on workers, in spite of their negative and damaging effects, have not been able to break the workers' struggle and their will to realise their demands. If it is true that the capitalists assault pushed the workers demand movement to a retreating position, but it is also a fact that it was followed by the compression of workers anger and their entering the struggle in broad numbers. It also made them more determined for a serious struggle to change the situation. Although the workers have resorted to struggle and protest to realise their economic demands principally and all these demands have had a defensive nature; on the grounds of the existing acute political crisis and deepening rift in the state, and society's excited and stormy atmosphere in which propounding any kind of demand in confrontation to the Islamic republic, speedily takes a political character; and the relatively positive conditions this has facilitated for the working class to flex its muscles, the labour movement can rapidly leave this stage behind, reach higher stages and transform to a political and country wide movement.

News from Iran

Electronics Workers Protest Rally

In protest to non-payment of their salaries and allowances the workers of Lama Electronics company in Mashhad gathered at the location of the company and demanded payment. The management was intending to pressurise the workers by not paying the wages and compel them to agree to signing temporary contracts. Since the management did not succeed in implementing their plan they sacked several workers. Although the experts' board has voted in favour of workers being reinstated, the management has ignored it and the issue has been referred to the arbitration boards. This has not result in favour of workers and their reinstatement.

Brick Company Workers Hold Protest Rally

About a hundred and fifty workers of the Safain Brick Company in Semnun held a protest rally at the town's House of Worker and demanded payment of their defaulted salaries and allowances. A week earlier they had gone to the labour office of the town and when returned they were locked out. The employer not only has branded the workers as saboteurs and disruptive, it has decided to close the company down and dismiss the workers. The workers have not received any salaries for more than 6 months and are now being threatened with dismissal for the offence of asking to be paid their salaries.

Strike At Haft-Tapeh Paper Factory

In protest to non-payment of wages on time the workers of Haft-Tapeh paper company in Khuzestun resorted to strike action. There is no news of the outcome and workers' other demands.

Sacked Workers Protest Letter

A large group of the dismissed workers of the "Imam Khomeini" hospital in Orumieh together with contract workers sent a petition to the Labour and Labourer newspaper protesting against the circular issued by the social security organisation that deprives the contract workers of receiving unemployment benefit. They have demanded benefiting from the legally determined benefits. In their letter, the workers among other things point out among them there workers who have records of twenty years employment and or there are contract workers who during their term of employment have paid their social security insurance premiums. Now, how could they be deprived of their absolute right and benefits following a circular? At the end of the protest letter the workers have demanded investigation of their problem and an end to uncertainty. It is worth mentioning according to statistics published in the same newspaper, right now there are more than ten thousand contract workers employed in agriculture, industry and service sectors of the state of Western Azarbaijan. Non-payment of unemployment benefit to contract workers according to the circular issued by the social security organisation which was put to action since beginning of the year has caused wide protest among the workers. Despite abolition of unemployment benefit payment to contract workers, the social security organisation still deducts 3 percent of workers wages for unemployment insurance premium.

Workers of Khazar Sewing Company protest

A number of workers of Khazar Sewing company in state of Mazandarun, a subsidiary of Foundation of the Weak, sent a protest note to the press concerning non-payment of postponed salaries and allowances. The workers say in spite of their correspondence with the foundation no action has been taken regarding the demand of 216 workers of the company.

Sack Weaving Workers Protest

A hundred and fifty dismissed workers of the sack weaving company in Orumieh sent a protest letter to the representative of the supreme leader in Western Azarbaijan and the Friday prayer's leader of the town. They have explained their situation and demanded an end to uncertainty, re-commencement of production and return to work. The workers of this closed down company consider the excuses of problem with raw material as stated by the employer to be false. Some of the workers had a meeting with the Friday prayer's leader of the town and demanded investigation of their problem and a solution to them.

Ghouchan Workers Protest Letter

Workers of bicycle manufacturing factory in Ghochun have sent a protest letter to the press concerning the way the employer threatens the workers and delay in payment of wages and have demanded their rights. The employer has not been paying the workers for several months and refuses to permanently employ workers who have worked there for over a year. He also has deprived the workers of minimum welfare facilities and even refuses to provide workers with safety cloths and shoes.

Uncertainty For Workers In Kurdistan

It is more than 6 months that clothing production workshop is in a disorganised situation and at the verge of closure. The situation is causing intense worry among the 90 workers employed in the workshop and their families. It has put them in an uncertain situation. In spite of workers repeatedly going to the authorities and members of the parliament and demanding investigation of their difficulties the problems remain unsolved. The workers of the factory are intensely protesting against the situation and say: "Why should we be uncertain after 20 years of work day and night?"

Management Prevents Workers Reinstatement

Following the protests of dismissed workers of paper bags factory in Kermun (Chahar Kaaf) a decree for reinstatement of 52 workers from a total of 59 has been issued. In spite of the ruling the workers were denied entry to the factory on the orders of the managing director. In protest to the problem the workers have protested to the other responsible and government authorities and wish to return to work.

269 Workers Dismissed

Following the liquidation of the Ghods Road Works office in Mahabad, 269 workers who were employed for many years in that sector lost their jobs and became

unemployed. Before this, it was said that the western Azarbaijan roads and transport main office had decided to merge the two offices. However, finally the plan to liquidate the Mahabad office and sack its workers was implemented. Adding insult to injury, the social security organisation is dragging its feet and not paying workers unemployment benefit while the workers have no income to support themselves.

Carpet Company Workers Protest

A hundred and fifty workers of the Aryan Carpet company in Abhar have signed a petition protesting at the method of calculating new year bonuses and reward. They have demanded payment of the difference in 1999 new year bonus and reward. The employer has deducted 20 percent of the new year bonus and reward as tax, the workers have demanded investigation of the problem and full payment of their new year bonus and rewards.

Sacked Workers Protest

Sacked workers in Oromiyeh have sent a protest letter to the press demanding payment of unemployment insurance premiums. Among other things the protesting workers say in their letter: "We the year 1999 sacked workers in Oromiyeh ask the concerned officials to take action regarding payment of our unemployment insurance premiums".

Town Hall Workers Strike

Tens of town hall workers in Abadun, in protest to non-payment of their salaries on time, stopped work. The striking workers later held a protest rally in front of the local government building of the town. They demanded payment of their delayed salaries. After the officials gave them a positive promise to investigate the workers finished their rally.

Workers of Suff Industrial Company Protest

Workers of Suff industrial company in Saveh have sent a protest note to the press demanding payment of their delayed salaries. Among other things, the workers have written in their letter: "Three months into the current year and we have not received any salaries yet". Stating that generally they are tenants and must pay rent, but the employer does not take this into consideration and every month other than empty promises nothing is given to them, they demanded payment of their delayed salaries and investigation of their difficulties.

Violent Demonstration of Toilers of Khatoon Abad Small Town in Pakdasht

On Saturday 12 June, the toiling population of Khatoon Abad of Pakdasht resorted to demonstration against the regime and government authorities. The regime's armed forces attacked and suppressed the people. The suppressive action taken by government forces inflamed the people's anger more and the demonstration turned violent. The people engaged the forces of suppression and smashed a number of government centres including the town hall and several banks. The Khatoon Abad demonstration started after a 6 year old child was killed as a result of lack of a pedestrian bridge and safety facilities at a accident spot. So far several accidents of the

same kind have occurred at the same spot. The government officials had always promised to construct a bridge and other safety facilities but never carried them out. The toiling population of Khatoon Abad are working and toiling people that are deprived of the minimum welfare and health facilities in their small town. In fact, with the demonstration they stated their protest against the existing system. The regime's armed and security forces arrested a large number of the people of the small town. There is no news about the faith of those arrested.

? **"House of Worker" an Employers Organisation!**

Labour and Labourer newspaper declared that recently "the Supreme Association of Managers and Employers of production and industrial units has been established"! According to the explanation given by the newspaper, the aim of the association is to "consolidate all employers trade associations". The newspaper goes on to say: "the founding members of the Supreme Association of Managers, at the same time have attempted to establish the managers organisation of the Islamic Party of Labour formed by the House of Worker". Concerning the newly established organisation attached to the House of Worker organisation, one of the managers says: "There is a misinterpretation about the Islamic Party of Labour and House of Worker. Some imagine that the party and House of Worker are only supportive of workers and only make efforts to secure that strata's interests. While the managers organisation of the Islamic Party of Labour, which was established as requested by the party officials, thinks of advancing factory production, reducing production obstacles and difficulties and blossoming industry, in a way that the managers organisation of the Islamic Party of Labour would consolidate the communication between managers and workers community so that both strata, side by side, would make efforts to exalt the industry"! Thus the reactionary nature of House of Worker and its Islamic party of Labour becomes even clearer than before. The house of Worker organisation and its Islamic Party of Labour, that before this have tried to serve the employers and capitalists by creating obstacles for workers struggle and diverting the struggle, have now completely stopped pretending and by establishing the "Managers Organisation of the Islamic Party of Labour" and attempting to consolidate the trade associations of employers, made more direct defence of the interests of capitalists and employers their main aim.

Prayer Leaders and Means of Cultural Suppression in Factories

The first seminar of the prayer leaders of the production factories of Karadj region was held with the attendance of Tahaie, administrative and financial deputy of the labour ministry and mullah Shahsavari the cultural manager of the ministry. During the seminar, Rohani, the general manager of labour in Karadj spoke about and admired the role of Friday prayer leaders in factories and saying prayers in order to "save the workers". He said at present in 170 production units Friday prayer offices are operating and in future their number would increase. Mullah Shahsavari also in a speech said that "methods of seeking assistance from prayer leaders to increase profitability and exaltation of culture" is the headings of the programme for these kinds of meetings. Tahai, deputy head of labour ministry for administration and finance said: "We intend to do serious follow ups to see collective prayers being held in the production units with more than 30 employees"! Prayer leaders, true leeches, working in cahoots with their counter parts in the state apparatus, ask the workers to work and work harder still so they could feed and graze on the workers fruits of

labour, maintain the existing conditions and continue sponging! Truly religion and clergy had never shown their role in supporting the classes of have-s and exploitative relations so openly and to this extent.

Accidents Caused By Work

While workers were at work in a metal processing workshop situated at Shahabad street in Tehran an oxygen cylinder exploded. As a result of the explosion a 25 year old welder called Gholam Reza Mohamadi lost his life. Four others were severely injured. A 28 year old worker called Yousef who was working in a half built building at Jonatabad was buried under tons of soil and lost his life after a wall collapsed. An Afghan digging worker who was working in a depth of 25 meters in a well ,situated in the Sepah square, was buried under tons of soil as a result of collapse of the well's wall. Attempts of two other workers to save him were fruitless and Najibollah Haji Lahori, the Afghan worker who was only 23 years old lost his life.

27% Unemployment in Kermanshah

An official of the planning and budget ministry of the state of Kermunshah predicted that the rate of unemployment in the state would reach 27%. He said in 1997 Kermunshah with 21.53% was the second state of the country in terms of growth of unemployment and Lorestan with 24.42% was the first. In the mean time, Labour and Labourer newspaper writes Kermunshah state with a rate of 24.1% growth of unemployment is the first!

70% of Workshops in Booshehr Are Idle

Construction Jihad official in Booshehr declared 70% of carpet weaving workshops of Booshehr are idle. He said from 5,499 carpet production workshops employing 8,249 employees, only 30% of the workshops employing 2,475 are working and the rest are idle.

Two Short News

1. The social Security organisation has sent an instruction to all its branches throughout the country ordering them not to pay unemployment benefit to contract workers from 21 March 1999. 2. There are also some debates about merger of the social security organisation and medical treatment services, both issues are subject of workers intense protest.

WORKERS STRIKE IN AZAR SPINNING FACTORY

Workers of Azar Spinning factory in Isfahan did not attend their work on Tuesday 27th July, in protest against not receiving their retroactive wage and other related subsidiaries. About 300 workers of this factory gathered in front of Labour Office in protest for their demands. The workers warned that in case they do not receive any payment they would organise much wider strike.

WORKERS PRODUCING PIPES IN PROTEST

The workers of Ahwaz Pipe factory demanded that their demands should be reflected in newspapers by sending a protest letter to Labour and Workers newspaper. The workers of this factory have, under a long period, received their fees with delay. They protest seriously about such way of payment and demand that their fees and subsidiaries should be paid in time. The workers have written in their letter, " we, workers of Ahwaz Pipe Factory, receive our fees very late. At present, in August, we are receiving the fee for May.

PROTEST LETTER

700 of the personnel of Kahrizak Sanatorium have protested against non-payment of health insurance by the employer in a letter to mass media. They have mentioned in their letter that the personnel have paid their share to insurance but not the employers. This has resulted that their insurance-books have not extended. They demanded, in the letter, that this matter should be taken under consideration.

THOUSANDS OF WEAVING WORKERS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR JOB

The Executive director of the Poor' Foundation, recently announced that bankruptcy and crises are real threat to production units for weaving. He said that the actions taken in order to reconstruct the old units are fully in no concern of economic value and therefore we have to believe their industrial death. The problems of concern are retroactive debts, high amortisation and surplus productive forces. He added that these units have until now, already faced the problem of keeping the employees and therefore they have been subject to massive economic damages. This means that Poor's Foundation is ready to close all the weaving factories and dismiss all the workers.

400 WORKERS OF KESHMIR WOOL FACTORY IN KERMANSHAH ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR JOBS

400 workers of Keshmir Wool factory in Kermanshah are in danger of losing their jobs. It has been several months since the directors of the factory have closed some of the sections and have not paid the workers' fees. The workers have tried to stop closure of the factory and have demanded retroactive payments by contacting the Ministry of Labour, Governor and other official organs but their attempts have not given any result yet.

WORKERS OF TEHRAN SOFALIN BRICKS WORKS ARE IN A CONFUSED SITUATION

Workers of Tehran Sofalin bricks works are in a confused situation. The factory is located in Khavaran high way. The chiefs of this factory have shot down light and fuel and have closed the factory. The excuse is, lack of technical facilities. The workers have not received any further information and they have not received any payment for three months now. In addition their health insurance has not extended and therefore they may not even have access to the minimum social care.

ZARI VAR SHOE FACTORY IS GOING TO BE CLOSED

Zari Var shoe factory is on the way to total closure and the workers are in a very critical situation. One of the workers stated that the production capacity is 3000 pair of shoes, slippers and boots on daily bases but the employers and the contractor have reduced it to only some pairs a day which are sold to schools. This factory is owned by Tehran's Municipality and has 58 workers.

THE ACCIDENTS AT WORK

A young worker, in Ponak quarter in Tehran, while digging a well fell to bottom and died. The cause of accident was collapse of the well's walls. Worker's name was Sarvar, 22 years of age and an Afghan national. Some days after this accident, a worker working in a laundry fell to the bottom of a well and died. He wanted to deepen the well and suffocated by gas. This worker, Davoud Hussein, was 21 and also an Afghan national. In the same day, a similar accident happened when a worker, Mohammed Ismail Tajak, while working in a well, 80 meters under ground, choked by power and died. In the area near Phelestin St. in Tehran, a 24 years old worker died while digging for groundwork of a building. The cause of accident was sudden collapse of the walls and he remained under tons of dust. An official of Fire stations said in Kar & Kareghar newspaper that the number of accident related to well constructions is increasing. The figure was 72 for the year 1997 but it was 90 for the year 1998. The figure is collected only form the reports received by Fire stations.

Every day, tens even hundreds of workers die in the country due to the lack of security measures at work. Hundreds of workers become also injured badly as well. These are just some examples:

- A worker of Mashhad Nakh factory lost two of his fingers while cleaning a cotton-filtering machine.

- A wireman in Ilam-Power Company, while working, choked by power and burnt himself. This due lack of secures tools. He injured badly in eyes. The lack of secure tools is so critical in this company that the workers do not have even access to proper gloves. One of the workers said," when we come to work, we expect that any minute some thing terrible coming to happen!"

LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF WOMEN SEEKING JOB HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED IN ISLAM SHAHR

The chief of the Job Centre in Islam Shahr announced recently hat the number of unemployed is increasing every day and there are no opportunities for job engagement. As an example, he mentioned that there are 20 000 job seeker women of whom only 20 have been employed.

THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IS 28% BY THE END OF THIRD-PROGRAMME

Mohammed Bagher Nobakht Haghighie, member of the board of Parliament, in an interview said that the rate of unemployment is reached 28%, which is 6% higher than 3 years ago. He added that by the rate of growth which will be 3% at he end of third programme, the rate of unemployment would be at least 28% and by the year 2007 it

will be 31,7%. It should be noticed that according to the official statistics, the rate of economic growth in Iran is 1,7% at the moment.

GATHERING OF REACTIONARIES AND EMPLOYERS AT THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE ISLAMIC LABOUR PARTY

The first congress of the Islamic Labour Party on 14th August, Mosavi Haeri, Home minister, and Ansarie, member of the reactionary Majlis had speech. The topic was the roll and necessity of such party's establishment. Ansarie said, "the establishment of parties" is essential in order to execute an Islamic rule in a right way". 30 persons elected, later on, to the Central council of this party. Abdoulghasem Sarhadi Zadeh elected as the Secretary General. Sarhadi Zadeh is one of the most reactionaries of the regime. He was a member of the Islamic Nations Party and the Islamic Republic Party. He has had position as the head of Board for all jails in Iran, minister of Labour and MP of Majlis. At present he is MP and a member of the Commission for Labour and Social Affairs. The other members of the Central council have had also been in similar positions, such as, deputy-director of Intelligence and security ministry, advisor to president, MP, former member of the Islamic Republic Party, representative of employers in negotiation committees, director of factory and General Secretary for Employers and Directors Organisation.

CONFESSION BY MEANS OF STATISTICS

Resalat daily newspaper, in his number published by the end of August, mentioned statistics on the critical economic situation, increase of prices, the rate of cash growth and the increase of budget deficit. All the figures are considered to be a confession on how the economic situation is. In the year 1996 and 1998, the budget deficit was 2 868,9 billions Rials and 17 712,1 billions Rials. The rate of cash growth in 1997 in comparison to the year 1995 had an increase by 15,2% and in the year 1998 was 27,1%. The volume of cash in the year 1997 and 1998 was 132 286,3 and 170 739,6 billions Rials. This newspaper, on the issue about the increase of prices, mentioned, "Last year, we observed that the prices for grains increased by 53,3%, for bread, rice and corns by 49,1%, for water, power and fuel by 39,6%, for cooking oil and butter by 36,6%, for meat, chicken and fish by 25,4%, for medical and hygienic material by 26,9%, for services by 24,1%, for tobacco by 22,4% and for soft-drinks and beverages by 20,8%.

Gathering protest of Pipe manufacturing workers

More than 350 workers of Khozestan Pipe Manufactory, gathered in front of Khozestan Governor-general's office in Ahwaz, in protest against non-payment of their last four months wages and subsideries. According to the report published by Resalat newspaper on October 14. The workers did not let the head of City Council and some other officials of the Governor-general office hold speech when they attended the gathering. Instead they demanded payment of their unpaid wages.

Sitting strike of Khashan Weaving workers

On September 28, more than 100 workers of Kashan Weaving and Spinning Company (pvt.Ltd), started a strike in protest aganist non-payment of their wages and subsideries. This protest was a follow-up of their protest in August. The workers really

showed by this that they mean serious about the payments but the director who attended their gathering, had as usual a new excuse. He said this time, that the tools and machinaries of the company are too old (bought 60 years ago) and therefore the company cannot produce quality textiles so he is not able to pay off workers' wages.

Gathering in front of the Governor's office

On October 12, workers of Semnan Spinning factory, gathered in front of the governor's office and demanded to go back to work and that their related problems should be taken under consideration. These workers have been unemployed for more than one year and have not received any compensation.

Gathering protest of the Municipal workers

On October 10, Iran's Municipal workers gathered in front of Municipal office in protest against non-payment of their wage for the month before. According to the report published by Economic News newspaper, in addition to unpaid wages for September, the Municipal workers have not received any over-time compensation, compensation for out wear and work related travel, during the last 15 months. The Municipal officials have announced that the reason for non-payment is the debt of 12 billions Rials that the Municipal has to the governmental offices and private establishments!

15,000 workers been unemployed and 1,500 have

not been paid for the last two years in Gilan province

Kar & Karghar newspaper has written that last year, more than 15,000 of employees have been unemployed in Gilan province, of them 8,000 being redeemed and 4,000 being unemployed due to the order from directors. More than 3,000 who had season employment being also unemployed. Same newspaper added that more than 25,000 workers in service companies have not even the minimum wage and 1,500 workers have not received their wage for an interval of two months upto two years. These workers are employees of Shoma Weaving, Iran Jika, Tan Saz, Ghanje Shoe, Gilan Co., Naghmeh Spagetti factory, Saravan Painting and Gilan Stocking.

Increase in import, decrease in export

The import volume of non-oil products has increased with 38,7% during the first six-months of this year in comparison to the same period last year. The volume is 11 millions of Tons. In return, the export volume of non-oil products during the same period has reached just to 5 millions of Tons. The General Director of the Islamic Republic's Harbours and Shipping Organisation, on the issue about oil products, said, "The import volume of oil products under the same period has reached 3,5 millions of Tons which, in comparison to the year before, is 43% higher."

Decrease in rate of production

The Chairperson of the Islamic Republic's Association of Weaving Industry, announced that the production of Icrelic and Tabs- Icrelic fibers decreased by 17,8% and 71%, production of thread made of cotton and industrial fibres by 2,6% and

production of machine-made carpets by 4% during the first six-months of this year in comparison to the same period last year.

Short news

· General-Secretary of the Worker's House announced that 54% of Iranian workers work more than 12 hours a day. He added that if workers work for less hours then they get huge financial problems.

· Deputy in-charge of Rehabilitating section of Health Organisation said that at present there are six millions mentally retired or physical handicap in country, among them there are 2 millions who have diagnosed handicap and are in need of special care.

· Iran newspaper wrote in its issue on September 29: During the last two years, 800 Iranian companies have been registered in countries of Persian Gulf region. They, together, have a capital of one billion and 800 million dollars. The same newspaper wrote also that Iranians' capital abroad can be estimated to be between 25 up to 50 billion dollars. It suggested that it may be considered as a sign for escape of remarkable capital from Iran.

Unbelievable rise in prices for rice and grains:

Resalat newspaper wrote in its issue on October 11, that the prices for grains this year have been increased up to 100-150%, in comparison to last year. This newspaper published in its issue, a list of prices of some articles from last year and this year:

ARTICLE	LAST YEAR	CURRENT YEAR
Pea	360	650
Navy-bean	360	550
Lentil	600	700
Bean	360	600
Kidney-bean	215	300
Black-eye bean	350	600
Split peas	400	800

Same newspaper in its issue on October 14, wrote that the price of rice within the last two days has increased at least 200 Rials/kg. A kind of rice which was 4500 Rials/kg last year is 7000 now and another kind which was 3000 now is 5000.