

Dear friends,

Another reminder regarding a Jan Manch on 21 March, 2009 at the Constitution Club lawns, New Delhi (see item 1 below) being organized by People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) and the National Campaign for the People's Right to Information (NCPRI).

Besides, a few items from the past few weeks related to the NREGA from across the country.

1. Jan Manch on NREGA and RTI, 21 March, New Delhi.
2. Lok Adalat Fever
3. Childcare and NREGA
4. Update from Jan Jagran Manch (Araria, Bihar)
5. Report of social audit in Madhupur (Deoghar, Jharkhand)
6. NREGA news from Dahanu, Maharashtra
7. Pashchim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (PBKMS) dharna in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal

Regards,  
Reetika.

### **1. Jan Manch on NREGA and RTI, 21 March, New Delhi.**

A "Jan Manch" on Employment Guarantee and the Right to Information will be held in New Delhi on 21 March 2009, in anticipation of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. At this Jan Manch, representatives of all political parties will be invited to present their party's position on these two crucial issues, and to respond to public demands or queries.

This event is being convened under the joint banner of People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) and the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI). A charter of common demands on employment guarantee, and Right to Information is attached. This charter of demands will be sent to political parties in advance of the Jan Manch.

**The Jan Manch will be held on the lawns of Constitution Club (Rafi Marg) in New Delhi, from 10 am to 4 pm. About 500 participants are expected to attend from all over the country. For further information please write to [janmanch09@gmail.com](mailto:janmanch09@gmail.com). If you are coming in a group, please inform the organizers in advance by sending a line to the same address.**

### **2. Lok Adalat Fever**

- a. Lok Adalat in Latehar (Jharkhand): See attached note from Byomkesh [byomkeshkl@gmail.com](mailto:byomkeshkl@gmail.com)
- b. Lok Adalat in Sindhur taluk (Raichur, Karnataka), 7 March: See attached report from Abhay Kumar [rkabhay@yahoo.co.in](mailto:rkabhay@yahoo.co.in) and Praveen SP ([right2food\\_kar@yahoo.co.in](mailto:right2food_kar@yahoo.co.in))
3. **Childcare and NREGA:** See attached report on child care for female NREGA workers received from Devika Singh ([singhstheman@gmail.com](mailto:singhstheman@gmail.com)) and Radha Holla, Working Group on Children Under Six.
4. **Update from Jan Jagran Manch, Araria (Bihar):** Received from [ashishranjan@gmail.com](mailto:ashishranjan@gmail.com). See <http://docs.google.com/fileview?id=F.fcd9d5e4-8d14-4e4e-8338-03e9b85b1375>
5. **Report of social audit in Madhupur (Deoghar, Jharkhand):** Received from Pankaj Kumar, Mazdoor Kisan Samiti ([pankajmks@gmail.com](mailto:pankajmks@gmail.com)). See Attached.

**6. NREGA news from Maharashtra (received from Shiraz Prabhu):**

“Will not be able to make it for the Feb 26 meeting as it is just not possible to travel so far. However please keep me posted on the developments re the Jan Manch. We are having serious problems in the implementation of the MREGS in Thane district. Transparency is nil. People are given work for two or three days and made to sit at home for the next couple of days under the pretext of taking measurements. This is just not sustainable and many people have started migrating out for work to earn some money for holi. We have started a struggle against this practice and demanding unemployment allowance for those days. This will not be easy as the paper work is not in order, the rozgar sevaks were not paid and now there is no record re demand for work. Works have been started suo moto as in the days of EGS. Of course we are threatened with stoppage of work. All the ongoing works are undertaken by the forest department as the agricultural department is on strike. Panchayats have not got any technical assistance to have their plans approved so even that front is closed for the time being.

Furthermore, the forest department is using peoples desperation to sabotage their rights under the forest rights act by taking all kinds of digging works on peoples plots and community forests. The community forests serve as grazing grounds but if trenches are dug at a distance of 5 to 8 feet neither grass will grow nor can the cattle roam about for fear of falling in the pits and trenches. We are also protesting against this...

The situation here is not as bad as Jharkhand, but bad enough. What happening re solidarity for the Jharkhand activists.”

**7. Pashchim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (PBKMS) dharna in South 24 Parganas (received from Swapan Ganguly, [pbkmswb@gmail.com](mailto:pbkmswb@gmail.com))**

Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity (PBKMS) has been working for the proper implementation of NREGA programme which guarantees 100 days of work. West Bengal Government remains one of the worst performers nationally, and the South 24 Parganas district one of the worst in the state. Irregular flow of payments has been one of the major problems where money has not been released at the panchayat level leading to delayed wage payments and no work orders in the district.

Patharpratima Block of South 24 Parganas is one such example, where 4642 persons applied for work under NREGA in August 2008 in 11 Anchals in the block for 100 days of work for each household. Several meetings and deputations made by PBKMS with officials at the block level and district level yielded no result. Out of 4642 persons, 208 people did not get a single day of work and the rest were given work ranging from a minimum of two days to a maximum of 20 days. In view of the above inaction by the Block authorities, PBKMS workers gathered in numbers of about 700 and staged a dharna yesterday in Ramganga Block outside the BDO office in South 24 Parganas, with plans to continue indefinitely.

PBKMS had the following major demands, all of which were in keeping with the law:-

- a) Provision of 100 days of work to every household who has applied for work under NREGA, within 31st March 2009
- b) Work for all applicants must be in sites which are within 5 kms of their residences and/or where traveling costs are within 10% of the wages given
- c) Women must be given work near their villages.
- d) Special provision of work to be made for old people and handicapped.
- e) Failure to open bank accounts can not be a pretext for not giving work under NREGA.
- f) In case of failure to provide work, unemployment allowance to be given.

In addition, the Mid-day meal programme has not been running since the end of January in Pathar Pratima block. We demanded immediate resumption of the programme. The dharna resulted in a meeting yesterday with the Saha Sabhapati, PWD Karmadakha, Joint BDO and BDO, where the following decisions were taken:

- Work orders were sanctioned under NREGA for 4918 workers
- Rs. 67 lakh will be paid as wages to workers within a week to those whose wages were pending from the last financial year.
- Dakshin Raipur Anchal Gram Panchayat had no plan of action for works under NREGA till now; new works will be identified today.

In wake of the above decisions, PBKMS withdrew the dharna with a review meeting to be held on 14th March, and will accordingly decide to resume the dharna from 16th March.