



**Give what is due them:**

# Wage Hike for FDWs

There is no reason for the Hong Kong government not to give the foreign domestic workers what is due them – a wage increase.

Having been based in Hong Kong and helping FDWs for more than 20 years, the Mission For Migrant Workers (HK) Society has seen how the Hong Kong economy has improved with the significant contribution and presence of FDWs.

We have seen as well how the HK government has imposed on FDWs unnecessary and burdensome policies, not to mention the wage cuts it implemented in both 1999 and 2003.

There is no let-up for the FDWs' campaign for a liveable wage increase.

## HK Economy and the FDWs' Contribution

As in a statement issued by the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, the FDWs have contributed HK\$13.7 billion to the HK's Gross Domestic Product, or 1% of the total GNP.

This is clearly something that the HK government cannot deny as its economic boosts have been very well aired and proclaimed.

The economy is robust and the government is promising many benefits to the people: wage hikes, food and health allowances, tax breaks.

There should not be any hindrance then as to the HK's provision of a much-needed wage hike to FDWs.

## FDWs Hard Labor

FDWs are overworked and underpaid.

Their labor conditions – having no maximum number of working hours, being on 24-hours on call, doing more than just domestic work – virtually dictate their situation as slave-like.

As these labor conditions need to be changed, so should their compensation be.

With the financial crisis that has gripped their respective countries, not to mention the looming inflation and the rising cost of living here, the FDWs NEED to be protected.

Other governments in economically-afloat countries, like United Kingdom and Spain, are doing it. Why shouldn't they?

## Responsibility

With the call for a wage hike, the HK\$9,600 levy has likewise been demanded to be abolished. With its continued yet unjustified existence, there is no guarantee of an increase.

Both FDWs and their employers can benefit once this levy has been rid of.

With the contributions they are giving, they deserve no less.

# *Filipino Migrant Workers in Jeddah* Stranded and Cheated

Overseas Filipino Workers who turned to their Consulate for help after leaving adverse working conditions were promised, for a fee, “legal deportation” by Philippine Consul General Tago, a process also known as “Backdoor” Repatriation.

While the OFWs waited on the flight that never came, a virtual tent city arose under a bridge, joining many other nationalities of migrant workers who had run away or been abandoned by their governments. OFWs who had escaped maltreatment and abuse in their work places were told that they could leave the country through the “Backdoor” system.

## Cheated

As many as 220 OFWs paid 1,500 Saudi Riyals (the equivalent to more than 3,000 Hong Kong Dollars) to a Consulate official and were told to sign documents assuring their departure. The documents turned out to be fraudulent and their money was never returned. The distressed OFWs approached their Consulate for help but were ignored. On February 27 following a protest, 111 out of the 220 stranded OFWs were arrested and sent to Jeddah deportation centers to await proper exit visas.

Two weeks later the arrested OFWs are still stuck in the deportation center, facing hunger, illness and emotional distress. There is fighting among the displaced migrants of all nationalities in the deportation center over the little food they are provided. All of the detainees are kept in a small room with at least 100 other detainees, where there isn't even enough room to stretch out.

## Stranded Women

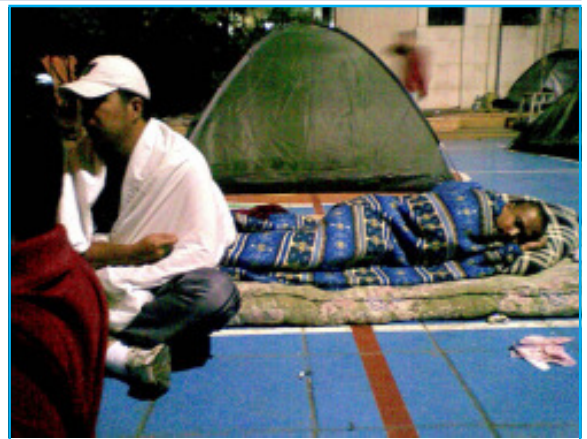
The latest reports from Jeddah confirm that 12 women were sent to Riyadh, Gassim and Abha for reasons that have not been released. There have been no updates as to the repatriation process of these women or what the conditions are of where they are staying. An additional 54 women were picked up from the tent city and returned to their employers; back to the same distressed situations from which they had run away.

Another rising concern is the number of women found in the Jeddah deportation center, with numbers growing to 40 women, one of whom has her 1 yr old son with her. Her son has become ill, and there are concerns that he is not getting needed medications.

## Bleak Future

The remittances of migrant workers are what sustain not only families back home, but the Philippine Government as well. Yet, as soon as the migrant workers find themselves in trouble with their employers or a foreign government, they are defrauded and ignored by the very Consulate that is supposed to protect and serve them.

In 2007 as many as 925 OFWs who had overstayed their visas or were



**STRUGGLING.** (from top to bottom) Stranded OFWs in Jeddah struggle through insufficient food and sheltering in makeshift homes by an idle lot and under a bridge as they demand for the Philippine government to provide the much-needed assistance and protection. Their demand is well-articulated in the last picture.

stranded in Jeddah were sent home with immediate, and legal, repatriation.

The way these 220 OFWs have been mistreated, ignored and deceived is a shame to the Philippine Government and the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah. Con. Gen. Tago should be held responsible for his false promises to the migrant workers and for his illegal actions that have caused much distress and potential harm to the OFWs in waiting and their families back home.

Those guilty of not following the Jeddah Immigration laws and Consulate standards should be punished; while those OFWs who fell victim to this scheme should be repatriated. 🇵🇭



# The Truth Will Make You Free

*John 8:32*

Migrant workers must never be indifferent to the issues of the massive corruption and failure in governance in the country.

We Filipino migrant workers keep the Philippine economy afloat. Part of the money that goes into the pockets of corrupt government officials is our hard-earned money. If the people (and that includes us) remain silent, these anomalies will continue. The whole nation deserves the truth.

## **Racked with Corruption**

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's (GMA) scandal-laden administration is once more racked with another revelation, the magnitude of which and the public reaction thereto may eventually topple her.

This latest expose concern is the multi-million deal with ZTE Corporation for a national broadband network. The deal would have costed the government a whopping USD320.

Mrs. Arroyo herself and her husband have been implicated in this anomalous transaction.

These revelations have engendered a renewed call for the resignation of the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The massive Ecumenical Prayer Rally on Friday 29 March 2008 is the largest so far in the call for Arroyo's resignation.

As usual the military has upped its ante by blocking the highways leading to Manila on that day thereby delaying if not turning away would be demonstrators. It continues to lie and to mock the public by reiterating its oft repeated but meaningless and hollow mantra of "political neutrality" while

staging its "March for Unity" in a show of loyalty to the chain of command. At the same time, it is also continues its red baiting by saying there are plots from the left to infiltrate the rallies and to destabilize the government.


## **Speak Out the Truth**

Church leaders have let their voices heard. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said in a statement: "We strongly: (1.) Condemn the continuing culture of corruption from the top to the bottom of our social and political ladder; (2.) Urge the President and all the branches of government to take the lead in combating corruption wherever it is found;

"(3.) Recommend the abolition of EO 464 so that those who might have knowledge of any corruption in branches of government, may be free to testify before the appropriate investigating

bodies; (4.) Ask the President to allow her subordinates to reveal any corrupt acts, particularly about the ZTE-NBN deal, without being obstructed in their testimony no matter who is involved;..."

The Most Revd Godofredo J. David, the Obsipo Maximo/Supreme Bishop of the IFI said that: "the Iglesia Filipina Independiente believes that the Filipino people must know the truth and assert justice. We believe that a presidency that compromises moral integrity and values of public service must be brought into accountability. It is the sacred duty of the Filipino people to defend the common good over and above the interests of a few individuals, even if they include the highest official of the land."

One line he strongly stated that struck me: "It is immoral to tolerate a presidency that repeatedly betrays the Filipino people's longing for good governance." 



**NOT WELCOME.** Filipino Domestic Workers, joined by local supporters, welcomed Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Hong Kong visit with an indignation rally. The GMA government has been riddled with protests due to corruption scandals, extrajudicial killings and other burdensome policies it has implemented.

# Association of Sri Lankans in Hong Kong hold GA, affirm objectives

On March 3, 2008 the Association of Sri-Lankans in Hong Kong (ASL-HK) held their General Assembly (GA) and elected a new set of officers at the Indian Club Kowloon Hong Kong. Every year, the Association holds its GA to present the accomplishment reports and vote for the new set of officers that will serve for one year.

The ASL-HK conducted several activities and programs to encourage members and non-members to participate in the organizational activities. These are as follows: New Year Celebration in April, Buddhist Ceremony in May, Musical Show in June and a Cultural program in September.

At present, ASL is actively campaigning for the wage increase and abolition of the levy. This is a long standing campaign of the migrant workers here in Hong Kong because the HK government is not responding to the basic demands of migrant workers. Aside from the wage issue, Sri Lankan migrant workers are also facing many issues and concerns, one of which is the issue of the New Conditions of Stay, or the Two Week Rule. The limited stay in Hong Kong forces Sri Lankan migrant workers to stay in Hong Kong beyond what their visa permits.

## ASL New Set of Officers 2008-2009

**Ms. Indra Jayanthi Ranaweera**

*President*

**Mr. B.A. Sampath Peres**

*Vice President*

**Ms. Ariyawathi Guruge**

*Secretary*

**Mr. Ariyadasa Gajanayake**

*Treasurer*


**Ms. Geetha Priyangani**

*Assistant Secretary*

**Mr. Anura Hettiarachchi**

*Vice Treasurer*

ASL is a member organization of Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, an alliance of migrant organizations of various nationalities in HK.

The new set of officers promised to fulfill their commitments and do every means to attain their objectives. 



**MIGRANT FOCUS**

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