

Sri Lankan workers and youth praise International May Day rally

Our correspondents
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Workers and youth from Sri Lanka were among the many people who registered for the online May Day Rally organised by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) last Sunday.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with some of those who participated in the historic event. All said it was a powerful and novel experience. Some asked whether they could listen to the event again in order to fully absorb the speeches delivered by speakers from the US, Britain, Germany, Australia and Sri Lanka.

Gunaratne, a teacher from Colombo, said: “It’s a real warning to hear about the fact that a world war looms over us. Chris Marsden provided important details about how the imperialist forces are militarily encircling Russia, particularly with their military buildup in the Black Sea. A war with Russia could explode very soon.

“David North pointed out that the cause of such wars is the contradiction between the global economy and the nation-state system. He also pointed out that only the working class can abolish this nation-state system. These are important things to learn.

“I was pleased to hear that more than 2,000 had registered for the rally. My 17-year-old son also listened with great interest and was looking for maps to trace the situation in the Ukraine. To know that there are people all around the world who think like us as a class and who gather in thousands to discuss a great task made us very happy.”

Mahesh, a student and part-time tutor, said: “The rally provided a good understanding about how the whole world is being rapidly dragged toward a nuclear war by America. The speakers explained that the basic reason for this danger is growing social inequality across all countries and that the top 85 capitalists in the world have accumulated assets worth more than those

of half of the world’s population. Every decision, including the preparations for world war, is taken to suit the interests of this tiny layer of capitalists.

“The May Day speakers also pointed out that the bourgeoisie is incapable of abolishing this inequality or preventing world war. I agree with the main idea that the speakers explained—that you cannot reform this system to address our needs. Parties such as the [opposition] Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna claim that capitalist rule can be reformed.”

Sampath, from Matara in Sri Lanka’s south, decided to participate in the online rally after attending a May Day lecture in Colombo three days earlier. “I thought that the ICFI’s international May Day rally would be crucial for the working class in every country and registered my name. I also urged my wife and some friends to get registered and last night we all got together at my home and listened to the speeches,” he explained.

“Your speakers powerfully explained the major contradictions of capitalism, the inter-imperialist rivalries. At the same time, they elaborated on the relationship between developing social inequality and war. All of this knowledge is very new for me.

“Before this rally, I thought that America, China, Germany and Russia were all playing on a level field and sometimes I saw China and Russia as provocateurs. But as your speakers showed, these are the concepts pumped out by the capitalist media and the fake-left parties. In contrast to them, America is the main provocateur and the crisis in Ukraine is a direct product of these provocations. As the speakers explained, these actions could lead to a nuclear war. This needs to be stopped.

“After attending your international rally, I am very optimistic. Yes, such a disaster can be stopped by the

unity of the international working class and I saw that strength through this rally.”

A **fisherman** from Chilaw in Sri Lanka’s northwest listened to the international May Day rally with a co-worker. It was a “good experience for workers,” he said.

“Everything the speakers said was true and the pictures on the screen were very useful to help us to understand the situation. Though the civil war in Sri Lanka was ended with the defeat of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] by the Rajapakse government, the problems facing fishermen have not been resolved. Now, both the Sri Lankan government and the Indian navy are arresting fishermen every day. We don’t have any trust in the political parties in this country.”

A **teacher** from Bandarawela in the central hills said: “I’m reading all the literature I’ve received from you and along with my wife and a friend, we listened to the May Day speeches until the end. We are not fluent in English but we could follow the rally to some extent.

“We’ve never heard your May Day speeches before but they’re very different from what we read in the media. There must be a change for the world. I’m discussing these issues with students because they must know that there is a different world. People are suffering under this system but the rulers live in luxury. I think there will only be a change if the system can be changed.”

Chaminda, from Katunayake, north of Colombo, was unable to hear all the speeches but listened to David North’s contribution and part of Nick Beams’s. He explained that he wanted to hear the entire May Day event and asked when the SEP would be holding meetings to further discuss the issues raised.

“I was attracted to the idea of an international May Day after hearing from a Socialist Equality Party member. David North explained the crisis in America and that this system is not good and has to be changed,” he said.

“Here in Sri Lanka, governments change but the people’s problems are not solved and now the situation is becoming worse. I’ve read about developments in Ukraine and agree, as North explained, that Ukraine has become a flashpoint. If a war breaks out what will happen? It will be catastrophic for the whole world.”



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