

Despite a 'misrepresentation', Guwahati Trade strike successful



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Daya Nath Singh 18 April 2009 9415 views

The traders strike in Guwahati against hike in trade license fees was a grand success despite a 'misrepresentation' by Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC). All Guwahati Traders' Association (AGTA), a federation of several retailers' organizations gave a call for 12-hour trade strike on 18th April, in protest of three times hike in trade license fees by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC). Another federation of merchants, namely, Assam Chamber of Commerce (ACC) also launched agitation on the same issue. But the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC), representing big business houses and wholesalers, controlling the economic affairs of Guwahati as well as the entire northeastern region, so far kept silence on the issue and on the eve of strike created confusion among the people announcing 'withdrawal of strike'. It was interesting to note that an organization like KCC, which was not a party to the agitation, had a 'secret discussion' with the officials of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) and announced the withdrawal of the strike for which it had not given a call. However, the retailers of the city fully aware of the facts did not pay attention to the rumors.

The retailers are the worst affected by GMC's unilateral decision of hike in trade license fees. Most of small traders are not in position to earn even two meals a day for their family due to lack of capital to run their business. If they have to pay more on trade license fees and other taxes they would have to close down their business. The GMC officials do not respond to the memoranda and letters of the agitating organizations, instead they try to create misunderstanding through another organization of 'their interest'. It has been alleged by the traders that the GMC has failed to provide even basic amenities and develop the markets, because of rampant corruption and that is why it does not try to collect funds from other resources by increasing its network to other spheres. Instead it always tries to impose more and more levies and taxes on those who abide by the law and pay them regularly. A number

of traders, contractors and professionals carry on business without trade licenses, but the GMC does not dare to approach them. If all the traders are given trade licenses, the GMC may earn more money and even the present trade license fees could be reduced, feel traders. It is only possible by a clean and transparent management of the affairs, which the GMC lacks. However, due to Lok Sabha elections the GMC could not react being afraid of violation of code of conduct.

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