



SIGHTINGS

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

INDIA, THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY, IS TAKING AN UNUSUALLY ROCKY ROAD TOWARD BECOMING ONE OF THE LARGEST ECONOMIES, OVER NUMEROUS SPEED BUMPS.

With political chaos hindering efforts to ameliorate staggering inequality and curb abuses of power, workers feel like ever-smaller cogs in an overheating machine. No surprise that many take to the streets—or, in the case of the taxi driver pictured above in Calcutta, stay off the streets—to demand higher pay, more rights, a stronger safety net, and more transparent financial practices. Frustrations boiled over last February when hundreds of thousands of workers from eleven unions banded together to disrupt life throughout the country in a massive strike.

But even big strikes, bringing city traffic to a halt, lack the impact they used to. In 2010, labor disputes cost the economy fewer than twenty million workdays—just a quarter as many as in 1982. India saw only 101 disputes during the first five months of 2012, less than half the number from the same period two years prior.

Why the drop in labor unrest? It's possible that, as in the United States, fewer unions with diminishing influence call fewer strikes. Ultimately, though, observers point out that the shift doesn't necessarily say much about India's workforce. After all, fully 94 percent of the nation's working population is unorganized, earning less and living more poorly than their unionized counterparts. Taxi drivers, it seems, have the luxury of striking. The same can't always be said of the millions of Indians who can scarcely afford to take a cab. —VADIM LIBERMAN