

JANUARY 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 25TH TO JANUARY 31ST 2016

BRICK KILNS GO ON THREE-DAY STRIKE ACROSS PUNJAB

Dawn, January 25th, 2016

LAHORE: The All Punjab Brick Kiln Owners Association on Sunday announced holding a three-day strike in protest against the ongoing raids at their kilns over child labour.

They said that all the kilns of the province will remain closed from Monday to Wednesday (Jan 27).

“We are against the child labour as we have already told our kiln workers not to engage their children in labour. But the government officials are raiding our kilns and recovering kids from their parents’ houses built on the premises of kilns,” the association’s chairman Shoaib Khan Niazi told Dawn.

He said that after recovering kids (aged up to 14 years) from houses, the officials were defaming kiln owners, accusing them of being involved in child labour. The cases were being registered against the kiln owners under the Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Ordinance 2016.

“On Jan 14, the ordinance was passed and on the very next day, the government directed district coordination officers (DCOs), capital city police officers (CCPOs) and district police officers (DPOs) to start raiding kilns without making rules and regulations that are mandatory to be framed before initiating any action,” Niazi added.

While criticising the manner in which raids were being carried out, he said the officials looked to be just doing this as formality. They were taking children (while they were staying home, sleeping or playing) into their custody and asking the parents to take them to nearby schools for admission. Soon after such raids, he added, they would arrest the kiln owners or their managers and shift them to police stations in a very disgusting manner.

“It is a non-bailable offence with the punishment up to six months imprisonment or Rs500,000 fine or both. When we are not involved in getting labour from kids why we are we being punished?” he asked.

He said the kiln owners association had earlier told the government to start paying a handsome monthly stipend to the parents first and then start raiding the kilns to end child labour but it didn’t do anything to develop a proper system.

“Since the announcement of the government to award stipend to the parents and their kids for education is limited to paper work alone, the officials raid kilns and ask parents to take their kids to schools. But when they contact heads of schools, they refuse to admit them because of several formalities such as age limit, B-form, birth record, CNIC, etc. So the kids again return to their houses built on kilns premises,” Shoaib Khan Niazi said.

He added the association had also suggested to the government to set up small schools on kilns’ premises or near them, offering land free of cost for the purpose. But the government didn’t do this and started taking action in a hurried manner without devising any system, he said, urging the officials not to defame the country on the pretext of child labour.

Mr Niazi also demanded the government consult the kiln owners’ representatives on the ordinance.

“In case the government doesn’t hear and accept our demands, we may extend the strike for an unlimited period after Wednesday,” he warned.

The kiln owners association’s office-bearers reportedly held a press conference on the issue.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1235244/brick-kilns-go-on-three-day-strike-across-punjab>

TAKE-HOME SALARY: SINDH LABOUR TO GET AT LEAST RS13,000 WAGE

The Express Tribune, January 26th, 2016.

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a law to regulate the minimum wage of workers employed in various industrial and commercial establishments.

Senior minister for education and parliamentary affairs, Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, while briefing the House on the Sindh Minimum Wages Bill, 2015 said, "Minimum wages means minimum rate of remuneration announced, declared, adopted and notified by the government from time to time which shall include basic pay and statutory allowances, etc."

The provincial government has announced Rs13,000 minimum wage for fiscal year 2015-16.

Khuhro said after the 18th Amendment, the provincial governments have to make this law to notify the minimum wage in the province.

According to the law, there will be a minimum wage board consisting of chairperson and one member each to represent employers, workers, employers connected with industry or trade and workers engaged in such an industry and trade. The chairperson and members will be appointed by the government.

"The labour minister can be the chairperson of this board," suggested the senior minister. The law further states that the board may recommend minimum rates of wages for all classes of workers including skilled and unskilled for time work, piece work, over time and work on a weekly day of rest and for paid holidays.

During Monday's session chaired by speaker Agha Siraj Durrani, MQM lawmakers staged a token walkout when they were not allowed to move a resolution calling to lift the court ban on Altaf Hussain's coverage. Opposition leader Khawaja Izharul Hasan, Muhammad Hussain and Faisal Subzwari of the MQM insisted to move the resolution. "Freedom of speech is a fundamental right of every citizen. In this situation, Altaf Bhai cannot even condemn the brutal attacks by extremists in Pakistan. Thousands of people living in Pakistan want to listen to his speeches," said Hussain.

The opposition leader said the matter [of coverage ban] is in court and they want to move a resolution against the federal government's decision.

Khuhro said the case is pending in court, so a resolution cannot be moved on it. The speaker also said there will be a contempt of court case if anyone tried to move the resolution. "It is a sub-judice matter, so I cannot allow you [to move the resolution]. Let the court decide on it. Please try to understand our position," Durrani pleaded.

The MQM members then staged a token walkout.

Earlier, PTI MPAs staged a token walkout out when their MPA Khurram Sher Zaman was not given time to speak on the demolition of assembly employees' quarters. Assuring the house that the government would provide an alternative place to the employees, the speaker said, "I have summoned the secretary services to give alternative places to these employees," he said.

"PPP believes in giving shelter to the people. Please avoid playing politics on it," he added. Despite many attempts, the speaker did not allow Zaman to speak which resulted in the PTI lawmakers staging a token walkout.

The assembly was informed that some criminals including militants affiliated with Tehreek-e- Taliban Pakistan run illegal water hydrants in District West. The issue was raised by MQM MPA Kamran Akhtar.

Speaking on the call attention notice, he asked the local government minister the reason for acute water shortage in the district.

The minister said the Hub River has dried up for want of rains resulting in shortage of water in the district. “We are managing to provide them water received through Keenjhar Lake,” he informed.

During the session, the Sindh Allied Health Professional Council Bill, Sindh Bonded Labour System and Sindh Companies Profits Bill were referred to the relevant standing committees for feedback.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1033989/take-home-salary-sindh-labour-to-get-at-least-rs13000-wage/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 18TH TO JANUARY 24TH 2016

TAINTED BRICKS AND GOVT’S TILT TOWARDS PUNJAB

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2016.

Aamir Khan

KARACHI: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, along with a delegation of federal and provincial officials, participated in the United Nations Conference on climate change, described as the defining event of 2015.

The conference was attended by 150 heads of state, environmental experts and activists from all over the globe, to discuss climate change, ways of reducing global emissions, adopting a climate compatible growth trajectory and implementing their national action plans to improve the environment.

While it was heartening to see the premier addressing global challenges and declaring Pakistan’s commitment to improve the domestic and global environment, it is unfortunate that the declared policy has not trickled down to our policymakers.

One glaring example in this regard, is the government’s failure to shut down brick kilns operating in Pakistan, especially in Punjab. These kilns constitute a major emitter of greenhouse gases that cause global warming and make communities vulnerable to climate crises.

Apart from being the major source of pollution, kilns remain a social menace as ‘bonded labour’ is also endemic within the brick industry.

At a time when human rights are spreading far and wide, governments are legislating laws to eradicate bonded-labour and contemporary forms of slavery from their countries. Punjab in particular is a ‘hotspot’ of bonded labour in Pakistan, especially in sectors like brick making.

Brick kiln workers are from the poorest, most down-trodden segments of society and often trapped in a vicious cycle of ‘debt’ and ‘bondage.’ The workers are recruited against a ‘loan’ or advance payment by a labour contractor or kiln owner, which they have to repay in installments, by working on the kiln, over many years and sometimes over generations.

This loan is sanctioned to them to buy food and to meet basic needs in a poverty ridden community. But since the wages paid to the workers are so minimal, the loans cannot be paid back in the given frame of time. Hence, they have no choice but to work as slaves to service their debt and are often shackled in bonded in labour for life – a practice that is widespread in Pakistan, despite being outlawed under the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act of in 1992.

Pakistan is also obligated to eradicate this practice under Conventions No 29 and No 105 of the ILO. In the absence of written contracts of employment, it is difficult to monitor whether or not the minimum wage is being paid to workers, so thousands of people, including women and young children work without a salary, education, healthcare and financial support, in harsh conditions that are unacceptable under domestic and international standards.

The Global Slavery Index Report estimates that more than 1% of 185.13 million people in Pakistan are enslaved. This puts Pakistan among the top positions in the “Slavery’s List of Shame!”

In most cases, workers don’t even have access to rudimentary first aid.

Sometimes kiln workers are even blackmailed and implicated in bogus cases if they try to resist the oppression of their de-facto owners.

Kiln workers also suffer from heat strokes, hand burns, asthma and tuberculosis, hepatitis C, skin diseases including eczema, skin cancer and other infections of hand and feet.

Exposure to hazardous substances such as arsenic, burnt plastic, smoke, dust, coal soot and lack of proper ventilation also makes them vulnerable to eye problems like conjunctivitis, and stomach ailments because of dirty water.

In pursuance of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s initiative to accelerate the pace of construction in the country, an exemption in Sales Tax to the Block and Brick industry was announced in the Federal budget 2015-16.

Adding insult to injury, the bureaucracy, in total breach of the evident spirit of the budget, has decided to further the cause of Bhattas and Kilns by seemingly disallowing sales tax exemption to Block and Bricks not produced in the criminal way.

The only other possible reason to take such an approach would be to discriminate against Sindh where the use of concrete block is already very prevalent unlike Punjab.

Sadly, the FBR’s decision is not only against the policy statement of the government at the international level but is also a major source of exploitation of small provinces like Sindh, since Sindh largely uses concrete blocks whereas Punjab uses bricks from the Bhattas

Either it is a deliberate decision to make the construction industry in Sindh sick and move all activity to Punjab or it is a lack of understanding of the repercussions? This discrimination will obviously affect builders and developers in Sindh, as they will end up paying more for construction inputs. One is also at loss to understand why Sindh has not taken up this issue in the Council of Common Interests.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029283/tainted-bricks-and-govts-tilt-towards-punjab/>

EIGHT DIE IN SUGAR MILLS BOILER EXPLOSION

Dawn, January 20th, 2016

QALLAB ABBAS BUKHARI

JHANG: Eight people, including two brothers, died and 11 others injured, seven of them critically, when the boiler of a sugar mills exploded on Shorkot Cantonment road on Tuesday.

According to eyewitnesses, the boiler of the Kashmir Sugar Mills was being cleaned when the workers erroneously opened a valve that started emitting steam during the morning shift.

Before the leakage could be plugged, they said, the boiler exploded causing a massive blast that was heard far and away.

They said 19 workers were present in the boiler unit when the explosion occurred.

As a result of the explosion, seven people – Ishaq , Aslam (brothers), Sajjad, Ashraf, Sarfraz, Mahamand and an unidentified man – died on the spot, while Shehzad died on the way to the hospital.

Three of the critically injured –Abdul Waris, Asrar and Muhammad Ali – were shifted to the Allied Hospital, Faisalabad, while another Khalil who was also seriously injured was shifted to the Nishtar Hospital, Multan. Three others, Muhammad Ali, Faisal and Gul Raheem were shifted to the Shorkot Tehsil Headquarters Hospital.

All the deceased and injured people were residents of Khumananwala and other villages located in the vicinity of the mills.

The mills administration is yet to fix the responsibility for the incident.

Meanwhile, the Punjab government has constituted a high-level inquiry committee to probe into the incident.

Some residents of Khumanawala village talking to Dawn sought full compensation to the families of the deceased and the injured.

They also demanded immediate steps for safety of mills workers to avert such incidents in future. Official news agency APP, quoting Shorkot THQ hospital sources said that most of the injured were in serious condition with up to 70pc burns.

AWP: Awami Workers' Party central secretary general Farooq Tariq expressed solidarity with the families of the workers killed in the Kashmir Sugar mills boiler explosion.

In a statement on Tuesday, he demanded that a Rs3 million be paid to the families of each deceased and Rs1 million to each injured worker.

He also demanded that the proceedings of the investigating committee formed by the chief minister be made public.

He said the lack of safety arrangements had made the sugar mills a death trap for the workers.

The Kashmir Sugar mills is owned by Mian Javed Shafi, a cousin of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234166/eight-die-in-sugar-mills-boiler-explosion>

CHILD RIGHTS: ALL EFFORTS TO BE MADE TO END CHILD LABOUR AT BRICK KILNS: CM
The Express Tribune, January 20th, 2016.

Ali Usman

LAHORE: The menace of child labour at brick kilns will be eradicated at all costs. The required resources will be provided for resolving problems of children working at brick kilns, Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said on Tuesday.

He was addressing a meeting of the steering committee set up to curb child labour at brick kilns.

“Children working at brick kilns will be given a monthly stipend of Rs1,000 each on admission in schools. Free education, text books, stationery and uniform will also be provided for these children. Rs2,000 per family will be paid to parents of such children going to schools,” he said. Provincial ministers were also present.

The government will spend Rs283 million annually to provide the monthly stipends to children. Rs47 million will be spent on providing Rs2,000 each to parents of such children. A special package for the education of children working at brick kilns was approved by the chief minister. Free treatment facilities will also be provided to the children and their parents. The government will also bear transport expenses of the children where schools are far from their homes.

Under a draft law, kiln owners involved in child labour could be awarded up to six months' imprisonment. There will be a summary trial and the kiln owners could be fined up to Rs0.5 million.

The data compiled by the Labor Department states there are total of 6,090 brick kilns in the Punjab. Some 23,642 children below the ages of 14 work at these kilns. According to the data, Kasur district has the largest number of brick kilns. A total of 4,359 children under the ages of 14 work at 352 brick kilns there.

According to the data, 3,190 children below the ages of 14 are employed at 156 brick kilns in Lahore who have never gone to school. They work along with their parents at the kilns.

In Faisalabad, 1,726 children work at 428 brick kilns. In Sialkot, 1,168 children are employed at 262 brick kilns. In Gujrat, 1,164 children work at 273 brick kilns. According to the data, some children who work along with their parents are as young as five.

There are six districts in the Punjab where no children under the age of 14 are employed at brick kilns. They are: Attock, Mianwali, Lohdhan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur and Muzaffargarh.

Child rights activist Iftikhar Mubarik said the initiative was welcome. "However, a transparent monitoring system should be evolved," he said.

So far, 40 brick kilns have been sealed and 42 people have been taken into custody," he said.

He said that Labour and Human Resource Department had set up a helpline (0800-55444) to receive complaints about child labour at brick kilns. "So far, we have received 80 complaints. Immediate action was taken on all," he said. The minister said that 21,847 children working at kilns had been enrolled in schools close to their homes.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1030695/child-rights-all-efforts-to-be-made-to-end-child-labour-at-brick-kilns-cm/>

40 CHILDREN RESCUED FROM KILNS ENROLLED

Dawn, January 24th, 2016

LAHORE: Some 40 children were rescued from two brick kilns in Batapur on Saturday and taken to nearby schools for enrollment.

The crackdown on child labour was launched under the "The Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kiln Ordinance 2016" promulgated by the provincial government.

The ordinance prohibits employment of a worker less than 14 years of age.

The government has constituted a district level committee to inspect kilns in their respective areas.

The Lahore committee was headed by District Coordination Officer Muhammad Usman and its members are Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Amin Wains and Labour department district head.

On Saturday, the DCO, CCPO, Shalimar assistant commissioner along with security officials conducted a surprise raid on two kilns at Nathoki in Batapur area and recovered some 40 children.

Police sealed both the kilns and arrested the owner and his helper after registering a case.

The DCO talking to the media said the committees were conducting raids on kilns on a daily basis to end child labour.

He said the district teams were rescuing children from kilns, enrolling them in schools and also providing books.

He said initially they were being given a monthly stipend of Rs1,000 and Rs2,000 to their parents to ensure their attendance in schools.

He said the teams were directed to conduct raids on kilns in school time and keep a check that the children were being sent to schools or not.

The DCO directed the assistant commissioners to collect data of kilns and during checking stern legal action would be taken against the owners and parents for employing children.

He also directed the patrolling and area police to keep an eye on the kilns violating child labour laws while adding the network administrators were directed to locate the kilns of Lahore on Google map.

The DCO and CCPO also visited the Home Economics College, Gulberg, where the principal briefed them about the security.

DIG (Operations) Dr Haider Ashraf said police recovered some 96 children from kilns in a week-long crackdown in three division including Cantonment, Saddar and Iqbal Town.

He said some 33 kiln owners and accountants were arrested and 26 cases registered against them for violating child labour ordinance.

He said according to the ordinance, employing a 14-year-old child in any working place would land the owner in jail for six months or Rs500,000 fine.

Meanwhile, the chief minister said the educational package would change the life of the children working at kilns.

He was addressing a review meeting for the elimination of child labour from kilns held at Civil Secretariat through a video link.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1235029>

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February 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22nd TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016

PUNJAB GOVT, KILN OWNERS INCHING TOWARDS SHOWDOWN

Dawn, February 22nd, 2016

AMJAD MAHMOOD

LAHORE: The Punjab government and brick kiln owners are inching towards a showdown as both sides are failing to bridge their differences on the child labour issue.

The latest meeting held between labour secretary Ali Sarfraz and a delegation of the Brick Kiln Owners Association here on Sunday also remained inconclusive though a handout claimed that the panel had assured its “full cooperation” for the cause of eliminating the child labour from brick-making units.

During the meeting, Mr Sarfraz urged the delegation members led by Shoaib Khan Niazi to give their nominations for inclusion in inspection teams at tehsil and district levels so as to remove owners’ reservations regarding the raids under the Restriction of Employment of Children at Brick Kilns Ordinance 2016.

He also said that owners' demand to make the parents of the children also responsible for child labour was not justified as only owners were the sole authority for any employment at their units and thus solely responsible for any child labour at the kilns.

Mr Niazi, when contacted by Dawn, denied they had given any cooperation assurance to the government and ruled out any agreement on the issue until the government consented to their demands.

"We only said that the situation will be put before the kiln owners in the Tuesday meeting for a final decision."

Referring to registration of FIRs in child labour cases in English language, he alleged that the authorities were working under some foreign pressure without realizing the "ground realities" of the kiln industry.

As the workers reside at the kiln units along with families, he said, there they themselves involved their children in brick making to earn extra bucks.

But the so-called new law only penalized the kiln owners without taking the parents, the real beneficiary of child labour, as "co-accused", he lamented.

He feared that this "one-sided" action would generate black-mailing by the workers at the behest of some NGOs and claimed that it had already happened in some cases in which inspection teams raided kilns even at night time or during Sundays, when no education activities took place.

The government, he said, was also not accepting their demand that the one who comes to take custody of the so-called 32,000 children recovered from kilns should give the undertaking that the one will also be responsible if the child(ren) the one is taking along is again found involved in child labour.

Pointing out their benefit in banning child labour, Niazi claimed that children could not make as good bricks as elders, while it would also present a soft image of the owners as well as the country.

"But the government should take action keeping in view ground realities and by taking onboard all the stakeholders."

He threatened that in the present situation the owners were left with no option but to close their businesses.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241130>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 15th TO FEBRUARY 21st 2016
UP IN ARMS: HALF-BAKED REFORMS UNACCEPTABLE, SAYS KILN WORKERS
The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2016.

LAHORE: "Give us social security – it is our right. Ensure enforcement of minimum wage and we won't need incentives to send our children to school," Bhatta Mazdoor Union leaders said at a protest rally held at Lahore Press Club on Monday. The protest was called off after government officials assured the union leaders that they would address their concerns on priority.

Earlier, over 1,000 brick kiln workers from several districts had gathered in front of the Press Club at around 11am. They held banners and placards and shouted slogans demanding the implementation of laws granting them several rights in the Ordinance 2016 Prohibiting Child Labour at Brick Kilns.

The protesters said the government had removed children from brick kilns last month but told them that they would get books and their parents would get a stipend from April 1. They said this had created a sizeable dent in their income and they were struggling to make ends meet.

Safia Bibi, an elderly brick kiln worker from Sheikhpura, said her grandson was 14 years old and would be married in two years' time. "What class would he be admitted in? He's never been to school. Moreover, the nearest public school is an hour's walk from where we live. The government should start by opening up schools near brick kilns."

Shouts of Hamaray bachay dakhil karo (Admit our children to schools) and Paishgi khatam karo (End debt bondage) rang throughout the demonstration. The protesters waved red flags and shouted slogans against what they described as government's disdain for brick kiln workers.

Nazli Javed, the Awami Workers Party labour secretary, said women formed the backbone of the Bhatta Mazdoor Union.

Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has been supporting brick kiln owners from the start, Aslam Meraj of the Labour Qaumi Movement said. "No one supports the weak and powerless."

"They want the best possible health and education facilities for their children while our children are doomed to a life of slavery," he said.

Union leader Anwar Gujjar said the government must ensure enforcement of minimum wage. "When Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif visited the brick kiln at Jiya Bagga, he should have asked the kiln workers if they were being paid Rs962 for 1,000 bricks." He said in most cases, brick kiln workers received Rs500 per 1,000 bricks. "Half of that is deducted towards paishgi... what are we left with?"

Shehzad Masih, a brick kiln worker from Bahawalpur district, said he had four children and was paid Rs450 per 1,000 bricks. "It was hard to make ends meet as it is. Child labour has been banned at brick kilns but our children haven't been given books. We won't get the stipend promised for a few months and have reached breaking point."

The speakers claimed that Bhatta Mazdoor Union leaders in several districts had been harassed and some of them, including the union's leader in Nankana Sahib, had been arrested for planning the rally in Lahore the day Istanbul's mayor was scheduled to arrive.

They claimed that the police had sent back several buses carrying brick kiln workers who had arrived in Lahore from other districts.

Khalid Mehmood of the Labour Education Foundation congratulated the Bhatta Mazdoor Union for not bowing to government pressure. "The bricks that built Raiwind were made by these hands... keep up the exploitation and the same hands will tear down rulers' palaces."

Later, Labour Secretary Ali Sarfaraz, Punjab Labour Director Dawood Ahmad and Lahore Labour Director Hasnat Javed held talks with the protesters represented by Baba Latif, Aslam Meraj, Mehmood Ahmad Butt and Khalid Mehmood.

The government representatives agreed to add a clause to the ordinance waiving pending debt payments. They said criteria would soon be developed for awarding scholarships to school-going children and stipends to their families. They said the arrested union leaders would be released immediately and a campaign would be started against child labour.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1047580/up-in-arms-half-baked-reforms-unacceptable-says-kiln-workers/>

MINIMUM WAGES OF UNSKILLED WORKERS RAISED TO RS 13,000

Dawn, February 17th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The minimum monthly wage for unskilled workers in the federal capital has been increased from Rs8,000 to Rs13,000.

President Mamnoon Hussain approved on Tuesday a bill recently passed by the Senate to fix Rs13,000 as minimum wage for unskilled workers in Islamabad Capital Territory.

The provincial governments have already announced the increase in monthly salary to Rs13,000 of unskilled workers as after the 18th Amendment labour has become a provincial subject.

“President has approved a bill passed by the Senate regarding enhanced wages of unskilled workers,” said an official handout issued by the presidency.

The Senate passed the Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers (Amendment) Bill 2015 on Feb 10. The bill moved by Minister for Defence Production Rana Tanveer Hussain sought an amendment to the schedule of Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance 1969 and its application to the capital territory.

In June last year, the federal government raised the minimum wage for unskilled workers from Rs12,000 to Rs 13,000. It was followed by the provincial governments of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa notified the minimum wage as Rs12,000.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240046>

POLICY ‘AGAINST FARMERS’ MAY RESULT IN FOOD CRISIS, SAYS PPP
Dawn, February 17th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) fears there will be a severe food crisis in the country as a result of the government’s policy of ‘destroying farmers and growers economically’.

The party’s secretary-general and former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf expressed these fears during a meeting with a farmers’ delegation on Tuesday. “If the government does not pay heed to the problems of farmers, the country will soon face the worst kind of food crisis.”

The former prime minister said that the last PPP government had introduced food security through farmer-support programmes, because of which the country survived two severe floods during its tenure. “During the PPP government, two floods hit the country but the government not only provided financial assistance to farmers, it also managed to avoid a food crisis in the country,” he said.

He was of the view that farmers were not getting the reward for their hard work, while the prices of food grains and fertilisers were going up with each passing day.

Mr Ashraf said that workers, labourers and farmers always faced problems whenever the PML-N came into power. “It is highly unjustified that workers are being pushed to the wall,” he said.

He urged the government to pay due attention to the agriculture sector, adding that when his party comes into power again, it will provide justice to farmers by improving their conditions and resolving their problems.

The PPP submitted a call attention notice in the National Assembly Secretariat on the reported losses to the steel industry due to imports from neighbouring countries.

The notice was signed by PPP MNAs Dr Nafisa Shah, Dr Azra Fazal, Dr Shazia Sobia, Aijaz Jakhrani and Shazia Marri.

It states that: “We the undersigned would like to invite the attention of the federal minister for commerce to a matter of urgent public importance regarding the losses being suffered by the steel industry due to unchecked imports from neighbouring countries.

“This is a serious matter causing grave concern among the public and needs to be discussed on the floor of the house.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240048>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016

FOOTPRINTS: CHILDREN OF THE KILN

Dawn, February 2nd, 2016

XARI JALIL

IT is bitterly cold and a heavy curtain of smog hangs on the horizon, blurring the sight of the brick kiln chimneys in the distance. That the chimneys are not spewing smoke is not odd: the winter months are a time when bricks do not dry out and production is slow.

What is surprising now, though, are the several panaflex signs in both English and Urdu, proclaiming that no one under the age of 14 would be allowed to work at the kiln. It is also perhaps unusual that these signs have been put up by the owner of the kiln, Khalid Gujjar. But kiln owners like him constitute a handful, despite the recent drive by the government.

After the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Ordinance, 2016 was promulgated by the provincial government in mid-January, daily raids have been carried out by the various DCOs. Only a handful of owners have cooperated.

A short journey into the misty fields off Raiwind Road recently reveals a small settlement of labourers near the brick kilns. Gujjar owns three kilns, K1, 2 and 3, all near each other. The government has given students 10 days' relief from school because of the extreme cold — the relief was extended later — yet many children dressed in bright blue uniforms sit on a straw mat here, revising their lessons. On a normal day they would have been at a nearby government school, the Jodhu Deer High School. One of the older boys stands next to a whiteboard on which he has written out the Urdu alphabet neatly; the children repeat after him.

They are braving the cold in light sweaters and no socks. Many suffer from some kind of respiratory illness, and malnutrition is patently obvious from their skin condition. But beneath the yellowness of their eyes there is an excited restlessness; some smile mischievously, others look away shyly.

“We stamped their registration papers and organised their stationery and uniforms ourselves,” says Nazeer Ahmed, the accountant of kiln K1. He points towards a trolley meant for transporting completed bricks. “The boys all pile up in this, and the girls sit in rickshaws, and we take them to the school like this every day.”

In Punjab there are a total of 17,240 labourers residing in about 10,000 kilns. Government statistics show that the number of children between five and 14 years who are not attending school is 23,642, out of which the labour department has provided admission to 21,847 children in nearby schools.

“It is a wonderful initiative that the government has started for the children,” says one mother. “But another major issue we are facing is that of CNICs without which we cannot be registered as citizens of this country or get birth certificates for our children.”

“I must admit we were lazy in thinking about sending our kids to school,” says another mother. “But now that this is law we have to follow it.” Her son Shafaqat has been in school for three years now.

Another boy, Ali Haider, has reached the eighth grade and aspires to join the army. “I want to lead a life different from that of my parents,” he says.

But Munir Ahmed let his daughters study only for seven years and now they take care of the housework.

“The brick kiln owners create a lot of issues but the parents' attitude is very narrow-minded too,” says Syeda Ghulam Fatima, general secretary of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front. “Most of the kiln owners are influential people, and

cause issues for anyone trying to free these labourers from being bonded. We have often faced threats and even dangerous situations. But, hopefully, this time some differences may be resolved.”

Lahore DCO retired Captain Muhammad Usman emphasises that although there are daily raids on kilns, and many owners have been arrested due to violations, he has the ultimate support of the Punjab chief minister and the governor.

“We have been given clear directions to arrest anyone violating the ordinance,” he explains. “We called all the owners and warned them about any child found working at their premises.

Some cooperated, others refused to admit that there was any such issue. And now we have already raided 169 kilns in Lahore alone and arrested 40 people,” he says. “We will keep visiting these bhattas in order to make it a sustainable system, otherwise these raids will have been pointless — tomorrow they [the owners] will be bailed out and will continue as they were.”

Mr Usman says that most of the children employed in this industry were put to digging and collecting soil for the bricks.

During the raids, sometimes, they see children running for cover. But that means something is being hidden from the authorities, he says. “A criminal will always try to hide his crimes,” muses the DCO. “For me, there is little humanity in those who force little children to work in such hazardous conditions.

They suffer respiratory problems, skin problems and are seriously malnourished. How are they supposed to break the vicious cycle of bonded labour if they don’t even get a chance to study?”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1236951>

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March 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 28th TO APRIL 3rd 2016

FIVE LABOURERS KILLED IN ORAKZAI MINE BLAST

Dawn, April 3rd, 2016

Abdul Sami Paracha

KOHAT: At least five labourers were killed and six injured in a blast inside a coalmine in Orakzai Agency on Saturday.

Officials said seriously injured labourers were taken to the agency headquarters hospital and Peshawar.

The political office in Hangu confirmed the death toll and said most of the deceased and injured belonged to Swat. They were digging inside the main mine in Doli region of Korez tehsil of lower Orakzai Agency when a gas explosion took place.

The rescue operation continued from 9am till afternoon because no machinery was available in the area where mobile or landline phones also did not work.

Soon after the incident, rescuers pulled out two bodies while several others were stuck inside and their number was not known.

Miners were killed and injured by burns and they were pulled out by rescue workers and tribesmen.

Esar Ali, who had been at the site and returned to Hangu in the evening, told Dawn that minor blasts occurred every day in the mines, but there were no ambulances and medical support in case of an emergency.

About 20 days ago, 11 miners were killed at the same place when the mountain caved in after a blast and the mouth of the mine was closed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249674>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 21st TO MARCH 27th 2016 ILO TO GIVE QATAR A YEAR TO EASE FORCED LABOUR

Dawn, March 22nd, 2016

GENEVA: Qatar is making progress toward ending forced labour and improving conditions for migrant workers, but the test will be whether it enforces new legislation from December, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said on Monday.

The small, wealthy Gulf Arab state is building facilities to hold the 2022 soccer World Cup and has imported hundreds of thousands of construction workers for that purpose, drawing more attention to the conditions of its migrant labour community.

A high-level ILO team who visited the tiny Gulf state this month after persistent complaints from migrant workers said any decision to appoint an ILO commission of inquiry should be put off for a year to allow time to implement the reforms. The report and recommendations will be debated at the ILO's Governing Body on Tuesday, spokesman Hans von Rohland said.

A commission of inquiry is a rare sanction which the United Nations agency has imposed only about a dozen times since World War Two, against countries including Myanmar and Belarus.

In a report, the ILO mission said it "acknowledges the recent concrete measures taken by the government and other interlocutors" it met in Qatar to improve migrants' working conditions.

Yet "certain challenges remain and the implementation of the measures to overcome them are still under way," said the report by the team led by Japanese Ambassador Misako Kaji and including representatives of governments, employers and workers groups.

From December, a new Qatari law abolishes the "kafala" sponsorship system for migrant workers in favour of a labour contract system, removing all curbs on worker movements.

A worker will no longer be forced to continue a job if there is abuse or exploitation, although domestic workers are excluded from this provision, the report said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247151>

IN LAST THREE YEARS: \$190,000 ALLOCATED TO END CHILD LABOUR The Express Tribune, March 27th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Over the last three years, \$190,000 were allocated by foreign-funded projects to eliminate child labour from the country. A one-year project, "Strengthening Capacity of Constituents to Address Unacceptable Forms of Work focusing Child Labour, Bonded Labour and Informal Economy Workers" was devised for May 2015 to April 2016. The initiative was taken by the governments of Sweden and Denmark in Punjab and Balochistan with an amount of \$180,000, an official of ministry of overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073585/in-last-three-years-190000-allocated-to-end-child-labour/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 14th TO MARCH 20th 2016

90 PC OF DOMESTIC WORKERS HAVE NO LABOUR PROTECTION

Dawn, March 15th, 2016

GENEVA: Around 90 per cent of the world's 67 million domestic workers have no access to social security protection, with migrants left particularly vulnerable, the International Labour Organisation said on Monday.

Domestic work is largely "undervalued and unprotected," the UN labour agency said in a new report.

"When domestic workers become old or injured, they are fired, without a pension or adequate income support," said Isabel Ortiz, head of the ILO social protection department.

The report noted that women were by a wide margin the most affected — accounting for 80pc of all domestic workers globally.

In Italy, roughly 60pc of domestic workers are excluded from social security systems, the report said. The same was true for 30pc of domestic workers in France and Spain.

Not surprisingly, the largest gaps in protection for domestic workers were most severe in developing countries.

For migrants seeking domestic work, including those flocking to Europe amid the current massive movement of people towards the continent, labour protection is especially rare.

Certain countries which have legally mandated social security systems for domestic workers specifically exclude migrants from those programmes, the ILO said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245692>

CHILD LABOUR: THE ENGINE OF PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY

The Express Tribune, March 16th, 2016.

Saadan Noor

We are confronted with a great example of hypocrisy in the form of a child working in a tuck-shop of a business institute which teaches its students about the evils and immorality associated with promoting child labour.

This glaring reality cannot be ignored. It is a real-life example of a practice that is widely written about and taught, but which passes unnoticed in our everyday lives. We must notice it and then reflect on the authenticity of the moral fibre present inside every one of us.

We are all surrounded by such great marvels of deception and hypocrisies. We have doctors in our midst, yet they blatantly harm others around them when they aren't on duty or outside of their workplace. We also have lawyers in our midst, who will boldly strip off the rights of those they deem inferior to them just to be able to feel superior.

We have teachers in our midst, who will unreservedly fill our minds with biased information and prejudices, which have no affiliation with the truth or with education.

We have police officers in our midst, who are more likely to intimidate the innocent than make them feel secure. And we have the NGOs — the alleged preachers of humanity and equality, who are more concerned with amassing wealth than disseminating human rights.

We need only stop and reflect for a brief period of time and the picture will start becoming clearer in our minds. We have accustomed ourselves so much to the idea and practice of child labour that to us, it seems like it is a norm or part and parcel of our culture. We are thus standing so close to the tree that we are missing the view of the forest.

Until we come to terms with the contradictions, complexities and evil within ourselves, we are not likely to open our eyes to the injustice and hypocrisy that constantly surround us. Until we look into ourselves in introspection, we will continue to be entwined with this posturing and false virtue that fills the world. We are the ambassadors of empty-talk and preachers of hypocrisy.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1066416/child-labour-the-engine-of-pakistans-economy/>

CONSENSUS BUILDING: RS 5, 000 STIPENDS PROPOSED FOR KILN WORKERS' CHILDREN

The Express Tribune, March 18th, 2016.

Sarah Eleazar

Kiln owners support the provincial government's Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Ordinance 2016 save for a few reservations, Pakistan Brick Kilns Owners' Association (PBKOA) central president Shoaib Khan Niazi told The Express Tribune on Wednesday.

He said the government was not paying attention to the owners' demands because it was busy dealing with the European Union.

On child labour at kilns, Niazi said parents' should be responsible for ending it. "It's not our problem. We don't want children making bricks, they don't do a good job anyway. The bricks they make are of inferior quality," he said.

Niazi said many workers' lived at the kiln premises with their families. "They can get help from their children in meeting production targets assigned to them. How does the government expect us to prevent that?" he asked.

Niazi said workers were paid for the bricks produced by them.

He said hundreds of kiln owners across the province had been arrested on false charges.

On payment of minimum wage, he said the government had set the wage without doing its homework. He said it was not possible for owners across the province to pay a uniform minimum wage. "When the price of bricks in Rajanpur and Lahore is different, why should kiln owners in the two areas pay the same wage to their workers?" he asked. "The owner in Rajanpur will end up suffering heavy losses," he said.

He said the minimum wage in the province was higher than in all other provinces. "Kiln owners in Sindh are required to pay just Rs560 for 1,000 bricks whereas we have been told to pay Rs962 per 1,000 bricks. This unfair to us," he said.

The new law requires kiln owners to get their workers registered with the Social Security Department. Niazi objected to the requirement. "It makes sense for factory workers to be registered for social security.

The wages they're paid are far less than the value of the commodities they produce using the installed machinery," he said. "We employ hundreds of workers but they're not required to work with machinery. The value of commodities produced by kiln workers is far less than that of commodities produced by factory workers," he said.

Niazi suggested that if the government wanted kiln workers to send their children to schools it should increase the stipend paid for the purpose from Rs1,000 to Rs5,000. He said the stipend announced by the government would not make up for the wages lost by workers by removing their children from work.

All Pakistan Brick Kiln Workers' Association (APBKWA) chairman Mehmood Butt agreed that payment of Rs5,000 per child would be more realistic.

However, he dismissed other demands of the owners' associations. "Registration for social security is every worker's right," he said. He said cost of living and size of bricks produced were better criteria for determining a minimum wage. A uniform minimum wage was consistent with these requirements, he said.

Butt said the APBKWA had announced a protest demonstration for March 18 to press for its demand that the level of advance payments should be agreed upon in consultation with representatives of workers.

On Tuesday, a delegation of kiln owners had met with Labour and Human Resources Minister Raja Ashfaq Sarwar. Ahmad Raza Sarwar, the new secretary for the Labour and Human Resource Department, was also present.

A press statement issued after the meeting said that Sarwar had told the owners that the government was aware of their grievances over the child labour ordinance.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1067785/consensus-building-rs5000-stipends-proposed-for-kiln-workers-children/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 7th TO MARCH 13th 2016 FARM WOMEN WORKERS HOLD RALLY FOR WAGE LAW

Dawn, March 8th, 2016

HYDERABAD: A rally was taken out by women agriculture workers hailing from different villages of Matiari and other districts to mark International Women Day.

They demanded a "pledge for parity" defined by the UN theme for this year regarding the day.

They marched outside the local press club on Monday ahead of the International Women Day to be observed on March 8. The rally was organised by the Sindh Community Foundation (SCF) and attended by women workers, including peasants, mostly cotton pickers.

Activists of civil society organisations who attended the rally were Punhal Sario of the Sindh Hari Porhyat Council (SHPC), Javed Hussain of the Sindh Community Foundation, Dr Ashothama Lohana of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Beena of Society for Protection of Rights of the Child (SPARC), Fareeda Chana of the Green Works Foundation and others.

The participants demanded pro-women legislation for agriculture workers with recognition of informal labour in the form of policy to protect their social safety net, increase in their wages and for their social and economic protection.

Pakistan's most important industrial and export sector, textile and clothing industry depended on those women who were being deprived of their wages. Though they worked hard to collect cotton in sweltering heat, they said.

"Cotton is one of the major cash crops of Sindh and women have more to say about their wages. Because they cannot receive suitable wages to bankroll their families at the time when price rises and they have to face problems," Javed Hussain Sozhalai of the Sindh Community Foundation (SCF) said.

He said the SCF was a group for women workers in Matiari district. Although these women were responsible for the industry's growth, they remained poor and were exploited as their wages were meagre, he said.

Because women had weak bargaining power, they suffered from hazardous working environment that involved excessive use of poisonous pesticides, he added. He pointed out that there were reports about sexual harassment faced by women cotton pickers. These reports mostly went unreported due to certain reasons, mainly because of their poverty.

Meanwhile, women participants, including women cotton pickers Hoor from the village of Sukio Mirjat, Farzana from the village of Peer, Jamal Dahri and Mariam from the village of Peer Bux Kaka narrated their plights and issues about wages, health, children and future of their work. They said there should be a legislation to protect their rights. Women cotton pickers earn Rs100-Rs 200 for the work from dawn to dusk.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244186>

TEVTA REGULARISES OVER 4,000 EMPLOYEES

Business Recorder, March 12, 2016

LAHORE: The Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority has regularised its employees and more than 4,000 of them, including teaching and non-teaching staff working at 374 institutes, are expected to take benefit from this regularisation.

All employees will get pension and provident fund and other facilities after their retirement from service.

The announcement came from Provincial Minister for Industries Chaudhry Muhammad Shafiq addressing a press conference at the authority's secretariat on Friday.

Authority Chairperson Irfan Qaiser Sheikh, Chief Operating Officer Jawad Ahmed Qureshi and his top management were also present.

Minister Shafiq said, "It is top priority of the chief minister to provide more benefits to its employees working in the province. The Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority is one of the leading organisations of the Punjab government which can deliver for the prosperity of the youth. We, at present under the dynamic leadership of its Chairperson Irfan Qaiser Sheikh, are trying to train 541,000 youth till 2018 under skill-development programme."

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/12/9-page/740166-news.html>

PROTECTIVE GEAR FOR ORANGE LINE WORKERS A MUST

Dawn, March 13th, 2016

LAHORE: Many casualties during construction work of the Orange Line project has forced the project supervisors and executors to disallow performing work by any worker without adequate safety measures.

Senior officials, who are supposed to monitor the construction phase and get it implemented in line with the quality standards amid safety of the workers according to measures as mentioned in the Environment Impact Assessment of the scheme, are regularly visiting the construction sites these days after many workers lost their lives and some suffered serious injuries.

"No worker will be allowed to be at the project site without adopting safety measures," Nespak Managing Director Amjad A. Khan directed officials of various contract and consulting firms.

He emphasised the need for strengthening protection sheets and barriers along the project route. Recognising safety hazards as the most important element in preventing accidents, he stressed and urged those in charge to enforce the safety regulations and be prepared to halt unsafe actions. "Workers need to wear safety equipment and report unsafe conditions to their seniors".

Mr Khan took briefings from the in-charges of various portions of the project regarding the quality and speed of construction over the entire length of 27.1km route. During discussions safety and health measures being adopted during the execution of this project were also discussed.

He instructed the relevant staff of Nespak to be more vigilant in performing construction supervision during night and rainy season. He pledged hefty reward for the staff of Nespak on successful and timely completion of the project.

Seven labourers have died during construction work at various sites. This shows poor monitoring of the construction activity, particularly health and safety measures, for workers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245343/protective-gear-for-orange-line-workers-a-must>

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April 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016

DENGUE DRIVE AT RISK: SACKED WORKERS DEMAND PAYMENT OF SALARIES

The Express Tribune, April 26th, 2016.

RAWALPINDI: A large number of daily wagers including women, hired by the district government for its anti-dengue drive, carried out a protest rally against non-payment of salaries and sacking of trained workers, on Monday.

Over 100 daily wagers including women staged a protest demonstration and sit-in outside the office of the district coordination officer (DCO) demanding payment of salaries for the last eight months.

Some of the women protestors sat under the hot sun carrying toddlers in their laps. The protestors were chanting slogans against the DCO, the executive district officer (EDO) health, the deputy district officer health and other high ups of the district government.

They were holding placards and banners with anti-government slogans written on them. "Reinstate the trained anti-dengue workers and pay their salaries for the past eight months," the protestors demanded.

They asked the Punjab government not to deny them their livelihood. Talking to media persons, a senior patrol, Mumraiz said that the government had not paid them salaries, which was a violation of their contract. He added that the sacking of anti-dengue workers from service was injustice. "We have been hired with surety of getting permanent jobs after some time but the government cheated us by showing us the door after eight months of work," Mumraiz said.

The health worker said that the workers would boycott the ongoing anti-dengue drive. Another protester Sabeeqa Javed told media persons that the women workers were forced to protest because their supervisors had turned a blind eye towards their problems.

She said that the women started working for the anti-dengue drive six months ago and had yet to receive any payment from the Punjab government.

Another woman worker said that the government instead of clearing their dues had cancelled their contracts that too without paying the wages. She said that she took the job to support her family.

The worker said that it was not possible to work without a salary. "A team of two women workers had to visit 40 to 60 houses every day to monitor the situation of dengue larva and they will have to spend money from their own pockets," another protester said.

The DDO, Dr Amir Sheikh, during an interaction with media persons said that the contract of the daily wagers had ended after 79 days and they were sent home by the district government.

He said that the government would float 200 new vacancies and daily wagers would be given preference in the recruitment.

The health official claimed that the protest by the daily wagers was baseless as the government had transferred their salaries to their bank accounts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1091605/dengue-drive-at-risk-sacked-workers-demand-payment-of-salaries/>

AT RISK: INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY NO CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

The Express Tribune, May 1st, 2016.

Shazia Mehboob

RAWALPINDI: Dust-coated faces of hundreds of labourers busy crafting marble pieces at workshops in Rawalpindi criticize government labour sector reforms and International Labour Organisation assertions of descent work environment on International Labour Day.

Labourers work at these workshops, spread over both sides of a road in Rawalpindi's Westridge area, is known as the glass factory area. They use mere handkerchiefs to cover their mouths from dust particles while crafting marble, and do not have protection and safety equipment recommended by the ILO. The only safety equipment they use is a pair of long shoes.

There is no concept of uniforms and safety equipment for workers in this profession. Labourers at these workshops are themselves responsible to clean their equipment, which they do just once a week. There is also no concept of using safety gloves near chemicals and cutting equipment. In addition, they eat in these contaminated surroundings, often from vendors set up around this polluted area.

The repercussion of this hazardous environment has become visible in term of their declining health. Mubarak Ali*, 30, is one such worker. Ali has been hospitalised twice due to asthma-related problems since joining one of these workshops some 13 years ago. "I wasn't an asthmatic patient before," Ali said.

He is considered a 'skilled worker', yet his salary is Rs12,000 per month, equal to the minimum wage for unskilled labour. Ali said his asthma treatment is a major drain on his income, and often has to borrow money from his brother and relatives to make ends meet. Ali said he has no other option but to continue working in this hazardous environment.

Conditions of unskilled workers is worse, as they are often paid Rs6,000 a month. Imtiaz*, a 60-year-old tea boy, is among these workers.

"Our workers are provided with all necessary safety equipment, but they don't use them," said All Pakistan Marble Industry Association Zonal Committee Secretary Muhammad Arif. He said whenever they advise workers to wear masks, they refuse claiming it causes them an inconvenience while working.

He said the marble industry is already paying a heavy amount in terms of taxes, as well as educating labourers about their safety. He said making separate arrangements to make labourers aware is not possible for them. He added that a skilled worker's package is Rs25,000 to Rs30,000 a month, in addition to overtime. He also said unskilled workers should be paid a stipulated range of Rs12,000 to Rs15,000 a month.

He said all labourers are registered with the Punjab Social Security Health Management Company, and in case of any health-related problems they are entitled to free treatment.

According to the LJO, a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease every 15 seconds. Around 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents every day, and more than 2.3 million a year. The Factories Act, 1934, entails health and safety standards such as precautions against dangerous fumes, disposal of wastes, ventilation, clean drinking water, latrines, precautions against contagious or infectious disease, compulsory vaccination and inoculation, canteens and welfare officers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094798/at-risk-international-workers-day-no-cause-for-celebration/>

LABOUR WELFARE VITAL FOR GROWTH, SAYS SHAHBAZ

The Express Tribune, May 1st, 2016.

LAHORE: "Labourers contribute the most to the national economy. Their prosperity and empowerment is vital for achieving the development goals," Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said on Saturday.

"Islam has declared labourers God's favourites," the chief minister said in a message in connection with International Labour Day.

Shairf said that on Labour Day, there was need to renew the pledge that all-out support would be extended for the welfare of labourers and protection of their rights. He said Pakistan's workforce had the potential to achieve the targets of development. "Our workforce is the backbone of national economy... that is why the provincial government is committed to their well-being," the chief minister said.

He said several schemes had been launched to provide health, housing and education facilities to labourers. "Establishment of quality educational institutions for labourers' children, social security hospitals and labour colonies is the proof of our labour-friendly policies," Sharif said.

Sharif said the Khidmat Card programme was aimed at providing financial assistance to the disabled. More than 65,000 disabled people had been issued Khidmat Cards, he said.

The chief minister was speaking to Social Welfare and Baitul Maal Minister Syed Haroon Sultan Bukhari who called on him.

Shairf said more than 150,000 bright students faced with financial constraints had benefitted from the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund. He said that more than 1.5 million deserving children were being given education through the Punjab Education Foundation. He said free boarding and quality education were being given to deserving students at Daanish Schools.

Sharif said the youth were being offered interest-free loans to help them start their own businesses. He said those agitating did not want the common man to flourish.

"They are creating hurdles in the way of welfare programmes launched by the government... but people are aware of such designs and they will reject the agitation," the chief minister said.

Sharif said getting loans written off [without merit] was a serious crime. "Those who get their loans waived should be dealt with strictly," he said during a meeting with senior journalists, at Governor's House on Saturday.

The chief minister said the State Bank of Pakistan had a list of those who had had their loans waived. "The names of those who have usurped taxpayers' money should be made public. [Some of] the families that have had their loans written off also own off-shore companies," he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094822/labour-day-labour-welfare-vital-for-growth-says-shahbaz/>

MAY LABOUR HAVE ITS DAY

May Day celebrations in Pakistan have been reduced, over the years, to no more than an annual ritual without the zeal and enthusiasm that had been the hallmark of the event in the recent past.

Of course, rallies are staged by worker unions on the day and a number of conferences and seminars are also held not only to acknowledge the contribution of labour in the development of our country, but also to enlighten people about the problems being faced by them and their solutions.

But that is that. The next day, it is back to the same old routine. The fate of labour in our country seems to have been handed over to the vagaries of the market. It is now the principle of supply and demand that is what is dictating our labour market currently. As such labour is often deprived of even minimum basic pay and minimum health cover and neither do they get enough to send their children to school.

A vast majority of labourers and daily-wage workers, including those who serve as domestic help, remain outside the field of labour laws, which means that workers have no job security, no medical coverage, no pension or provident fund, no limit on working hours and are paid no overtime. Besides, hundreds and thousands of children are also found either doing jobs meant for adults or are loitering on the streets begging.

The menace of child labour has consigned a large portion of our future generation to a perpetual life below the poverty line. The power of labour legislation was devolved to the provinces under the 18th Amendment but the job that was to have been completed by June 2011, remains incomplete.

Two of the money-generating legislations, the Companies Profits (Workers Participation) Act of 1968 and the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act of 1976 remain with the centre, which enables Islamabad to retain the funds generated under these legislations. It would be in the fitness of things as we celebrate May Day today, for the federal government to devolve these laws and also transfer these funds to the provinces in the interest of our workers..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094767/may-labour-have-its-day/>

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY: SPEAKERS FOR PROVIDING INSURANCE COVER TO WOMEN AGRICULTURE WORKERS

Business Recorder, May1, 2016

Speakers paid tribute to the women agriculture workers, especially cotton pickers on the occasion of the International Labour Day and demanded the government to ensure protection of rights of women workers in Sindh. They discussed violation of minimum wages and lack of social security, saying these women contributed a lot in national economy but in return they are facing difficulties to run domestic affairs.

They were speaking at Women Convention, organized by Sindh Community foundation (SCF), which attracted a large number of community women, growers, researchers, agriculture scientists, human rights activists.

Nawab Zubair Talpur, leader of newly formed Sindh Growers Alliance accused the PPP-led government, which in his understanding is exploiting agriculturists, both growers and workers. He realised the fact that when landlords receive 50-percent rate of cotton per mound, how landlords can pay proper wages to the cotton picker women.

Suleman G Abro, President Sindh Agriculture, Forest, Workers Coordinating Organisation (SAFWCO) said it is the responsibility of government to design policies for development of agriculture and simultaneously for the workers, associated to this main sector.

He said there are old laws and policies formed by British era long ago and being implemented present time. Abro proposed to design alternate agriculture policy draft with covering all issues related to workers and development and disseminate it to legislators, so they may take up the matter at assembly forums.

Professor M Ismail Kumbhar of Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam said it is not only the issue of wages; the entire social system needs to understand. He said in the name of green revolution, pesticides were given free of cost to farmers and now this is main hurdle and health risk for peasant workers.

He suggested sensitizing the government to fix at least Rs 1000 per mound for cotton pickers. Nadeem Shah Jamot of Sindh Abadgar Board said 80 percent contribution in agriculture sector comes from women and they must deserve proper wages. He said Rs 400 mound wages is fixed by government for cotton pickers and landlords have to pay these wages as per the law.

He suggested that these women may be given trainings for developing kitchen gardening at domestic level so they may produce safe vegetable for their own consumption and marketing to earn income. He said not only haris but landlords themselves are facing problems, because there is no policy for cotton price.

Punhal Sario of Sindhi Hari Porhiat Council pointed out that despite the fact the government has fixed Rs 400 per mound as wages, the cotton pickers get only Rs 180-280 mound in Matiari district. Dr Shahnawaz Dall said now when heat wave threats, these workers face problems of heat stroke. To avoid this threat, he said these women should be made aware about these issues and stays safe from heat.

Manzoor Thahim, a renowned writer pointed out that emerging corporate sector in agriculture forcing peasant workers to commit suicide because there is no work left for these local workers. Machinery under corporate sector forces the traditional workers to stay idle at home without job and in this situation there is no option other than committing suicide. Shabana, a cotton picking woman from village Jamal Dahri said they travel three-four kilometre distance daily to work but in return they are deprived of their wages. In some cases, she said pregnant women travel this distance and face health problems. They always take risk of lives to run their families.

Razzak Umrani of HANDS paid tribute to the world workers, who struggled to create awareness among the labourers to fight for their wages and rights. He said on the occasion of first May Day, this issue should be raised to stop pesticides, which are banned in the world.

Dr Ashothama of HRCF Sindh taskforce said now is the time to link workers struggle in Sindh to the workers of entire country, as the issues are the same. Mustafa Baloch, SPO regional head Hyderabad, Mashooq Memon of Labour department, peasant woman Shamim Kaka, Veteran hari leader Dada Ali Bakhsh also spoke on the occasion.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/41634/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 18th TO APRIL 24th 2016

GERMAN FIRM ACCEPTS ILO MEDIATION ON LIFELONG COMPENSATION FOR HEIRS OF BALDIA FIRE VICTIMS

Dawn, April 18th, 2016

SAHER BALOCH

KARACHI: The International Labour Organisation has agreed to intervene and help sort out the long-term compensation agreement between heirs of Baldia Town factory fire victims and the German brand KIK, which agreed and accepted the ILO as a mediator in the compensation process, it emerged on Sunday.

The intervention is a big milestone for the rights group and counsel in the case, as it comes two years after a stand-off persisted between the KIK and rights activists in which the former backed off after initially agreeing to pay the long-term compensation owed to the families of the victims.

Confirming the development, counsel for the Baldia Town factory fire victims, Advocate Faisal Siddiqi, said that the agreement came after he, with the rights group, Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Research (Piler), pursued the German government in sorting out the matter of compensation with the KIK.

Explaining the process, Advocate Siddiqi said: “It was decided between the German government, our team and the brand recently that the negotiations must go on. The ILO is one organisation on which both the brand and our team agreed upon. They [ILO] will spearhead the negotiation and calculate the amount of compensation to be given to each member of a victim’s family.”

The ILO agreed to be part of the long-term compensation and communicated their decision through its Karachi office, he added.

The German brand, KIK, bought 90 per cent of its products from the Ali Enterprises in Baldia Town until the 2012 blaze that killed 260 workers. Soon after the fire, an agreement was reached between Advocate Siddiqi and the management of the KIK in the presence of representatives from Piler.

According to Advocate Siddiqi, it was decided and agreed upon by the management of the brand that the it would pay the compensation to the families of labourers who died in the fire. A memorandum of understanding was signed after the meeting that took place in 2013.

“The agreement was to be carried out in three phases,” said Advocate Siddiqi. “The management of the brand had to ensure immediate relief to the families; to ensure payment of compensation to the families on the long-term basis; and to strengthen labour rights in Pakistan through collaborative efforts between KIK and labour organisations,” he added.

The first phase was completed after the KIK issued a cheque for \$1 million and the amount was eventually distributed among the families through a judicial commission constituted by the Sindh High Court. But soon after, the management at KIK distanced itself from the second phase of the agreement in which long-term compensation was to be disbursed. When the counsel reminded the management about the agreement in a meeting that took place in 2014, they refused to acknowledge their commitment.

Explaining the concept of compensation on a long-term basis, Advocate Siddiqi added, “A long-term compensation basically means that since a labourer working at the factory was killed during the fire, one of his heirs will receive a stipulated amount of money or compensation till the age of retirement.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1252758/german-firm-accepts-ilo-mediation-on-lifelong-compensation-for-heirs-of-baldia-fire-victims>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 11th TO APRIL 17th 2016

MAKERS OF THAR SHAWLS STRUGGLING FOR SUSTENANCE

The Express Tribune, April 14th, 2016

Zubair Ashraf

MITHI: Yet another death has brought Tharparkar to the limelight once again. This time it is the demise of a livelihood.

The hand-made shawls from the desert area used to be in high demand in both domestic and international markets, providing a skilled occupation to the residents of Tharparkar who were mostly engaged in cattle rearing. The demand for these shawls has now declined, bringing down with it this unique skill set of the Tharis.

“You would find one or more than one khadi [manual weaving loom] in each household in almost every village in Thar,” recalled 30-year-old Vishan, who inherited this shawl-making profession from his father.

Khadi is a five- to six-feet-long machine made of wood. It is fitted with needles to hold the thread and levers to let the handler operate and control the interlacing. “My father learned this art from my grandfather, who learned it from my great grandfather,” he explained. “I don’t know if my great grandfather was taught by his father or not,” he chuckled, adding that it is an occupation going far back into multiple generations.

The moustached Vishan, who looks much younger than his actual age, admitted the profession gained so much popularity in Thar back in the day since it required low investment and yielded high profits. A large number of people were attracted to it but Vishan doubted the trend will continue.

“The business has not remained as lucrative as it was in the past,” he regretted. “Since, the industrial units have taken over and are producing such products en masse, the prices have systematically gone down,” he explained.

It is hard for a worker to earn enough profit from this business to be able to make both ends meet, Vishan pointed out, adding that the workers are drifting away from this profession to others, such as working on construction sites in big cities. “There they can easily earn Rs400 to Rs600 a day to keep their kitchens running,” he said. “On the other hand, a shawl maker would earn only Rs250 to Rs300 a day on average.”

The shawl-making profession may be fading away in Tharparkar but there are still a few villages that have installed khadis.

Tabo Meghwar, a relatively well-maintained village located 50 kilometres away from Mithi, is one such area. There is deafening silence in the village save the screams of peacocks and the unique sound that a khadi makes, similar to the hammering of a wood. There are around 140 houses in this village and every second house has one or more khadi.

“This is the only art and occupation that our family has been engaged in for generations. In our family system, a father would teach his children this operation so they become his helping hands,” said Vishan, father of three. “But I don’t want my kids to learn it,” he admitted. Accepting that shawl-making is his family’s legacy, Vishan knows the profession does not promise a good future for his children.

Apart from managing the household, the women of Tabo Meghwar contribute to the family income by making rillis [patchwork quilts] during their free time. The rillis of Thar are unique as the women add cut-outs of camels and peacocks on them.

Rajo, an elderly woman, says that it takes around two to three months to complete one piece. “We do this work when we are done with all the house chores. That is why it takes months to complete,” she said.

The rates of these comforters vary from piece to piece. Each is different from the other. Some buyers prefer the art on these comforters while some use it to keep warm during winters. No matter what the use, the result is the same – these makers of rillis and shawls do not get enough in return. The villagers demanded the government take an interest in their problems and help them sustain the dying profession.

“Inflation and other problems are forcing Thari labourers to switch to other jobs that they don’t know anything about,” Vishan pointed out. “If the government puts our occupation matter on its agenda, the situation can improve. All we need is training to operate modern weaving machines, investments to buy them and easy access to market to sell our products,” he suggested.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1084006/spinning-to-no-returns-makers-of-thar-shawls-struggling-for-sustenance/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016
WHEN THE LAW PROMOTES SLAVERY
Dawn, April 7th, 2016

I.A. REHMAN

THE Punjab bill on the prohibition of child labour in brick kilns is a double-edged weapon. Ostensibly, the bill is designed to end the evil of child labour in a fairly large sector, but it also aims to revive the curse of peshgi (an advance against wages), and thus legitimises bonded labour.

The bill provides for regulation of employment in brick kilns through a written contract (an appointment letter) between the worker and the employer, containing the terms of employment and the wages that have been promised.

In a country where owners of brick kilns have stubbornly resisted the registration of their trade, and rarely disclosed the exact number of employees working for them, a new contract system can only be welcomed.

But other than this progressive step, the bill has an utterly retrogressive provision. The contract will include the amount of peshgi taken by the worker and the payback schedule. The way that peshgi registers are maintained, and debt arbitrarily inflated, is well known. Who will guarantee that employers do not include huge amounts of peshgis into their contracts?

The bill allows employers to give peshgi to workers, and also fixes a limit on the advance amount — equal to six times a worker's wages for one wage period. It has been argued that the peshgi amount can go up to six figures.

Besides difficulties in eliminating the exploitation of workers through account tampering, the provision destroys the foundation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, and the historic Supreme Court decision in 1988 which discontinued peshgi.

On the basis of this verdict the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1992 declared: "No person shall make any advance under, or in pursuance of the bonded labour system, or compel any person to render any bonded labour or other form of forced labour."

The Supreme Court struck down peshgi after thorough research by experts and leading lawyers. The court had also based its verdict on an understanding between the petitioners (bonded workers) and employers.

Throughout the two decades in which the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act has been on the statute books (although it has never been sincerely enforced), employers have tried to subvert it through a variety of stratagems.

The act has survived a challenge in the Shariat Court, and another in the Sindh High Court. It was also once denounced as a measure aimed at ruining Sindh's agricultural economy. That this law — which overrides all other laws — would be undone under the cloak of curbing child labour, cannot be expected from any government that has the slightest respect for workers' rights and their dignity.

It is a sad turn of events for bonded workers that Punjab has decided to legalise a slavery-like practice in utter violation of the Constitution (Article 11).

Concerning the part of the bill related to child labour, there are no two opinions on the employment of children in brick kilns; it is one of the worst forms of exploitation. These children are obliged to start work at a very tender age, sometimes as young as four years. The long hours of work, mostly under a blazing sun, adversely affect their physical and mental growth.

The environment in which such children see many people (including their parents) — subjected to violence, deceit and all kinds of humiliation — destroys all possibility of their development into normal adults, and cultivating values of personal freedoms and dignity.

Thus, the initiative to eliminate child labour in brick kilns deserves to be supported — it is sound in principle. However, the success of the project will obviously depend less on the nature of the scheme, and more on the strategy of its implementation.

Has the government taken note of the following two factors that are likely to impede implementation of the project? First, how will parents be persuaded to forego their children's contributions to family earnings, or be compensated for the shortfall caused by their children's withdrawal from family labour?

Secondly, children will continue to live near brick kilns and remain exposed to these corrupt and exploitative environments, with little protection against employment after school hours. Since the exploitation of child and adult workers is inextricably linked with their dependence for housing provided by employers, a long-term policy to meet the housing needs of brick kiln workers has to be integral to any plan to end exploitation in this sector.

The bill bars the employment of children in brick kilns. If a child above the age of five is found at a brick kiln during school timings he shall be “deemed to have been employed, engaged or permitted to work at the brick kiln”.

Violations are punishable with sealing of the brick kiln, simple imprisonment for seven days to six months, and a fine of Rs50,000 to Rs500,000. A key role has been assigned to the inspector, who will monitor implementation of the law, and on whose report all prosecutions will begin.

Under the proposed law ‘child’ means a “person who has not completed the fourteenth year of age”. This is contrary to global trends of raising the child age limit to eighteen, in keeping with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Besides, an employer is referred to as ‘occupier’ in the bill, which makes no sense at all. Since the law deals with the employment of labour, the word ‘occupier’ should be replaced with ‘employer’. Whether the proposed law ensures that all children relieved of labour in brick kilns will in fact attend school is another challenge.

The best thing that the Punjab government can do is to restrict the bill to child labour, drop the effort to restore peshgi, and rewrite the scheme for contracts between workers and brick kiln owners.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250463>

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May 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 23rd TO MAY 29th 2016

PAKISTAN RAILWAYS RESTRUCTURING: ADB SET TO APPROVE \$300M BUDGETARY SUPPORT LOAN

The Express Tribune, May 20th, 2016

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is set to approve \$300 million budgetary support loan for Pakistan in the name of public sector reforms amid the country’s flagging commitment to privatise the loss-making entities.

The Board of Directors of the Manila-based lending agency will take up Pakistan’s request for \$300 million loan next month that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is eager to receive before June 30, said sources in the Finance Ministry. As is the case with all budgetary support loans that focused on some Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs), this time Pakistan Railways will be at the centre of new loan package and it is required to take six policy actions including retrenchment of its workforce, according to the official documents.

The \$300 million loan will be the first tranche of \$600 million loan that the ADB will give in the name of restructuring the PSEs during the next two years.

“Privatisation is not the only solution, as the performance of the public sector enterprises can be improved by ensuring financial transparency and implementing good corporate governance,” said Werner Liepach, the Country Director of the ADB while talking to The Express Tribune.

Liepach said that the \$300 million reform programme would support the efforts of the government to improve performance of public sector enterprises.

Initially the size of the loan was \$150 million that has been increased on the request of Pakistan due to its growing debt obligations, said the sources.

The programme will also help in identifying and reducing the contingent liabilities of the public sector enterprises, as the government is accused of concealing the actual liabilities, said the sources in the Finance Ministry.

Under the loan conditions, the government will be bound to allocate resources equivalent to about 0.4% of GDP for the development expenditures of the PSEs.

The ADB has noted that in current fiscal year 65% of federal bailouts were consumed in meeting current expenses, severely limiting critical capital development expenditures to improve their efficiency.

“Power distribution companies, Pakistan Steel Mills and Pakistan International Airlines need substantial upfront reforms and investment as well as efficient management of stakeholder interests before privatisation can materialise,” according to the programme documents.

Pakistan Railways

Pakistan Railways is not on the list of privatisation but requires alternative approaches for improving efficiency, service delivery and asset management as well as reducing contingent liabilities.

The ADB noted that the Railways liabilities have piled up due to maintaining non-core operations, large unfunded pension liabilities, poor revenue generation and poor financial management and internal controls. Liepach said that the ADB was quite pleased with the performance of the Railways in recent years and was willing to invest money for further improvements.

The federal government owns 191 PSEs having an asset base of Rs9.4 trillion in fiscal year 2013-14 and employing more than 420,000 workers.

The Pakistan Railways employees’ strength is 78,000. Pakistan Railways has been picked for retrenching the workforce and it is required to submit a workforce rationalisation plan by next month, according to the documents. The Railways would also digitise land asset database.

The ADB has cautioned that the success of the \$300 million reform programme hinges on public awareness of the reform process and benefits and strong government commitment and adequate support from all the stakeholders.

The ADB is eyeing 20% increase in profits of the PSEs and the government’s dividend incomes in next two years as a result of its \$300 million investment, which seems an uphill task.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1106682/pakistan-railways-restructuring-adb-set-approve-300m-budgetary-support-loan/>

LABOUR RIGHTS: PAKISTAN ORGANISES WAGE CONFERENCE

The Express Tribune, May 26th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, in close collaboration with the Netherlands and Germany’s governments, organised the Asian Living Wage Conference (ALWC) that started yesterday in Islamabad.

More than 200 guests, including government officials, manufacturers, members of trade associations and trade unions from 20 countries are scheduled to attend the two-day conference to discuss strategies to improve wage levels.

Its main objective is to highlight the need for social dialogue in a tripartite 'plus' setting in order to realise living wages, said a press statement issued here on Wednesday. "We can have hundreds of legislations and standards, but it will never be enough," said Sri Lankan State Minister of Labour and Trade Union Relations Ravindra Samaraweera.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1110613/labour-rights-pakistan-organises-wage-conference/>

JUDGE IRKED BY GOVT INDECISION OVER BALDIA JIT FINDINGS

Dawn, May 29th, 2016

Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: Irked by the failure of the authorities concerned to decide the fate of the Baldia Town factory fire case, a sessions court on Saturday asked police authorities whether they were filing a new FIR as recommended by the report of a joint investigation team.

Additional District and Sessions Judge (west) Maqbool Ahmed Memon ordered the police to come up on July 16 with a proper reply whether the authorities were lodging a new FIR or filing a supplementary charge-sheet. The case will be tried by an antiterrorism court if the authorities decided to lodge a new FIR under the antiterrorism law.

Initially, the police had charge-sheeted the owner of the ill-fated industrial unit Abdul Aziz Bhaila, his two sons — Arshad Bhaila and Shahid Bhaila — a general manager and some gatekeepers in the tragic incident. On a directive of a magistrate, the then managing director of SITE Ltd, Abdul Rasheed Solangi, director-labour Zahid Gulzar Shaikh, additional controller-civil defence Ghulam Akbar and chief inspector-electrical Amjad Ali were also named in the case for their alleged negligence.

However, the reinvestigation of the case was ordered in March 2015 by a JIT after the case took a dramatic turn when a 2013 JIT report was submitted in the Sindh High Court in February 2015 by Rangers, revealing that the factory was set on fire after its owners failed to pay protection money.

On Feb 13, this year police informed the court that the JIT had completed its report and it was being sent to the provincial home department for approval.

On March 5, the investigation officer, SP Sajid Sadozai, through a progress report informed the court that the factory fire was a planned terrorist activity and the JIT recommended that a new case be lodged under the antiterrorism law against former chief of the MQM's Karachi Tanzeemi Committee Hammad Siddiqui, Abdul Rehman alias Bhola, Zubair, Ali Hasan, Umar Hassan, Abdul Sattar, Iqbal Adeeb Khanum and four unidentified persons.

Since then, the police have not informed the court about the fate of the case. It has submitted a copy of the JIT report in court and not the original document.

When the case came up for hearing on Saturday, the court was informed that the JIT report was still with the home department for further directions.

The judge deplored that the home department and the police were exhibiting a non-serious attitude towards the much-delayed trial of the case. The court also returned a copy of the JIT report to police and said it did not ask for the JIT report but a supplementary investigation report.

Over 250 workers were killed in a devastating fire that engulfed a multi-storey garment factory in Baldia Town in September 2012.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 16TH TO MAY 22 ND 2016
FIVE LABOURERS DIE AFTER INHALING TOXIC GASES IN KORANGI FACTORY
Dawn, May 16th, 2016

Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: Five labourers, including two brothers, working in a small industrial unit died after they inhaled toxic fumes while cleaning an underground tank that contained some chemical waste in the Korangi Industrial Area on Sunday.

Witnesses and police said that the owner of the industrial unity — a polythene bag manufacturing factory — in Korangi's Sector 24 called 11 workers on Sunday (weekly holiday) to get cleaned the tank where chemical waste was being dumped.

A factory worker, Alam, said that none of the labourers were given safety masks and rubber shoes to perform the task.

Landhi SP Afnan Amin told Dawn that initially three labourers descended into the tank to clean it, but they became unconscious. Two more workers went down to rescue them but they also became unconscious.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, other workers pulled them out and rushed them to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, where they all died before any medical aid could be provided to them, the SP added.

Korangi Industrial Area SHO Abdul Rasool Siyal identified the victims as Abdul Raheem, his brother Irfan, Mairaj, Arbaz and Shakeel.

“We have received five bodies from a factory,” said Dr Seemin Jamali, head of the JPMC's emergency department. She said the families did not allow doctors to carry out a post-mortem examination. However, initial examinations suggested that the workers died from inhaling some toxic gases, probably carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide or methane, in the industrial unit's tank, she added.

The area SHO said that the factory owner used to get the tank cleaned from his workers every month when it was filled with waste.

Moving scenes were witnessed outside the factory where victims' relatives gathered after getting information about the death of their near and dear ones.

The two brothers had recently come here from Peshawar in search of livelihood and were staying at his elder brother's home in Korangi, who is also working in the same factory.

The mother of victim Abdul Raheem told the media that her son had been working in the factory for the past eight months. He had recently applied for his computerised national identity card, which would help him in pay raise, she added.

The Korangi Industrial Area police registered a case (FIR 462/2016) against the factory owner, Wasi, and supervisor Ahsan on the complaint of a labourer, Abdul Kalam.

The Landhi SP said that the case was registered under Sections 322 (qatl-bis-sabab, or manslaughter), 284 (negligent conduct with respect to poisonous substance), 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter) and 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah expressed his profound grief over the death of five labourers in the Korangi factory.

A spokesman for the CM said that Mr Shah directed the labour secretary to submit a detailed report within three days with recommendation of action against the factory management.

He asked that how come the labourers were working on a weekly holiday (Sunday) and what kind of work they were doing. He wanted the labour secretary to let him know whether the victims were covered by the Sindh social security institution and what safety measures the factory management had taken to protect them.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258587/five-labourers-die-after-inhaling-toxic-gases-in-korangi-factory>

FACTORY WORKERS' SAFETY

Dawn, May 17th, 2016

THE authorities are dragging their feet when it comes to ensuring the safety of factory workers. Consider Sunday's tragic accident in Karachi's Korangi industrial area where five labourers, including two brothers from Peshawar, died after inhaling toxic fumes.

Reportedly, they were not wearing safety masks and rubber shoes when cleaning an underground dumping tank that contained chemical waste. In violation of labour laws, the factory owner had not installed adequate health and safety mechanisms.

As long as factory owners, culpable of criminal negligence, are not taken to task, the informal sector will continue to use cheap labour at the cost of lives and in violation of building rules and equipment standards. More than 70pc of all workers comprise the informal sector, making it challenging for the state to institute legal and administrative structures that ensure their rights are not abused.

And although Pakistan has ratified 36 ILO conventions, there is little implementation, and small industry owners continue to ignore the laws. Despite the Factories Act, 1934, being on the statutory books, weak implementation has resulted in tragic disasters on factory floors, such as the Baldia incident in Karachi some years ago when over 250 workers were killed. Meanwhile, poverty, illiteracy and lack of rights awareness contribute to the acceptance of poor working conditions.

Pakistan also lags behind in the provision of safer working conditions because of the poor labour inspection system. The ILO estimates that the country has 336 labour inspectors for 60 million registered workers. Clearly, this is not enough, and bridging this enormous gap, especially in cities crowded with industrial units, through the recruitment of more inspectors is necessary. Surely the frequency of accidents — factory roof collapses, boiler explosions, electrocution, etc — are reason enough for the provinces to form inspection teams and mechanisms for legal frameworks.

Responsibility lies with the provinces to protect the exploited labour force by strengthening inspection systems, offering social security for formal and informal sectors; and vigorously instituting laws for a safe work environment.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258796>

SINDH GOVT KEEN ON DEVISING LABOUR POLICY

The Express Tribune, May 21st, 2016.

KARACHI: The Sindh government is keen to come up with a labour policy that can provide a climate conducive to business and workers, said Sindh Labour Secretary Abdul Rasheed Solangi.

Speaking at the National Industrial Relations and Provincial Tripartite Labour Convention, he said the Sindh government had already promulgated 15 laws and was taking measures to improve conditions of workers through revamping welfare schemes.

The event was organised by the Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP) in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Earlier, EFP President Khawaja Muhammad Nauman called on provincial governments to develop a harmonious approach in all provinces for an employment and productivity-oriented labour and industrial policy at the federal and provincial levels.

ILO Country Director Ingrid Christensen, in her remarks, stated social dialogue and harmonious industrial relations were one of the four strategic pillars of decent work. "Proper and sound social dialogue is an important enabling factor for addressing other decent work elements – be it employment generation, skills matching, social protection or the fundamental principles and rights at work," she said.

The EFP also announced recognition awards for the best IR practicing companies. The Grand Recognition Award in IR Practices was given to Hinopak Motors, while Recognition Awards in IR Practices were given to Bayer Pakistan, Lotte Chemicals and Agriautos. Emerging IR Practice Award for adopting the social dialogue approach was given to Ayesha Fabrics.

Ministry of Commerce Policy Director Aasim Tiwana and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Labour Secretary Alamgir Shah also spoke at the event.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107210/sindh-govt-keen-devising-labour-policy/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 9TH TO MAY 15TH 2016

BADIN COURT SETS FREE 30 BONDED PEASANTS

Dawn, May 14th, 2016

BADIN: Badin District and Sessions Judge Tariq Mehmood Khoso on Friday set free 30 men, women and children who were forced into bonded labour by a landowner in Chak-43 of Golarchi for many months.

Complainant Mallah Mohammed had filed his application in the court stating that his family members and relatives had been forced into bonded labour by their employer, Malik Akhtar Awan, on his lands. He stated that they were neither being given their due share in crop nor were they allowed a free movement as per the Tenancy Act.

The judge ordered the Golarchi police to carry out a raid on the specified place and rescue the bonded labourers and their families if found there.

The police found seven men, 10 women and 13 children kept at the raided place and brought them to the court.

After recording the victims' statements, the judge set all of them at freedom.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258203>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 2nd TO MAY 8th 2016

WORKERS DEMAND THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

Dawn, May 2nd, 2016

KARACHI: Various workers organisations held seminars, symposia and took out processions to mark International Labour Day (May Day) on Sunday. The refrain at all events was the demand to abolish the contract system, and fix the minimum wages of a worker at par with the price of one tola of gold so that poor workers could support their families in a respectable manner.

Speaking at a meeting organised jointly by the Trade Unions Federation and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists at the Karachi Press Club, Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani said that the contract system had been introduced to cripple trade unions. He termed it against the constitution and demanded that it be abolished.

He regretted that the workers of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) were not supported by other trade unions in their struggle and said that if the privatisation of PIA was allowed, it would pave the way for the privatisation of other national assets such as Steel Mills, Sui Gas etc.

Senator Rabbani urged Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah to appoint a labour minister who understood problems being faced by workers and was sympathetic towards them.

Earlier, a procession was taken out at the Empress Market which at the press club turned into a rally.

Labour leaders Kaneez Fatima and Zulfiqar Shah, speaking at a rally organised by the Municipal Workers Trade Unions Alliance, said workers would not allow the authorities to hand over services like garbage collection, charged parking, etc that were currently being provided by the civic agencies to contractors. They demanded that municipal workers be provided their salaries on time, the contract system be abolished, workers employed on contracts be regularised, and children of deceased workers be given jobs under the son quota. The municipal workers had earlier taken out a procession from the KMC workshop that ended at the KPC, where they rallied for their demands.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, in his message on the occasion of May Day, said that laws had been formulated under which the Employees Old Age Benefit Institution and Workers Welfare Board were being brought under the Sindh government so that workers could be better served. He said flats built for workers had been encroached on, but they were being vacated so that they could be handed over to deserving workers.

The Pakistan Awami Tehreek and the Sindh National Party also organised rallies where speakers demanded that the working conditions of the workers be improved and their salaries be raised.

The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) organised three workshops at the Women of the World Festival held at the Beach Luxury Hotel.

The running theme of these workshops was how to make labourers and startups more aware of the opportunities surrounding them. The workshops apprised participants about the differences in the wages given to men and women, how to deal with harassment at workplace, and how to begin one's own business within a budget of Rs100,000.

Executive director of Piler Karamat Ali said wage gaps existed in almost every economic sector of Pakistan. "For instance," he added, "women, who largely work in the garment sector, are paid far less than what men working in the same sector earn. There is a difference of 50 per cent between their wages."

He elaborated that the issues in implementing the minimum wage in the private sector as well as raising the wage earned by women in the garment factories, among other issues, was the result of non-participation and an absence of women in trade unions, including contractual employment of workers in general.

The two women on the panel of speakers, advocate at Habib Bank Nosheen Ahmed, and a representative of the Sindh ombudsman working for protection against harassment at workplace, Uzma Al-Karim, spoke about how women dealt with harassment and what their respective organisations did about it. Advocate Nosheen said it was important for women working in small or big companies to receive their appointment letters, "as without it, it becomes easier for the companies to fire them at will."

Ms Al-Karim claimed that at present "28 centres have been established at the district level for women to register their complaints against harassment". Explaining the procedure of filing a complaint, she said it should be filed to an

inquiry committee within the organisation which should decide the case within 30 days after hearing out both the parties. The ombudsman's office could be informed in case there was no inquiry committee.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255697>

WORKERS, ACTIVISTS MARK LABOUR DAY IN TWIN CITIES

Dawn, May 2nd, 2016

Aamir Yasin | Ikram Junaidi

RAWALPINDI: Trade unionists, political activists and workers at a conference on Sunday demanded restoration of labour inspection survey at the provincial level, amendments to the industrial relation act, and an increase in the minimum wage, warning that they would come out on the streets if they did not get their rights.

These demands were made at a conference of the All Pakistan Workers Confederation (APWC) at the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Press Club. It was followed by the traditional May Day rally by workers from the country's trade unions.

APWC patron-in-chief Zafarullah Khan Niazi, regional general secretary Akram Bunda, All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union regional chairman Javed Iqbal Baloch, Pakistan Workers Party's Asim Sajjad, Mohammad Ramazan Jadoon and others spoke at the event.

Mr Niazi said workers were united to get the rights enshrined in the Constitution. He said: "Industrialists hired the services of labour and workers while violating international laws and human rights, and the government's silence has exposed its mentality."

"The government should stop the privatisation of PIA, Steel Mills, Wapda and other national organisations, as it would be an anti-state act of the PML-N led government," he said.

Mr Bunda said the minimum wage fixed by the government for workers was not being implemented by any organisation or industrial unit in the country.

"The government just announced the fixation of daily wages, but there are no checks and balances, and investors are given free rein to humiliate workers," he said.

Following the conference, activists and workers brought out a rally from the Press Club to Murree Road. Participants carried red flags and placards inscribed with their demands.

Activists, trade unionists and students also gathered in Shamsabad at the Awami Workers Party (AWP) offices to pay tribute to two legendary working class organisers from Punjab: Bhagat Singh and Dada Amir Haider.

The event was organised by the Awami Workers Party to mark International Workers' Day, which marks the 130th anniversary of the Chicago Haymarket massacre during the struggle for an eight-hour working day. The event included speeches on the life and struggles of Dada Amir Haider and Bhagat Singh, and the history of the revolutionary labour movement.

Speakers called for the left and the trade union movement to learn from their achievements, and assess their own shortcomings in organising the working class.

The speeches were followed by a musical performance by the AWP's Ammar Rashid, featuring poetry by Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

Bhagat Singh (1907 – 1931) was a revolutionary socialist activist associated with the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, hailing from what is today the Faisalabad district. He was convicted and hanged at the age of 23 in Lahore by the British colonial administration for his revolutionary activities.

Dada Amir Haider (1900 – 1989) was born in the Rawalpindi district and spent his entire life struggling for the cause of the working class in this region and around the world, and was arrested multiple times, both before and after partition, for his activism.

“We need to take a close look at the reasons why the labour movement in our region is no longer the vibrant force that it once was,” said Nusrat Hussain, secretary-general of AWP’s Islamabad-Rawalpindi district.

Speaking at the event, AWP’s Dr Farzana Bari highlighted the plight of working class women in the area. “On International Workers’ Day we must remember that this country’s workers are not only men, and they face many additional struggles in the workplace, particularly sexual harassment,” she said.

“We demand that this country’s labour laws are amended to include workers in the informal sector, many of whom are women,” she added.

Because World Labour Day fell on a Sunday, most departments were not able to hold events to mark the day.

Events are typically organised by a number of public and private sector departments and unions. The AWP also holds events in the capital, but could not do so this year.

AWP Punjab President Aasim Sajjad Akhtar told Dawn the party decided to hold its main event in Rawalpindi, and a rally was also carried out from the AWP offices.

The CDA labour union held an event in Islamabad at the Fire Brigade Office, which was attended by a number of politicians and labour leaders.

The leader of the CDA’s CBA union, Chaudhry Yaseen, said the civic body workers were not against the local bodies system, but did not want the CDA to be divided in the name of local government.

“We just demand from the government that legislation should be carried out to address the labourer’s problems. In the upcoming budget, the salary of a labourer should be increased and ad hoc-ism should be abolished in government departments,” he said.

He added: “There should be no politics in government departments.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255739>

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: CM LAUNCHES KHIDMAT CARDS FOR KILN WORKERS

The Express Tribune, May 2nd, 2016.

LAHORE: Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif launched the Khidmat Card Programme for financial assistance to children of brick kiln workers on Sunday. Addressing a ceremony at Expo Centre, the chief minister also announced that the minimum wage would be raised to Rs14,000 from July 1.

“Labour Day is about workers’ dignity and welfare. Workers in Pakistan toil in harsh conditions to earn their livelihoods. Their efforts strengthen the national economy,” he said. “It is due to the labour of workers that our industries produce goods and our fields bear fruits,” he said.

“The government is aware that there is much to be done for workers’ welfare. The journey to progress and development is not complete without prosperity of workers,” he said.

The chief minister said 48,000 children employed at kilns had been enrolled at schools.

“These children will be given a Rs1,000 monthly stipend if they maintain attendance. Their parents received Rs2,000 from the government on their enrolment,” he said. He said these children had been rescued from bonded labour at kilns and had been provided books, uniform, stationery, shoes and transport facilities. “Children belong in schools, not kilns,” he said.

Shahbaz said the labour minister had been tasked to also eliminate child labour from hotels, workshops and petrol pumps.

Referring to Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf demonstration at Charing Cross, the chief minister said the PTI chairman had demanded formation of a judicial commission for accountability. “When the prime minister wrote to the chief justice to set up the commission, he [Imran Khan] started dictating the TORs,” he said. “The prime minister’s children will appear before the commission and reply to allegations against them.”

Addressing the ceremony, Minister for Labour Raja Ashfaq Sarwar said the government had constructed 992 flats for workers at a cost of Rs3 billion in Multan. He said flats were also being constructed in Faisalabad and Nankana Sahib.

The district administration of Bahawalpur issued Khidmat Cards to 1,601 children of 307 families at an inauguration ceremony held at the Commissioner’s Office.

A spokesman of the district administration said the children would be enrolled in schools. “Their parents will be given Rs2,000 when the children are enrolled,” he said. He said Rs1,000 monthly stipend would be provided if the children maintained attendance.

He said the children would also be provided school bags, two sets of uniforms, shoes, books and stationery. The cards were issued to children of kiln workers in Yazman and Bahawalpur tehsils.

In Faisalabad, a ceremony was held at the TMA Hall Lyallpur Town where DCO Salman Ghani distributed Khidmat Cards among brick kiln families. He said 814 children from these families would be enrolled in schools by May 15 under the first phase of the programme.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095417/financial-assistance-cm-launches-khidmat-cards-for-kiln-workers/>

WORKERS COME OUT EN MASSE ACROSS SINDH TO MARK LABOUR DAY

The Express Tribune, May 2nd, 2016.

KARACHI/SUKKUR/HYDERABAD: Scores of seminars, rallies and processions were held across the province to mark the International Labour Day on Sunday.

The largest rally in Karachi was held in Saddar, where the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) – a conglomerate of labour unions and federations – took out a rally from Empress Market to Karachi Press Club.

Participants spread over a length of almost a kilometre on one side of Sharae Liaquat and marched while holding Marxist-hallmark red flags and chanted against the ‘class-based’ system. “Workers of the world, unite, unite,” chanted the labourers.

“Today’s event is a slap on the faces of those who kept people divided in the name of religion, ethnicity or caste for their ulterior motives,” said NTUF president Rafiq Baloch. “The [mainstream] political parties have virtually removed advocacy of labour rights from their agendas. They only remember the working class when they need manpower for their gatherings.”

“It is a controlled democracy we are living in, to make it a real democracy workers have to wage a struggle themselves, otherwise opportunists and dictatorial forces will push the country more into the abyss of darkness,” he told participants.

NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor commented that the ruling class has proved that it is the main enemy of workers. “In Pakistan, workers have been deprived of their due rights in both private and public sectors.”

It is tyranny that when workers raise their voice against this injustice they are labeled as terrorists, Mansoor said, referring to incidents in Faisalabad and Karachi where workers were fired from their jobs and later when they campaigned against their companies they were booked under the penal code and anti-terror laws.

The rally culminated at the press club where other labour leaders also spoke. A large number of women were also part of the rally. An elderly woman, Zahida Bibi, said she worked for her whole life and at this age she still has to. “No one thinks about us,” she said, complaining about not having any retirement plan or compensation from the textile company she worked at.

The heirs of Baldia factory fire victims also attended the rally to join hands with workers. “We don’t want others to suffer the same way as we have. Therefore, we are here to demand labour rights and workplace safety for others,” said Farhan, who lost his brother in the fire. “The government and political parties don’t care about us. They have made a joke out of us by using our case as a political card.”

Apart from these events, several others by the provincial government and various political parties were also held.

Since the creation of Pakistan, many governments have claimed to provide rights to the oppressed and labourers but the fate of labourers remains unchanged, said former chief justice of Pakistan and chairperson of the Pakistan Justice Democratic Party, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry on Sunday.

Addressing a Labour Day rally in Mirpur Mathelo, he said the labourers’ struggle started in Chicago in 1886 and since then their struggle is continuing, with little being done to improve their living conditions.

“Labourers are an asset for any company or industrial unit and by reaping the benefit of their hard work, the owners and management are leading luxurious lives, which is highly condemnable,” he said.

A flurry of token demonstrations staged by hundreds of labours’ unions, associations and NGOs were held to mark Labour Day in Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas divisions on Sunday. Demonstrators reiterated their demands to their employers and the government for better wages, allowances and working conditions.

The Railway Workers Union, which reached Hyderabad from Karachi in a train march, called for abolishing the policy of privatising trains. “All privatisation projects should be cancelled,” demanded the union’s president Manzoor Ahmed Razi.

The union also asked the federal government to provide hardship, shift, night and supervisory allowances, stop making deductions from house rent, reducing strength of the officer cadre by 50% and an inquiry into recent appointments.

Separately, the Home Based Women Workers Federation and Sindh Agricultural General Workers Union took out a joint rally, which culminated at Hyderabad press club. “The plight of workers engaged in the informal sector is even worse than those working in the formal and industrial sectors,” said the federation’s president Shakeela Khan.

She asserted that 80% of home-based workers are women and that while Pakistan is a signatory of the United Nation’s International Home Work Convention, the provincial governments are violating that agreement by denying labour status to home-based workers.

Awami Workers Party’s leader, Comrade Latif, lamented that the federal government is caving to the dictates of international financial institutions by privatising state-owned institutions.

Workers in Thatta, Sujawal, Nawabshah, Jamshoro, Tando Allahyar, Matiari, Umerkot and other districts also organised demonstrations to mark the day.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095315/countrys-backbone-workers-come-out-en-masse-across-sindh-to-mark-labour-day/>

LABOUR DAY OBSERVED IN BALOCHISTAN

Dawn, May 2nd, 2016

QUETTA: Rallies and other programmes were organised in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan on Sunday to mark the Labour Day.

In Quetta, the All Pakistan Labour Federation (APLF) and the Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation organised a procession which passed through different roads of the provincial capital.

A large number of workers took part in the procession. They were carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans for their demands.

The participants of the procession later gathered outside the press club.

Speaking on the occasion, APLF president Sultan Mohammad Khan, secretary general Abdul Sattar, leader of coalmine workers Mohammad Zameen, Ali Sher Bugti and other labour leaders demanded good working conditions for workers in Pakistan.

They paid tribute to the martyrs of Chicago and said they sacrificed their lives for the rights of workers.

The speakers expressed concern over rising inflation, joblessness and bad security situation in the province, saying that these problems had made life miserable for workers, especially daily wage earners.

They urged the government to take notice of shifting of industrial units out of the country. They said that it would further increase unemployment in the country.

The speakers said the economic managers of the country needed to improve policies so that the country could attract foreign investment.

According to sources, programmes to mark the Labour Day were also held in Dera Murad Jamali, Dera Allahyar, Khuzdar, Loralai, Zhob, Sibi, Kalat and some other towns and cities of Balochistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1255728>

WORKERS SEEK INCREASE IN WAGES, REGULARISATION OF JOBS

Dawn, May 2nd, 2016

PESHAWAR: The labourers have urged the government to implement its decision regarding minimum wages, regularise all contractual employees in various departments and ensure free medical and education facilities to them and their children.

The demands were made by the participants of different processions taken out in provincial metropolis on Sunday in connection with May Day to remember the sacrifices of Chicago workers and vowed to accomplish their mission.

The main procession was taken out on the call of All Pakistan Workers Confederation from Peshawar Press Club that was led by Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union provincial general secretary Mustajab Mazdoryar, deputy chairman

Ali Syed, deputy secretary Liaquat Ali and information secretary Gohar Ali Gohar. The procession turned into a public meeting outside Governor's House where the participants chanted slogans for solution to their problems.

The workers of Pakistan Railways Workers Union also took out a rally from the press club and marched till Governor's House. The rally was led by Ashfaq Bacha. The participants of the rally were holding banners and placards inscribed with demands for implementation of government's decision regarding minimum wages, provision of all incentives to workers and quota in jobs for the employees.

Another procession was staged at Bacha Khan Chowk which was led by Adviser to Chief Minister Arif Yousuf, PWD Labour Union president Mukhtiar Hussain, chairman Malik Nisar Khan and Ijaz Ahmed.

Several resolutions were unanimously adopted by the workers, who demanded Rs2,0000 as minimum wages, provision of medical treatment and free education to their children, quota in jobs for workers and increase in pension.

The workers also demanded betterment of working conditions, especially for female workers, saying the government should take stern action against those, who were involved in child labour.

They said that salaries of workers should be equalised in public and private sectors so that they could meet their routine expenditures. They also advised the government against privatisation of different national institutions including Pakistan Railways, Wapda and PIA.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Pervez Khattak, Peshawar Electric Supply Company chief executive officer Anwarul Haq Yousufzai, Qaumi Watan Party chairman Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherapao in their separate statements appreciated the workers for making efforts to get their rights.

In Swabi, Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF) and other organisations of workers held a rally to mark Labour Day.

The workers gathered in the district headquarters and marched on different roads, holding placards and banners and chanting slogans for their rights. The procession turned into a public meeting outside the office of tehsil municipal administration. On the occasion, speakers criticised entrepreneurs of Gadoon Amazai Industrial Estate (GAIE), who, according to them, threatened the workers that their two-day wages would be deducted if they took off on May Day.

Aslam Adil, president of Awami Labour Union Sinohydro, Tarbela Dam, and Shaukat Anjum, national coordinator of PWF, addressed the gathering.

In Mansehra, the employees of Utility Stores Corporation threatened to launch agitation if the management terminated services of daily wagers working in the corporation for the last one decade or more.

"I warn the management of corporation not to terminate services of daily wagers otherwise we would resist any such move with a full might," said Arif Hussain Shah, central chairman of All Pakistan Workers Union Utility Stores Corporation, while addressing a convention held in connection with May Day on Sunday.

In Karak, United Workers Welfare Association took out a rally to mark Labour Day.

After the rally the labourers gathered at Noor Sali Khan Market in Sabirabad where district president of the organisation Malik Naveed and general secretary Taj Ali addressed them.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255759/workers-seek-increase-in-wages-regularisation-of-jobs>

LABOUR'S OWN GOALS

Dawn, May 4th, 2016

Mahir Ali

It is beyond question that the anti-Semitism controversy that erupted in Britain last week has damaged that nation's Labour Party. It is equally true that some of the most unconstructive interventions in the ensuing debate have come from within the party, mainly, albeit not exclusively, from those determined to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

The latest fracas, which fits a pattern that has been delineated over an extended period, was sparked by a right-wing blogger's 'revelation' about a Facebook post from nearly two years ago from Naz Shah, an MP who also happened to be shadow chancellor John McDonnell's parliamentary private secretary.

She was more or less immediately suspended from the party, and has apologised profusely and abjectly for her indiscretion. Her 'crime', dating back to the Israeli state's most recent military assault against Gaza and before Shah was an MP, involved reposting a graphic depicting Israel relocated to the centre of the United States, with a few lines of commentary on why this would be an ideal "solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict".

It's obviously satire, but is it anti-Semitic? Well, it appears to have originated on the blog of American academic and writer Norman Finkelstein, the son of Holocaust survivors and a trenchant critic of Israeli policies as well as what he has termed "the Holocaust industry", but decidedly not someone who advocates the destruction of Israel.

Then, former London mayor and Labour MP Ken Livingstone stepped into the row, arguing in a BBC interview that Shah's "remarks were over the top but she is not anti-Semitic", before adding: "Let's remember when [Adolf] Hitler won his election in 1932 [sic], his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism ... before he went mad and killed six million Jews."

Livingstone, who was also promptly suspended from the Labour Party, appears to subsequently have realised that his reference to Hitler was both unhelpful and unnecessary, but has refused to issue an apology or retract his statement, on the grounds that it was accurate. In his defence he even cited a comment last year by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the effect that Hitler was determined to expel rather than slaughter Jews until convinced otherwise by the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini.

In the face of an uproar, not least within Israel, Netanyahu was obliged to withdraw the insinuation that the Holocaust was essentially a Palestinian plot. The fact remains, though, that segments of the Zionist movement initially collaborated with the Nazi authorities in sending some 20,000 German Jews to Palestine, and even subsequently the Third Reich contemplated the involuntary deportation of Jews to, notably, Madagascar. It didn't, though, with horrendous consequences that no one can seriously deny or overlook.

Livingstone's claim that Hitler or his regime 'supported' Zionism is open to argument, but he clearly did not call Hitler a Zionist, as any number of detractors and media outlets continue to claim. The accusation of being a "Nazi apologist", aggressively levelled against him outside the BBC studios by Labour MP John Mann, is both malicious and patently absurd.

Uncritical admirers of Israel — and both sides of politics boast a fair number in most Western countries — have long adopted the strategy of damning critics of the Jewish state's policies and practices as anti-Semite. Some even claim that anti-Zionism is essentially anti-Semitic. That's a ridiculous claim, not least because there are any number of anti-Zionist Jews, not least in the context of Israel's expansionist aims vis-à-vis the occupied territories.

In fact, most critiques of Israel over recent years relate specifically to the uncompromising policies of the Likud party and its allies. Perhaps it's worth noting that when Menachem Begin, eventually the first Likudite prime minister of Israel and a veteran of the terrorist Irgun organisation, first visited the US to garner support for his new Herut party (a precursor of Likud), Jewish intellectuals such as Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein warned Americans against backing "this latest manifestation of fascism".

A similar warning about present-day Likud anywhere in the West would instantly be castigated as racist. The defensive posture of the British Labour Party's leadership in the context of the latest controversy is disconcerting, but

perhaps not surprising. Implacably hostile media coverage is likely to contribute to a poor showing in tomorrow's local council and Scottish elections — and London mayoral candidate Sadiq Khan, himself the victim of race-baiting by the campaign of his Tory opponent Zac Goldsmith, has been vociferous in his condemnations of Livingstone to a stupid extent.

The party has instituted an inquiry into racism within its ranks, which is all very well provided it does not feed into what already appears to be a witch-hunt against Labour's more progressive elements, aimed ultimately at destroying Corbyn's leadership and restoring the party's Blairite neoliberal credentials.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256109/labours-own-goals>

SACKED WORKER DISSUADED FROM COMMITTING SUICIDE

Dawn, May 7th, 2016

HYDERABAD: A sacked worker climbed up a tall tree outside the press club on Friday and threatened to commit self-immolation in protest against dismissal from service but he was saved by a number of onlookers, policemen and journalists who convinced him not to end his life.

After Ghulam Mustafa Qambrani finally climbed down from the tree and threw down the bottle of petrol, he told journalists that he had worked at a multinational tooth paste manufacturing firm in Kotri for nine years and sacked a year back without giving any reason.

He said that he kept protesting outside the press clubs in Jamshoro and Hyderabad, demanding reinstatement of his job but to no avail.

Three fire tenders were also called to save him with the help of snorkels in case he went ahead with his plan. But to everyone's relief, he was finally dissuaded from the extreme step and climbed down safely.

He said that he was poor but hard working, he appealed to managers of the firm to reinstate him but they refused to do so.

After remaining jobless for an entire year, he had become so fed up with life that he came to commit self-immolation but luckily he saved, he said.

Qambrani is a resident of Kotri Bhattai Colony and has two wives but no child.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256779/sacked-worker-dissuaded-from-committing-suicide>

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June 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016

CHILD LABOUR – THE WORST MENACE OF ALL TIME

Business Recorder, June 28, 2016

Life of some children in Pakistan is not easy. Their sole crime is that they are born in a country where children as young as eight years old are working and taking care of entire families. At an age where they should be in school and enjoying the blessings of their childhood, they work well over twelve hours in hazardous work environments.

It has been more than a decade now that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched the World Day against Child Labour. Earlier this month Pakistan and rest of the world marked the World Day against Child Labour. In last decade or so not much has changed in Pakistan despite the fact that both the federal and provincial governments have taken some steps to deal with the menace.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its report, 'Global estimates and trends of child labour 2000-2012' says that out of the 264 million children in employment worldwide, 168 million are in child labour. In Pakistan as per the estimates of Child Rights Movement (CRM) 12.5 million children are involved in child labour.

Unfortunately, Pakistan has not conducted the National Child Labour Survey since 1996. The last survey showed that there were 3.3 million between the age of five and fourteen in the workforce. However, recently released annual Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2014-15 provides some help.

It reveals that there are 5.24 million children under the age of ten to seventeen working in the various type of employment. It is worth noticing here that the LFS data has some shortcomings; it does not include a significant number of children working on the street in various positions.

Recently the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (Sparc) organised a seminar on the 'Elimination of child labour in Pakistan'. It appeared at the symposium that despite a significant decline in recorded cases of child labour globally, Pakistan ranks third worldwide in child and forced labour.

Figures shared by Director of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler), Mr Karamat Ali at the seminar are scary – a four-fold increase in child labour in Pakistan in the past 20 years.

Besides that, according to the figures released in the National Policy on Home-Based Workers, there are 8.52 million home-based workers in Pakistan. Unfortunately, around 6 million of these workers are up to the age of 10 years old.

Some people argue and rationalise the importance of child labour on the basis of poverty. Yes, that might be true in the short-run, but in the long-run the consequences of this problem are very severe and detrimental to the whole society.

The theme that child Labour Day followed this year was "End child labour in supply chains – It's everyone's business! " This idea is quite important because in developing economies like Pakistan, people justify the practice of child labour because it brings the cost of production down amid growing competition.

However, what is being ignored is the fact that these businesses are not only exploiting children but also robbing them of their childhood.

Countries that have been successful in war against child labour have focused on four important points: Proper enforcement of labour laws, quality primary education for everyone, social security to the people and, regular surveys and enhanced monitoring capabilities of regulatory agencies.

Time has come for the government and for the civil society to act now to stop child labour once and for all. Recently, the Punjab Government has taken some steps in the right direction. The Punjab Restriction of Employment of Children Bill 2015 is in principle, approved by the cabinet.

Similarly, the Social Protection Authority has started making direct cash transfers to the vulnerable groups. Other provinces and the federal government should follow the suit. At the federal level, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child Bill, which is still pending in the parliament, needs to be approved so that child right violation linked to child labour can be monitored.

THAI FOOD GIANT DROPS CHICKEN FARM OVER LABOUR ABUSES

Business Recorder, June 30, 2016

BANGKOK: A Thai food giant suspended ties with a chicken supplier Wednesday after allegations of exploitation of migrant workers, as the multi-billion-dollar industry moves to head off censure from global consumers.

The kingdom's money-spinning seafood sector has been battered by allegations of human trafficking and faces threats of a European Union boycott of exports.

Scrutiny has now turned on the kingdom's massive poultry industry — Thailand is among the world's top chicken exporters.

Myanmar workers on a farm in central Lopburi province this week accused bosses of unlawfully low pay and punishing working hours. The Thammakaset Farm 2 supplies chicken to Betagro Group, one of the biggest Thai food companies with clients across the world.

On Wednesday Betagro issued a statement saying it had “stopped business operations with the farm until there is a solution for the labour conflict”.

Limited access to isolated farms has long helped shield the chicken industry from prying eyes, according to labour rights defenders.

“The chicken industry needs this scrutiny...this is modern day slavery,” said Andy Hall, a prominent migrant rights activist whose group took the complaint from the Lopburi farm workers. He said the problems begin with recruitment agencies charging workers steep sums for job placements, leaving them in effective “debt bondage” and vulnerable to further abuse from employers.

The Lopburi farm case is likely to be the “tip of the iceberg” in the poultry sector, he said, adding it is a sign that Betagro has not properly audited its supply chain. The majority of Thailand's migrant labourers hail from neighbouring Myanmar, where decades of poverty under former military leaders drove millions to cross the border in search of higher wages. But once in Thailand, many find themselves at the mercy of corrupt officials and trafficking gangs who take advantage of the kingdom's ad-hoc migration policies.

The rights of Myanmar migrant workers topped the agenda during Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to Thailand last week, the democracy activist's first since her party took power in April. Suu Kyi pledged to strengthen protections for her countrymen and drive economic changes at home that could pave the way for their return.—AFP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/30/23-page/773118-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 20TH TO JUNE 26TH 2016

HOME-BASED WORKERS REITERATE DEMAND FOR ACCEPTANCE BY STATE

Dawn, June 21th, 2016

KARACHI: As the world marked June 20 as the 20th anniversary of the acceptance of home-based workers by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as part of workforce, local home-based workers reiterated the demand on Monday that they be legally recognised by the state and given an identity.

Speaking at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club, general secretary of Home Based Workers Association Zehra Khan said that it was high time the government recognised the home-based workers and ratified the Home Work Convention 1996 (No177) as part of law.

This, she said, would at least give a formal recognition to the workers whose stories went unnoticed, who were underpaid or often went unpaid and exploited by middlemen due to the absence of a law ensuring their rights. At the same time, she said, the wages of home-based workers should also be raised.

This year in March, a petition was filed in the senate by the association, which followed three meetings, with the last one held on June 14. “The Sindh government has formed a five-member committee to review the law and implement home-based workers policy. But so far, the notification about the law is being awaited and nothing has materialised,” she said.

According to the activists, Senator Javed Abbasi from the law and justice committee of the senate was by far the only person who had shown serious interest in legislation for home-based workers and recognising them as part of daily wage workforce.

Others, they said, “do not come prepared to meetings and so a lot of time is wasted in clarifications and reaching an agreement.”

Women constitute a large part of home based economy and supply chain in the market by contributing to carpet weaving, packing, stitching and embroidery, among others. At the same time, they also pay for the production cost in making these things.

“Such people are often exploited by middlemen or remain underpaid because of the absence of a defined law,” Ms Zehra said.

Provincial head of the National Trade Union Federation, Gul Rehman, said that after all these years, Home Work Convention 177 had been recognised only by 10 countries.

He said that according to an estimate 50 million home based workers were in South Asia out of which above a million were in Pakistan. Though resolutions had been passed by all four provinces “but it’s been three years now and there is no discussion going on the resolutions in any assembly,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266151>

UNPAID CARE WORK

Dawn, June 22 , 2016

Zeenaat Hisam

IF you ask 100 women in Pakistan whether they work, 78 of them will respond that they do not – our female labour force participation rate is 22pc. If probed further on how they spend their time, they might mumble: “I cook, clean, send children to school, buy groceries, and take care of infants, toddlers and the elderly ...” The list would go on.

If the setting is rural, they might tell you that they “milk cows, clean barns, bring firewood, fetch water, cook, wash clothes, care for the family...” And on it goes. The irony is not that women themselves fail to recognise the labour they put into their families and homes, or care work, as ‘work’. The irony lies in the fact that society at large, and policymakers in particular, do not recognise the value of care work.

Fortunately, the world has now come to accept the fact that unpaid care work is a moral, social and economic issue with serious implications — for it drives gender inequity, impinges upon human rights and obstructs the overall development and growth of society.

Almost 75pc of global unpaid work is performed by women, which is estimated to constitute 16pc of the global GDP in value. Another recent study of six countries estimates that the value of unpaid care work, when applied at the minimum wage rate, is between 20pc to 40pc of the countries’ GDPs. According to a 2015 McKinsey Global Institute report, unpaid care work performed by women globally is worth around \$10 trillion a year. Where does this \$10tr go annually? Well, it is pocketed by governments — both in developed and developing countries — the elites and the people who own offshore companies, ie rich and powerful men.

Tax policies that discriminate against low-income groups (in which women are over-represented) — favouring higher-income individuals, landed owners and corporations, relying on indirect taxing, and cutting social security benefits, public services and infrastructure development — lead to disproportionate amounts of unpaid care work performed by women. The opportunity cost paid by women for unpaid care work is immense and its implications profound in developing countries such as Pakistan.

Unpaid care work obstructs women's access to equal opportunities in education, healthcare and skill development. Due to their work loads, they cannot participate in decision-making or public and cultural activities. Women end up in low-paid, insecure jobs — and the vicious cycle of gender inequality is perpetuated.

As money dominates the global value system and unpaid care work is not ascribed its proper value, it is neither recognised nor valued and caregivers (ie women) are not respected. Ascribing monetary value to the chores, considered inferior and beneath the dignity of men in our society, is unthinkable for those who prescribe 'light beating' meted out to caregivers. They need not be alarmed; women of the world, least of all in Pakistan, are not asking to monetise unpaid care work.

Since the issue of unpaid care work was tabled at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995 — when the question of why unpaid care work could not be included in the System of National Accounts standardised by the UN first arose to prominence — the debate on unpaid care work has slowly gained momentum. Political economists and sociologists have proposed theories, suggested different frameworks, explored linkages between market and non-market activities, and come up with definitions, tools and techniques of measuring unpaid care work.

From 2000 onward, a number of developed and developing countries have started using time-use surveys to measure the value of unpaid care work and its share in the country's GDP. A real breakthrough in this debate came when in 2008 British economist and sociologist, Diane Elson, suggested 'the 3 Rs' — recognise, reduce and redistribute — framework to address issues of unpaid care work. Another milestone has been the UN's Special Report on Extreme Poverty 2013, which positions unpaid care work as a major human rights issue and notes that "failure of states to adequately provide, fund, support and regulate care contradicts their human rights obligations."

The state stands indicted of this issue and has a central role to play in its remedy. Our government needs to recognise unpaid work. The Federal Bureau of Statistics can introduce time-use surveys to measure care work. Burden on women can be reduced through investments in infrastructure with revenue generated from tax reforms. It is sad that, instead of increasing direct taxes, policymakers have reduced corporate tax by 30pc in the 2016-17 budget.

Pakistan's current tax-to-GDP ratio, at 11.5pc, is very low; it must be raised to 20pc through direct taxes, inclusive of agriculture. Finally, unpaid work can be redistributed through investment in public services — including free universal education, healthcare, access to water and sanitation — and by adopting social protection measures and complying with ILO labour standards.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266314>

15,566 CHILDREN WORKING IN 10 DISTRICTS

The Express Tribune, June 24th, 2016.

LAHORE: As many as 15,566 children are working at auto workshops, service stations, petrol pumps, hotels and restaurants in 10 Punjab districts, according to data issued by the Labour and Human Resource Department.

The 10 districts include Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Hafizabad, Khanewal, Multan, Okara, Rahim Yar Khan, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura, says a press release issued by the ministry. It said the data had been collected by the Bureau of Statistics.

Of the 15,566 children, 4,683 children under the age of 14 years are employed at hotels and restaurants and 289 children at petrol pumps and service stations.

Labour and Human Resource Minister Raja Ashfaq Sarwar said the children would be provided free education, a stipends, uniforms, books and shoes in collaboration with the Literacy and School Education Department.

Red Workers' Front general secretary Adam Pal accused the government of releasing wrong data. He said thousands of children were working for Sialkot's sports industry alone. "They have reported less than one per cent of the actual figure."

"How will the government provide them education when it has shut down social security schools and is going to privatise the education system?" He said the government had not conducted a child labour survey for 20 years. "It is estimated that more than 11 million children across Pakistan are forced to work," he said.

The Federal Bureau of Statistics had conducted the last nationwide survey of child labour in 1996, with technical support from the International Labour Organisation. It had found that that of the 40 million children between the five and 14 years of age in Pakistan, 3.3 million were economically active.

Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Mahaz's Mehmood Butt said the government had been unable to curb child labour. "Thousands of children are still working at brick kilns across Lahore," he said. He accused the Labour Department of concealing the facts in this regard. He said that if the government could not provide relief to child labourers, it should at least provide correct stats about them

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1129048/15566-children-working-10-districts/>

EBAD ACCORDS ASSENT TO SINDH BONDED LABOUR (ABOLITION) BILL
Business Recorder, June 24, 2016

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Dr. Ishrat-ul-Ebad Khan has accorded assent to Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Bill 2015.

After signatures of the Sindh Governor it would be called the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 2015. It will come into force at once and extend to the whole of Sindh.

A Governor House official said here on Thursday that after the commencement of this Act whoever compels any person to render any bonded labour shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than two years and not more than five years or with fine which shall not be less than Rs. 100,000.

If a company indulges in such practice then the head of the company would be held responsible for the same.

For implementation of this Act, vigilance committees would be established at district level.

These Committees would comprise of elected representatives of area, representatives of district administration, bar associations, media, recognised social services and the labour department.—APP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/24/23-page/771627-news.html>

DEVOLUTION HAS NOT CREATED GAPS IN LABOUR LEGISLATION: COUNTRY DIRECTOR, ILO
Business Recorder, June 24, 2016

The International Labour Organization (ILO) brings together governments, employers and workers representatives of the 187 member states of the United Nations to set labour standards, formulate policies, and develop programmes that promote decent work for all women and men.

BR Research sat down with Ms. Ingrid Christensen, the ILO Country Director for Pakistan, to discuss some of the issues that we face in the implementation of labour laws and what the body's programmes are in for country. Below are edited transcripts of the interview.

BR Research: Tell us about ILO's operations in Pakistan.

Ingrid Christensen: The ILO normally operates at a country-level programme with its social partners and the government, with an aim to assist in promoting decent work conditions and environment in the country.

It is currently in a transitional phase; the most recent country programme 2010-2015 was completed late last year, following which we had started working on a new country programme 2016-2020.

The latest programme, which is expected to be properly launched sometime after Ramadan, is developed in consultation with the federal and provincial governments, along with Employers Federation of Pakistan, Pakistan Workers Federation, other business associations and trade unions, academia and civil society organizations.

BRR: What are some of the thematic areas ILO will focus on in the new programme?

IC: The new programme has four main components. The first surrounds decent work in the rural economy. The second area is job creation for the youth – especially from the vulnerable sector. That component includes work on entrepreneurship, skill development and enterprise development.

Another element attached to that is employment opportunity and migration, but where abuse and exploitation are also key concerns. Right now ILO is involved promotion of safe and fair migration where the aim is to provide proper information to prospective migrants, so they can make an informed choice.

The third priority area is about the compliance with international labour standards through social dialogue. The fourth component concerns social protection, which involves developing schemes for social protection and social security, and building capacity to roll it out, to get its financial aspects sorted out, etc. The gender component is cross-cutting in all of the four areas.

BRR: Tell us a little more about compliance with international labour standards.

IC: The activities under this component revolve around building capacity among the government both at federal and provincial level to promote the compliance with international labour standards.

For instance, you get the standard regarding the elimination of child labour or abolition of forced labour, but what is it and how can both federal and provincial work with it. This component also entails a great deal of cooperation with the employers' and workers' organizations and their members.

Similarly, when it comes to standards about safety and health, then we build capacity around labour inspection and how to investigate accidents, to create awareness, provide advice to employers and workers etc.

BRR: Does ILO have any measure or indices that it reports periodically, and where does Pakistan stand on it?

IC: The ILO measures lots of labour market indicators, employment, minimum wage, on gender dimension aspects, skills etc. We could compare countries but we are not doing that much because all countries are different. It is difficult to compare Pakistan with, for instance, a small Pacific island state.

BRR: We understand that there is no such thing as perfect index; and there are always issues of comparability. Yet economic history shows that indices are part of modern day and age; we have HDI, we have GCI, Doing Business, political freedom indices and what not?

IC: Actually, for some of the labour dimensions it is very difficult to compare.

BRR: Just to gauge the priority within those four themes, what's the percentage allocation of funding for each theme?

IC: Spending doesn't always show our priority. For instance, child labour is a priority area but if for instance provincial governments have already allocated sufficient amounts for that issue from their own pockets then we provide a different type of technical support and use the resources on other priority areas.

Plus it's not always the money that we bring on the table; it's our technical expertise and advisory that we provide. And that goes a long way in helping countries that are short of relevant expertise on the subject.

BRR: Why does ILO keep a low-key profile? Is that a well-intended strategy?

IC: We do have quite a bit of visibility. The ILO is an old organization; we have been here in Pakistan since 1970, while the organization was established in 1919, and we have been working quite steadily with our partners since then. I am sure we could do more visibility; though we may note that labour as an issue does not always get media and public attention as some of the other economic issues.

However, in the last 10-15 years there has been a lot of awareness of labour issues. We have made lots of efforts towards building the capacity of those stakeholders of society who can help in advocacy and lobbying. We support workers organizations, employers' organizations, and governments and their agencies in terms of bringing the issues to light in tripartite engagements.

So our focus is on the issue, we have three very important constituents – the governments, the employers and the workers — to whom we provide technical assistance.

Then, another important stakeholder is the media. One of our programmes provided basic training to more than 900 journalists, to be able to understand the labour market, the gender issues and overall labour market issues including safety and health and so forth.

As a result of that, in the past four years, reporting on labour issues has increased substantially.

BRR: You mentioned that safe and fair migration is one of the components ILO works on. Could you share more details?

IC: The project that we have currently is about creating awareness and also institutionalizing the mechanisms that make migrants more aware of the conditions on the ground. There are many that go abroad and suffer potential exploitation and abuses. However, different studies also show that exploitation can start even within the home country.

For instance, when prospective migrants take the help from labour agents, they may be fleeced by some of those very agents. One of the studies shows that prospective migrant workers pay much more for the whole paperwork to go to the Gulf states than, for instance, the Indian migrant workers do, or Nepalese etc. for the same kind of job.

We are also aware that migrants are being promised jobs but when they land up in the destination there is no job or the job is not the same as promised.

Recognizing these issues, we recently supported the opening of migrant resource centre. Through that, we intend to help possible migrants to identify the right authorized agents and the official costs associated, the fees etc. This is to help towards ensuring that prospective migrants are not fleeced before their departure.

BRR: In this context, we would like to bring your attention to the fact that there have been many complaints of terrible working conditions of blue-collar workers in Saudi Arabia – where a lot of Pakistani workers go.

Many workers – even white collar workers – find out that their pay is withheld for months by their Saudi employers. What can the ILO do about it given that it's an international body?

IC: The one of the things that the ILO has been involved in is that countries can have bilateral agreements using our platform, where we organize conferences between official representatives from both sending and receiving countries and sort out their concerns or make agreements for collaboration.

But if there is no explicit request to raise the issue with a partner country, we may not be well aware of the situation unless the issue is very glaring in nature.

BRR: What is your assessment of Pakistani labour laws in the context of GSP Plus? Has there been a gap in legislation after the devolution?

IC: GSP Plus demands Pakistan's compliance with a number of international conventions and eight of them are international labour standards.

And international labour standards are implemented in the country through national legislation and standards; and so if countries don't have legislations, then they haven't implemented those standards and then the GSP might be compromised. Some laws are well implemented in Pakistan and some aren't, and our efforts are towards improving implementation.

To our understanding, the devolution per se has not made the gaps in terms of labour legislation larger in the country because 18th amendment clearly articulates that until the provinces have specific laws, the federal laws prevail.

If there is no law on child labour in one province, that doesn't mean that there is no child labour law, since the federal law prevails until the province rolls out its own laws. But that said a number of the legislation are old and may not address the issue well any more

BRR: We are told that some of the labour laws are archaic. Could you please shed some light on the subject; how are archaic laws hurting labour and/or employer prospects?

IC: The Factories Act is a good example. A lot has happened in terms of technology and production process etc, safety and health over the last many decades. In the old days we were looking at safety mostly from the lens of accidents; today those notions go beyond accidents.

In the modern age, safety and health demands that focus also be on the health hazards due to fumes, new materials or ergonomics hazards, or doing the same thing over and over again, or sitting all day. It also focuses on stress at work.

In many jurisdictions, stress and many other psychosocial hazards are also part of safety and health. If you look at the Factory Act then it may not apply to all these kinds of newer kinds of hazards, though of course some of the provinces are now updating their Factories Act. The other thing is that the Factories Act applies to formal economy, and the many businesses in the informal economy are not covered by it.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/24/23-page/771618-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 13TH TO JUNE 19TH 2016

WINNING THE CHILD LABOUR WAR

Dawn, June 13th, 2016

Iftikhar Ahmad

YESTERDAY, June 12, was World Day Against Child Labour. The menace of child labour is present in many developing countries. Research by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) indicates that of the 264 million children in employment worldwide, 168m are in child labour. Out of them, 85m are in hazardous work, which endangers their health, safety and moral development. Asia Pacific is said to have the largest number of child labourers, ie 78m, of which 16.7m between five to 17 years of age are found in South Asia.

The last National Child Labour Survey in Pakistan was in 1996, which indicated there were 3.3m children between the ages of five and 14 working in the country. New data on child labour has been compiled through the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2014-15 to obtain more recent and reliable estimates of child labour in Pakistan.

The LFS reveals that 5.24m children (10-17 years), representing 14pc of the total children in this age group, are in employment. Not all children in employment are considered child labour. The number of minors involved in child labour in the entire age range, ie 10-17 years, is 3.7m.

Disaggregating the data on the basis of gender and area reveals that of the children aged 10-14 years in child labour, 61pc (1.27m) are males and 88pc (1.82m) come from rural areas. Of those between 15-17 years, 89pc (1.47m) are males doing hazardous work; 71pc (1.18m) of the latter come from rural areas. The share of those engaged in hazardous work (15-17 years) is 44pc of total child labour.

However, the LFS does not take into account some other terrible forms of child labour prevalent in the country. The involvement of children in armed conflict, human and drug trafficking, begging and other illicit activities as well as debt bondage cannot be estimated from the LFS data.

Debt bondage is usually reported in agriculture, brick kilns, domestic labour, carpet weaving and coal mines. There have also been reports of children's involvement in armed conflict by non-state actors.

The federal and provincial governments need to follow a three-pronged strategy to curb child labour: provision of free, compulsory and quality basic education at least up to the minimum age for admission to work; adoption and enforcement of laws and policies, with cooperation between labour inspection and education systems; and establishment of a social protection system.

Unless basic education is improved through enactment and proper enforcement of compulsory education laws (KP has yet to enact one), there will be large numbers of out-of-school children.

Though children in employment are a concern, those who are neither attending school nor working (6m children between 10-17 years) must be tackled first and their attendance ensured through conditional cash transfers (eg Khidmat Cards in Punjab), provision of free education through abolition of all school fees, and introduction of inclusive education strategies.

The minimum age regulations alone do not produce the desired results since these divert children from regulated to non-regulated activities if compulsory education laws do not supplement minimum age laws.

Children in the higher age group (15-17 years) need to be given skills training through provincial technical and vocational education and training authorities and the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission. There should be programmes for apprenticeships and training of those children earlier involved in labour (rehabilitative measures) to facilitate their transition from child labour to decent youth employment.

The existence of a large informal economy (72.57pc); a massive rural economy including the agricultural sector (engaging 42.27pc of total workforce); lack of financial and human resource capacity (334 labour inspectors) in labour departments and other implementation agencies; and the scrapping of enforcement institutions in the name of investment-friendly policies (inspections were allowed in 2012 after a gap of 10 years), have all played a role in the lacklustre implementation of labour laws.

The capacity of labour inspectors must be strengthened to detect hazardous child labour and the worst forms of child labour. In order to combat this menace at the local level, especially in the agricultural sector, the local government system has to play its part. Greater collaboration between the enforcement agencies and labour departments is required for effective implementation of child labour conventions.

A child labour monitoring system must be developed, for that complements the work of labour inspectorates/labour departments by monitoring those areas of hazardous work that are difficult to reach through conventional labour inspection systems such as workers in the informal economy (eg home-based workers).

The Sialkot Soccer Ball Industry Project proved a trendsetter in combating child labour through combining workplace monitoring with education, health and social protection programmes. That experience can be replicated in other sectors.

The Punjab government has also started a sector-specific operation against engaging children under 14 years in brick kilns through promulgating the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Ordinance, 2016. Its operation is being extended to auto workshops, hotels/restaurants and petrol pumps. Similar sector-specific approaches can also be employed by other provinces.

While governments have focused on adopting legislation prohibiting child labour, a lot needs to be done to address its root causes. Poverty is the foremost among them: there is evidence that child labour declines by huge proportions when poverty is moderated.

There is a need to establish adequate social protection floors such as the Prime Minister's National Health Programme, conditional and unconditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes as well as public employment schemes (NREGA in India is a good example to replicate in order to ensure livelihood to people especially in rural areas).

Punjab has already established its Social Protection Authority to "provide a comprehensive, efficient, effective and inclusive social protection system to the poor and vulnerable". Other provinces can follow suit and establish similar institutions in line with the ILO Recommendation 202 (Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012) on the subject.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264473>

'12.5 MILLION CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN ARE INVOLVED IN LABOUR'

Dawn, June 13th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: More than a decade after June 12 was declared 'World Day Against Child Labour', over 12.5 million children in Pakistan are involved in child labour, according to a statement issued by the Child Rights Movement (CRM) National Secretariat.

The statement cites an ILO report of 2004 which said that 264,000 children in Pakistan were then employed as domestic help.

"There are 8.52 million home-based workers in the country, according to the figures released in the National Policy on Home-Based Workers, the number of child labourers up to the age of 10 years is around 6 million. This staggering number requires immediate action by the federal and provincial governments," the statement says.

Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Pakistan has committed to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking as well as secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers and by 2025, end child labour in all its forms.

According to the statement, a large number of children still constitute a significant part of the labour force in Pakistan. Legislation relating to child employment are still not aligned with Article 25-A of the Constitution which gives each child a right to education and the employment of children remains unaddressed, particularly in sectors like agriculture, factories, small car workshops, shops, hotels, cinemas, vending on the streets, the fishing industry, mining, brick kilns, weaving, bracelet making, packing and construction etc.

The statement claims that a large portion of these children are employed through an informal economy in the street, in private structures or in their homes, which also deprives them of any form of safety and recognition.

Denying children their fundamental right to be educated between the ages of five to 16 exposes them to health hazards, hampers their development and puts them at risk to other forms of violence, which may also be physical, psychological and sexual, the statement says.

It goes on to say that children in the labour environment are highly vulnerable to exploitation including commercial and sexual as well as trafficking.

“We, Pakistani citizens, cannot wait any further to provide those little citizens with respect and decency and cannot reasonably agree to sacrifice a significant portion of our next generation if we wish to create a prosperous Pakistan in line with SDGs and with the challenges of the 21st century. We therefore demand to the Pakistani government at provincial and national levels to take steps to abolish child labour,” the statement says.

It suggests amending and aligning child employment acts and other relevant laws with Article 25-A, to execute the ILO conventions ratified by the country and to arrest and prosecute all those employing children.

CRM has also urged the government to increase budget allocations for education so that quality education is available to all children in Pakistan and to enact the National Commission on the Rights of the Child Bill, which is still pending in the National Assembly so that child right violations linked with child labour can be monitored and addressed.

It suggests the development of national and provincial child protection mechanisms to rehabilitate, support and reintegrate child labourers in formal education systems.

Other recommendations include the development of family planning programs and the allocation of relevant resources to support families which are below the poverty lines so that their children are not involved in income generating activities, According to the statement, which was uploaded on the ILO website, 168 million children worldwide are involved in labour.

“Child labour has no place in well-functioning and well regulated markets, or in any supply chain. The message that we must act now to stop child labour once and for all has been affirmed by the SDGs. Acting together, it is within our means to make the future of work a future without child labour,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264451>

GOVT OFFICIALS RELUCTANT TO RATIFY CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF INFORMAL WORKERS

Dawn, June 15th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Officials of the law, human resources and foreign affairs ministries appeared reluctant to ratify Internal Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 177, during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice on Tuesday.

The convention, which was introduced in 1996, emphasises the rights of eight million informal workers. It states that those employed in the informal sector should have basic rights, including a fixed minimum wage, should receive various facilities such as healthcare, and have the right to make associations. These workers should also be registered with the social security department.

The committee was discussing a public petition filed by Zehra Bano Khan, the general secretary of the Home Based Women Worker Foundation.

Ms Khan told the committee that while there is no official data on informal workers in Pakistan, there are an estimated eight million people working as informal employees.

“There are 1.2 million women who work from their houses, [making] bangles, jewellery, sports’ goods etc. The formula of minimum wage is not implemented on them,” she said.

She said women who make bangles at home receive Rs5 for 300 bangles, because of which they involve children in their work to make a few thousand bangles every day and increase their earnings.

“Unfortunately, no one looks into those issues. If we ratify ILO Convention 177, the life of informal workers will become easy, and they will be able to work with respect,” she said.

She also said, if ratified, Pakistan will become the first South Asian country to ratify the convention. “All over the world, 100 million people are linked with home based work, out of which 50pc are in South Asia.”

Senator Saeed Ghani (PPP) said that the Constitution also ensures basic rights for all citizens, and so the ILO convention should be ratified. However, he added that Pakistan has signed a number of conventions that are not being implemented.

But, Mr Ghani said by ratifying the convention “we will feel the responsibility to look at the issue”.

A representative of the Foreign Office said that if ratified, implementing the convention would become a responsibility. He said: “Not a single country has ratified it because it is not easy to implement.”

Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Joint Secretary Atifa Raffat also said that while the law was good, ratification could become a problem and a matter of embarrassment.

“A few years ago, some employees of a five star hotel in Karachi were dismissed from service. They sought a court order for reinstatement, but the owner of the hotel obtained a stay order from the Sindh High Court in 2013.”

“We faced international pressure and embarrassment over the issue, because we had ratified the convention about labour laws,” she said.

Zafarullah Khan, the adviser to the prime minister on law and justice, said the matter was sensitive because it would give labour inspections the right to enter houses.

“If we ratify the convention, we will have to submit a report about it every four or five years, and we can face sanctions,” he said.

Mr Khan and the committee chairman Mohammad Javed Abbasi also said provinces should be consulted before a decision is taken.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264931>

RIGHTS OF INFORMAL WORKERS

The Express Tribune, June 17th, 2016.

The plight of workers working in the informal sector in Pakistan is no hidden secret. However, this bit of information is still sure to leave one flabbergasted — women who make glass bangles at home are paid a measly sum of Rs5 for 300 pieces by their thrifty employers and middlemen. The result is that they also end up engaging their children in the tedious job, robbing them of their childhood as they help their mothers make ends meet.

But their case is far from unique. Life is no less bitter for similarly disadvantaged informal workers sweating it out in other sectors. This cycle of exploitation goes on unchecked and unchallenged, remaining largely invisible to public scrutiny.

The country's labour laws do not afford them protection. On top of this, as emerged in a recent session of the Senate Standing Committee of Law and Justice, there is reluctance among officials to ratify International Labour Organisation conventions regarding rights of informal workers as once that's done, there will be pressure to implement international labour laws and a failure to do so can result in penalties for Pakistan.

While it is true that tracking down informal workers, registering them and then keeping track of the conditions they work in will not be an easy endeavour, that shouldn't mean that the government allows the rights of these workers to be trampled upon with impunity.

As it is, being informally employed means that workers are too scattered and disorganised to have their voices heard. The Home Based Women Workers Foundation told the Senate panel that there are some eight million workers working in the informal sector, and of these there are 1.2 million women who work from homes, but the formula of minimum wage is not applied on them and neither are they provided with basic healthcare by their employers nor do they have the right to form associations.

The plight of informal workers must not be ignored. The government needs to set up mechanisms to monitor their plight and punish infringements.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1124220/rights-informal-workers/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 6TH TO JUNE 12TH 2016

ORANGE LINE CASE: HIGH COURT SEEKS ENVIRONMENT DG' S APPEARANCE

Dawn, June 8th, 2016

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Tuesday sought personal appearance of the Director General of the Environment Department to answer queries about hazards due to the multi-billion Orange Line Metro Train project.

DG Javed Iqbal was supposed to appear on Tuesday before a division bench seized with several identical petitions against the project but he did not turn up. The bench directed him to appear without fail on Wednesday (today).

Earlier, Advocate Azhar Siddique continued his arguments on behalf of the petitioners and accused the government of not taking safety measures for workers engaged in the construction of the project. He pointed out that two more workers lost their lives when a pillar collapsed at a construction site.

The bench comprising Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh and Justice Shahid Karim observed with surprise the government signed contract with China but engaged local construction companies in the train project. It said had a Chinese company been involved in the construction work, there would have been rare deaths of workers.

The lawyer argued that there were no beds in public hospitals but the government decided to spend over Rs200 billion on a project meant for two percent of the population. Questioning the transparency of the project, the counsel said Nespak was given contract without open tender. He said growing level of pollution in the city had become a serious health hazard to citizens.

Advocate Siddique further said the government blatantly ignored possible environmental pollution and damage to national heritage sites before initiating the project.

In this case, the bench had already stayed construction of the project within 200-foot radius of eleven heritage sites including Shalamar Gardens, Chauburji, GPO building and shrine of Baba Mauj Darya.

However, a local commission comprising Supreme Court Bar Association Secretary Asad Manzoor Butt and Lahore High Court Bar Association's former secretary Ahmad Qayyum was yet to submit its report about alleged violation of the court's stay.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

Dawn, June 8th, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

THE convoluted history of the labour movement in Pakistan is replete with negativities: state oppression by both military and democratic regimes, ethnic and ideological divides among workers, employers' subversion of genuine workers' representation through pocket unions, to name a few.

Yet it was a brief, two-year flicker of industrial labour struggle that stood out for its promise of labour solidarity and potential for sustained movement, had it not been extinguished by Z.A. Bhutto's civilian martial law regime in June 1972.

The years 1969-72 were politically tumultuous. The country was falling apart, struggling to hold on to whatever remained. Labour had suffered under the military rule of Ayub Khan (1958- 1969): the Trade Union Act 1926 was repealed, trade unions became dysfunctional, the industrialist class had free rein, workers were retrenched in large numbers, and labour activists were arrested and tried in the military courts.

The workers played an active role in Ayub's downfall. His successor, Yahya Khan, in a bid to control the situation, promulgated the 1969 Industrial Relations Ordinance — a repressive, exclusionary law that allowed registration of trade unions only under certain conditions. When the PPP won the 1970 general elections in the West Wing, the workers were infused with socialist ideals and the promise of a better bargain.

When the PPP government was installed on Dec 20, 1971, the workers' demands intensified. Labour militancy increased as disillusionment with the new regime set in. Beginning from January 1972, strikes and lockouts in Karachi became routine.

What distinguished this phase of labour unrest was the coming together of trade unions and federations of diverse trades, ethnicities and ideologies from both the public and private sectors.

The government was compelled to announce a new labour policy in February 1972 promising certain concessions and an improved legislative framework. But confrontation between the workers and the state and employers continued, only to end on a tragic note.

On June 7, 1972, a worker was shot dead by police outside a factory in the SITE area where workers had gathered to collect their wages. The following day, five workers were killed when police opened fire on the funeral procession.

In retrospect, if you sift through the archives, you could identify a number of factors which led to extreme polarisation of stakeholders; a unity among workers that was (and is) rare and the use of force by the state to respond to workers' grievances.

But, as a veteran trade unionist and labour analyst very aptly pointed out to me in a recent conversation, it was the absence of tripartite mechanisms and effective labour institutions that led each party to resort to unilateral decisions and actions.

There was no dialogue between the workers and the employers, and the state did not play its role as mediator of conflict: it sided with the industrialists.

After the June 7-8 incident, the government did call the Tripartite Labour Conference. The workers put up tangible suggestions for amendments in labour laws. But the state used the conference as a ploy to placate workers as it had done previously in the first Tripartite

Labour Conference 1949 and through the 1950s, and it continued with unilateral decisions to deal with labour unrest. In October 1972, police firing led to four workers being killed in the Landhi industrial area.

A few days later, two more workers were shot dead and 50 injured when the police disrupted a workers' meeting in a labour colony in the SITE area.

Lessons are aplenty, but who pays any heed to history? Till today, there is no evidence of sound social dialogue and effective tripartite mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between two unequal partners.

Tripartite mechanisms provide institutional framework for negotiation, consultation and information exchange between and among workers, employers, state officials and other key stakeholders. It leads to dispute prevention, resolution of conflicts and collective bargaining, and creates an enabling environment for economic growth and social progress.

Pakistan ratified the 1976 Tripartite Consultation Convention (No. 144) in 1994. The institutional arrangements for tripartism in place in Pakistan include the Tripartite Labour Conference, provincial standing committees on labour and human resources, provincial and district labour advisory boards, and minimum wage councils.

So what is the complaint about if the institutions are in place? Well, the arrangements do not deliver because the government has failed to establish preconditions for sound social dialogue as outlined by the International Labour Organisation.

There are no strong, independent workers' organisations with the technical capacity and access to relevant information. The government has no political will and commitment to engage in social dialogue.

There is no respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. The state institutional arrangements lack genuine workers' representation. Indeed, it is time to reform labour institutions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263387/lessons-of-history>

WAPDA WORKERS UNION REJECTS 10PC RAISE

Dawn, June 10th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Rejecting 10 per cent (pc) raise in salaries and pensions of government servants and industrial workers in the federal budget, All Pakistan Workers Confederation Sindh president Abdul Latif Nizamani said on Thursday that the government must fix salaries and pensions according to inflation in the country to satisfy workers.

"The government wants to snatch even single loaf of chapati which is somehow available to the worker. It is utter injustice and a kind of cruelty," he said, according to a handout.

He also said the government upgraded and revised pay scales of only clerks while workers of other cadres were deprived of the facility. Same facilities must be given to all workers without any discrimination, he demanded.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263786>

THE INVISIBLE WORKERS

Dawn, Sunday Magazine, June 12th, 2016

Rizwana Naqvi

Eleven-year-old Shan Ali, who worked as babysitter for Atiya Al Hussain's seven-month-old son, was reported dead to the police on Jan 5, 2012. Initially Atiya and her husband, Mudassar Abbas, told the police that Shan had

committed suicide but the autopsy performed on him indicated he had been strangled to death. Eventually, Atiya confessed: while she was trying to sleep, Shan had neglected her son and she choked the 11-year-old boy to death in a fit of anger.

Leaving aside the absurdity of having a pre-teen look after a young child and the exploitation of Shan, what is highlighted in this case is the lack of adequate child labour laws in the informal sector.

Shan should never have been employed in the first place, let alone be working in an environment where his employer was physically abusive and be able to get away with it. But there is no official government agency or implementation of laws to protect children working as domestic staff in affluent households.

The number of children working as maids or domestic help is hard to come by — there are no statistics on child domestic labour in Pakistan; not surprising given the invisible nature of the work. According to International Labour Organisation's (ILO) report in 2012, however, there are an estimated 12 million child labourers in Pakistan.

Women and young girls make up a disproportionate number of these workers; 8.5m of these workers are female but a significant number of boys are also exposed to similar problems and vulnerabilities.

However, as Fazela Gulrez, a child rights activist, points out, the actual number of child labourers, let alone children currently working as domestic staff, is hard to ascertain. "No survey has been conducted on child labour in Pakistan since 1996," she says.

Since these children work behind closed doors, in the privacy of people's homes, it increases the chances of abuse and exploitation.

According to the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (Sparc), violence against domestic child workers is on the increase; between January 2010 and December 2014, 47 cases of violence against child domestic workers were reported in different parts of the country, while as many as 24 children lost their lives from violence committed by their employers.

Cases of such nature began to make headlines after January 2010, when Shazia Masih was tortured to death in Lahore at the hands of the family of a noted lawyer.

Child workers are kept in exploitative, almost slave-like conditions — they have long working hours and are assigned hard tasks like washing dishes and clothes, sweeping, cleaning, and gardening.

Often they are assigned duties which carry a higher risk of causing injury such as ironing, working in the kitchen holding hot pans, using knives and other hazardous tools or washing bathrooms with chemicals. In many cases, such as Shan's, they are made to take care of young children who are barely a few years younger than themselves.

Such children are mostly underfed and overworked, and, in case of live-in help, are often not provided proper sleeping quarters but are made to sleep on the hard floor. The slightest of mistakes can land them a scolding and a beating; many cases documented by NGOs and the media show that children are often subjected to verbal, physical and sexual abuse by their employers.

"Child domestic labour is considered the worst form of child labour as it takes place within the four walls of the house and hidden from the society. They are the least paid and have the longest working hours. In most of the cases they are from some remote rural area and live with the employer's family ... and have no contact with their own families for months," explains Arshad Mahmood, a child rights activist.

Children engaged in labour are deprived of their basic rights, guaranteed under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (of which Pakistan is a signatory) and the country's Constitution, such as the right to food,

access to education, healthcare, development, to have friends, to play, and the right to protection from violence and exploitation.

Even when we talk about the ill-effects of child domestic labour, few people think of the damage that is caused to a child's psyche when they are taken away from their family, subjected to abuse, and starved of love.

According to Gulrez, "Children working in homes are exposed to some of the most severe dangers and hazards, the most important being the loss of their childhood, which is hardly ever mentioned as a hazard. Other than that, they work as virtual slaves and in slave-like conditions with unlimited working hours and at very meagre wages and at times without pay."

Gulrez adds that the sense of being 'trapped' and the hopelessness the child is plunged into is what is the most traumatic. "The worst is the loss of dignity and self-esteem that these children are exposed to from an early age, besides losing the opportunity to education and a healthy life. Many are separated from their parents and siblings and live in isolation with people who may generally look down on them as scum of the earth. Theirs is a life of despair, frustration and lost hope."

Zohair Waheed, manager research and communication, Sparc, agrees, pointing out that often such children are trafficked to the cities from smaller towns and villages: "Children are employed in homes which remain unmonitored by child protection and labour department officials, allowing employers to exploit their young employees further. In Pakistan for instance, child domestic workers are hired by dubious 'employers' from rural areas and taken to cities to work in the homes of middle and upper middle-class families."

Socio-economic factors such as poverty plus a lack of job opportunities for low-income adult workers usually force people to place their children in domestic work. If the child is hired as a live-in worker it also reduces the cost of meals and overcrowding in their homes.

In addition to this, the demand exists as children can be hired for lower wages, they do not protest and meekly follow all orders, and above all have no protection. Some employers prefer to employ young boys and girls, since they feel more comfortable having them around female members of their own family.

One may ask why people leave their young sons and daughters to live and work at others' homes where they are not safe. "No one wants their child to be away from them and that too with strangers who may or may not treat them properly, but circumstances force us to do so," says Zainab Bibi.

Zainab doesn't leave her daughter, who is 10 years old, anywhere but takes her along with her where she works to help her out, although she agrees that eventually she will have to find employment for her in a year or two when she has learnt her chores. "What options do we have? We can't educate them so they find good jobs. And in these days when the cost of living is so high everyone has to chip in; I also have to save for her wedding," she adds.

People like Zainab are banking their hopes on 'good' employers and there are people who do take care of their young employees, not making them work beyond their capacity and ensuring that they eat the same food as the family does, and get time to rest in between chores.

Then there are women like Mrs Haider, who does not even allow her maid to let her children work. "No child will work at my home," she declared when her maid brought in her young daughter and insisted that she can sweep and clean. "Baji, our children learn to work at a young age," the maid insisted. But Mrs Haider was resolute; she made the child sit in the shade and told the maid that she can bring her daughter if she can't be left at home but that she will not work.

Mahmood is of the opinion that in order to 'create' more employers like Mrs Haider, widespread awareness needs to be created about the negative effects of labour on children, and solutions need to be found outside the legal paradigm. However, the Pakistan government has a long way to go even when it comes to the legal course (See A legal vacuum).

It is important to sensitise people about child labour as mere legislation will not solve the problem. While poverty should not be taken as an excuse for child labour, if people who hire children to work at their place fix their wages beforehand and allow them to go to school or educate them at home, and give them time off for recreation and play, these children would be somewhat better off.

Twelve-year-old Tehmina, a domestic worker in Islamabad, hadn't been paid for several months. According to an August 2010 Sparc report, when the young girl demanded that she be paid what she was owed, she was pushed off a balcony. The fall severely injured Tehmina's spinal cord and she was paralysed; she died a few months later. There are plenty of cases such as Tehmina's documented in the media and by NGOs. What makes the 12-year-old's case even more tragic is that she had no legal rights as a child domestic worker under Pakistan's labour laws. There are no specific laws on domestic workers below the age of 18 in Pakistan. To make matters more complicated, the laws addressing adult domestic workers are not specific enough to be effective.

Domestic labour is mentioned in two legislations: one is The Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance, 1965; Section 55-A of the ordinance stipulates that "Every employer of a domestic servant shall be liable to provide at his own cost to the domestic servant medical care to the extent mentioned in section 45".

The other is the Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961 that includes 'domestic work' in its definition of 'worker' but the government has not yet notified the minimum wages applicable to domestic workers.

A new piece of legislation, the Domestic Workers (Employment Rights) Bill, could change the legal landscape. According to Zohair Waheed, manager research and communication at Sparc, the bill was tabled in the Senate in January 2014 and "sent to the Senate Standing Committee on Law for review".

"As the subject of domestic workers is a provincial one, the bill was amended to apply to the Islamabad Capital Territory. However, once the bill is passed by the Senate ... the provincial governments can adopt the bill to make it applicable in the provinces," he adds.

The bill aims to protect the rights of the domestic workers, to regulate their employment and conditions of service and to provide them with social security, safety, health facility and welfare. It sets the age of domestic workers between 14 and 60, provides them with the same rights available to other formal sector workers, and creates a special domestic workers welfare fund.

Whether and how it will be implemented is another matter: given that there is often no official agreement between the parties, enforcing anything legally could prove to be tricky. "There is no formal employment contract and arrangements are made informally between the employers and the child's family," points out Arshad Mahmood, a child rights activist.

Some activists argue that there are other national and local laws that can easily be utilised to discourage and regulate child labour. "Child domestic labour [can be notified] under the schedule of banned occupations of the Employment of Children Act, 1991 and the Punjab Employment of Children (Amendment) Act 2011," says Mahmood.

The activist further adds that other legal options such as the implementation of Article 25-A of the Constitution which ensures the provision of "free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to 16 years in such manner as may be determined by law" could also be explored. "Effective implementation of [the article] can play a major role in the eradication of child domestic labour," he states.

The government has also fallen short of its obligations under international conventions it is a signatory to. Pakistan has ratified a number of UN and ILO conventions relating to children such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits work for children at the expense of their education, health, childhood and remuneration among other things; it has also ratified ILO conventions regarding the minimum age for employment, hazardous and worst forms of child labour.

Experts point out that the government could have done more to implement what it agreed to under these conventions. “A list of banned occupations was also prepared and notified under the schedule of banned occupations of the Employment of Children Act, 1991; however, child domestic labour has not been included in that list despite the fact that [it] is clearly one of the worst forms of child labour,” emphasises Mahmood.

Pakistan has also not signed the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers (2011) which could have had the most impact on the ground. It calls for comprehensively banning child labour in the domestic sector and for setting up of a minimum age for domestic workers consistent with the ILO conventions on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Work, and the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The Convention requires ratifying states to ensure that work done by children (those above the minimum age of employment for domestic workers and less than 18 years of age) does not affect their ability to get a meaningful education.

Child rights activists believe that concrete legislation or policy steps have to be taken by the government to ensure basic rights for domestic workers and that more research needs to be done before effective policies can be written.

“It is important to carry out a serious and comprehensive survey to find out the exact magnitude of the problem. Implementation of national laws [and conventions] to stop child labour, absolutely and completely without any reservations, is a difficult task but it is not an impossible one,” states Fazela Gulrez, a child rights activist.

She also believes implementation of family planning on a war footing will go a long way in addressing poverty, one of the root causes of child labour. “This may sound like radical strategy, but [considering] where Pakistan stands in all its human indicators perhaps this is one of the most vital measures ... for the welfare of the child, parents and Pakistan,” she says.

While lawmakers debate what will and won’t work when it comes to domestic labour, children like Tehmina shall continue to suffer. Even in death, the 12 year old wasn’t able to get justice. Tehmina’s father was given compensation on the condition that he drop the charges against his daughter’s former employers; he agreed.

Mahmood points out that out-of-court settlements are very common in such instances; he says Tehmina’s father was paid Rs300,000 for his ‘troubles’. “Such inhuman and tragic murders should be considered a crime against the state and should not be allowed to be settled out of court,” says Mahmood. Whether the state does anything, however, is a game of wait and see. -Rizwana Naqvi

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263723/the-invisible-workers>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 30TH TO JUNE 5TH 2016
‘WORKERS SHOULD FORM A STRONG POLITICAL PARTY TO GET DUE RIGHTS’
Dawn, May 31st, 2016

HYDERABAD: Speakers at a programme stressed the need for forming a strong political party to represent workers in the elected houses and get long-standing issues of the labour class resolved.

The programme titled ‘Informal labour in construction sector in Hyderabad and surrounding cities’ was organised by the Hyderabad task force of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) at the local press club on Monday.

“Two mainstream political parties — the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — of the country represent capitalists and feudal lords, respectively. Workers must form their own strong political party which could fight for their rights,” Sindh HRCP vice chairperson Asad Iqbal Butt said.

He stressed that political parties of the country were supposed to knuckle down some serious work to address issues of informal labour because these issues could be solved in elected houses.

Though NGOs played an important role in society, they did not succeed in getting the issues of the labour class resolved, he said. Every worker should be hired under a proper appointment letter offering due rights and facilities to him, he added.

Mr Butt noted that more than 250 workers lost their lives in the Baldia factory inferno in Karachi but the bereaved families could not claim their dues and compensation because no appointment letters were issued to the workers, he said.

Zeenat Hisam, a researcher representing the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) at the programme, said there was no trend of research in the construction sector of the country although approximately 4.5 million workers were associated with it. There occurred many casualties, but due to non-implementation of labour laws, the affected workers were not getting due attention, she said.

She observed that there were more than 10 major builders operating in Hyderabad. All construction companies must provide proper training of avoiding risks and hazards to their employees, she said, adding that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) laws envisaged safety gears to be made available at workplaces to avoid casualties.

Sindh Awami Workers Party general secretary Bukhshal Thalho pleaded for forming a committee to address issues of workers.

He said that all political parties promised safeguarding workers rights but after coming to power they would not fulfil their commitment. He said that most workers earned between Rs300 and Rs1,200 a day but without any facility, including health and education.

All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union president Abdul Latif Nizamani said there were formal and informal, registered and unregistered labourers as they were described for calculated benefits in the world. He said there were five per cent organised or qualified workers in the country while the rest of them were unskilled.

He said workers must be given all rights as they served as the backbone of the economy.

Hyderabad HRCF task force head Dr Ashothama Lohana said there were 42 categories of construction workers, including labourer, mason, electrician, carpenter, painter and interior designer. He called for steps to ensure all due rights to be given to workers.

Others who spoke included psychiatrist Dr Shahnawaz Dall, writer Nazeer Channa, journalist Sohail Sangi, All Pakistan Defence Workshop Federation chairman Mehboob Qureshi and International Socialist Committee chairman Mohammad Khan Ahmedani.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261680/workers-should-form-a-strong-political-party-to-get-due-rights>

FIRE CAUSED BY CYLINDER BLAST KILLS LABOURER

Dawn, May 31st, 2016

SHIKARPUR: A labourer was burnt to death when gas cylinder exploded and caused a fire at an ice factory situated in the industrial area along the Khanpur-Shikarpur section of the Indus Highway, officials at the New Faujdari police station said on Monday.

The victim was identified as Abdul Qadeer Jakhro, 27. Initial investigations suggested that the labourer was asleep at the factory when the cylinder exploded. He was caught in fire and died instantly.

Fire-fighters extinguished the blaze and retrieved the body, which was handed over to the heirs after a post-mortem examination at the Shikarpur district headquarters hospital.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261679/fire-caused-by-cylinder-blast-kills-labourer>

SLAVERY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Express Tribune, June 2nd, 2016

The Global Slavery Index 2015, released on May 31, has revealed that 45.8 million people are living in slavery across the world. Slavery in the modern times refers to people being kept against their will to work for someone to whom they are usually indebted, or forced to stay for other reasons owing to threats or violence.

In Pakistan, its most common form is bonded labour, often found in brick kilns, with workers owing money to their employers and unable to leave until the debt is repaid in full. They are trapped into working for long periods of time for little to no pay. This means workers might never be able to repay their debts, being unable to earn the money to do so. Pakistan has been ranked third in the Global Slavery Index — with 2.13 million people living in bondage, only behind India and China.

Slavery in the country exists in the form of debt bondage, primarily in Punjab and Sindh. Generations of brick kiln workers are trapped in slavery owing huge sums to their employers and have no choice but to continue working in deplorable conditions to pay off their debts, which keep piling up due to interest.

NGOs in the country continue their uphill task to highlight the issue and do what they can to free labourers from bondage, but little seems to have been done at the government level to address this issue. There is little relief as not enough media attention is given to the menace. Federal and provincial governments have continuously failed to enforce the relevant labour laws and seem to have accepted it as a permissible system.

Our rulers' indifference here is appalling, as they do not appear to recognise the evils of this medieval criminal practice continuing in 21st century Pakistan. It is one thing to live in a country with a lack of opportunities but it is another to be trapped in a vicious cycle for one's whole life, for generations to come, without any free will and no hope for a better tomorrow. This must change..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1114691/slavery-21st-century/>

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July 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 25TH TO JULY 30TH 2016

SC REJECTS STEEL MILL WORKERS' SALARY PLEA

The Express Tribune, July 30th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday, while rejecting the plea of Pakistan Steel Mills employees regarding release of salaries, observed that judicial interference is not a substitute for prudent management.

The verdict came in a petition moved by the Pakistan Steel Peoples Workers Union seeking a restraining order for the government not to terminate the services of the employees of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) .

The apex court also observed that poor handling of the PSM drove it to bankruptcy while small foundries in the private sector grew into big industries with prudent management.

“It is because of prudent management that small foundries in the private sector grew into large industrial units. Tata – a renowned name in the steel industry – attained an enviable status in our neighbouring country (India),” the court observed.

On June 24, the court had reserved its ruling on determining the maintainability of the petition that whether the case could be heard under its original jurisdiction on enforcement of fundamental rights or not.

Contrary to its historical judgment wherein it had halted the process of PSM privatisation, the court has declared, “judicial analysis, assessment or adjudication of such matters, which is more or less theoretical, cannot be a substitute for prudent management”.

The court said the PSMC alone is not in the lurch. PIAC (Pakistan International Airline Corporation), which was one of the best airlines of the world, is also in troubled waters.

Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan, while authoring the four-page verdict, said overcoming failures of PSM is the domain of the executive and legislature.

“The executive in the first instance could take stock of the situation, examine the causes of their failure and find ways and means to bring them out of such straits. The legislature could legislate to deal with the problems besetting the corporations if the existing dispensation in its wisdom is not equal to the occasion,” the court said in its judgment.

The judgment further observed that PSMC is a huge enterprise, adding no mega or minor project in the country is conceivable without steel mills.

“It, despite having a winning head-start came to a deadlock,” observed the top court, declaring PSMC a hub of economy and backbone of the country.

The top court said the matter of payment of salaries to its employees, if it is inextricably linked with the disputed question of the fact, could be addressed by forums established by law.

“Failure to settle liabilities towards provident and gratuity funds may have worsened the plight of the employees, but such liabilities could also be settled by the fora established in this behalf.”

The bench recommended the employees to approach the high court to redress their grievances.

The judgments said no order terminating the services of the employees, laying them off, deducting their allowances or changing terms and conditions of their service has yet been passed; therefore, petition under Article 184(3) of the constitution on this score would be premature.

In case there is any such apprehension in the minds of the employees, they could if so advised approach the high court and ask for the issuance of a writ of prohibition or any other writ under Article 199 of the constitution, it further said.

“Inaction or indecision on the part of the government may raise alarm in the minds of the employees of PSMC and add to the anguish of every thinking citizen, but where the remedy could be heard from the high court under Article 199 of the constitution and other for a established in this behalf, we would not like to step in and wax eloquent in futility,” the judgment read.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1152173/sc-rejects-steel-mill-workers-salary-plea/>

LAHORE DCO, CCPO TO ENFORCE CHILD LABOUR BAN

The Express Tribune, July 31st, 2016.

Imran Adnan

LAHORE: The provincial government has nominated the Lahore DCO and the CCPO as inspectors to implement the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance of 2016 in Lahore from August 14.

The law bans employment of children below the age of 15 and restricts employment of children between 15 and 18 years of age for non-hazardous tasks only.

Assistant commissioners and ASPs and DSPs have been authorised to enforce the law at the tehsil and circle levels, respectively.

The decisions were announced at a meeting held on Friday. Lahore DCO Capt (r) Muhammad Usman said strict enforcement of the law would be ensured from August 14.

He said a comprehensive crackdown would be launched against those employing children under the age of 15. He said all manufacturing units, industries, workshops, businesses and charities or welfare organisations would be inspected for the purpose.

The meeting reviewed provisions of the new law and powers delegated to the authorities and devised a strategy to ensure effective implementation of the law.

In a directive issued in connection with the law, DCO Usman has asked all industries and businesses to refrain from hiring children under the age of 15 years. He said violators of the ban could be imprisoned from seven days to six months, fined between Rs10,000 and Rs50,000 and their businesses sealed for up to a week.

The DCO gave the businesses till August 12 to submit a report to the assistant commissioners concerned on tasks assigned to children between the ages of 15 and 18 years employed at their premises. He said those who failed to maintain this record and submit a report in this regard could face one-month prison term or Rs10,000 fine or both. The prison term could extend up to five years for repeat offenders.

Jobs categorised as hazardous under the new law and banned for children in 15-18 age group include those related to transport of passengers, goods or mail; catering at a railway station, movement of the vendor or any employee from one platform to another or into or out of a moving train; construction work at a railway station or any other work done in close proximity to or between the railway lines, at a port authority, underground mines and on ground quarries including blasting tasks; power-driven cutting machinery like saws, shears, guillotines, agricultural machines, thrashers, fodder cutting machines, live electrical wires over 50 volts;

All operations related to leather tanning processes such as soaking, dehairing, liming, chrome tanning, deliming, pickling, defleshing, ink application; mixing and manufacture of pesticides and insecticides and fumigation; sandblasting and other such work involving exposure to free silica; exposure to toxic, explosive and carcinogenic chemicals eg asbestos, benzene, ammonia, chlorine, manganese, cadmium, sulphur dioxide, phosphorus, benzidenedyes, isocyanates, carbon tetrachloride, carbon disulphide, epoxy resins, formaldehyde, metal fumes, heavy metals like nickel, mercury chromium, lead arsenic, beryllium, fiber glass; exposure to cement dust in cement industry; exposure to coal dust; manufacturing and sale of fireworks and explosives; sites where liquid petroleum gas (LPG) or compressed natural gas (CNG) is filled in cylinders; glass and metal furnaces and glass bangles manufacturing; weaving, printing, dyeing and fishing sections; sewer pipelines, pits and storage tanks; stone crushing; lifting and carrying of heavy weight (15kg and above)

Specially in transport industry; carpet weaving; scavenging including that of hospital waste; tobacco processing and manufacturing including niswar and biri making; deep-sea fishing, commercial fishing and processing of fish and seafood; sheep casing and wool industry; ship breaking; surgical instruments' manufacturing; spice grinding; boiler house; cinemas, mini cinemas and cyber clubs; mica-cutting and splitting; shells manufacturing; soap manufacturing; wool cleaning; building and construction industry; manufacturing of slate pencils including packing; and manufacture of products from agate.

The law specifies that children employed for non-hazardous tasks should to work in three-hour shifts. It says children could work for no more than six hours in a day. It adds that work hours should not overlap school timings, there should be a day off from work every week and weekly days off should not be changed more than once a month.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1152726/new-law-dco-ccpo-enforce-child-labour-ban/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 18TH TO JULY 24TH 2016

EMPOWERING VULNERABLE PEASANT COMMUNITIES

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, July 18th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

A PROJECT supported by international agencies to address social imbalances in Sindh has helped improve the livelihood of families of poor peasants and other rural households, in areas covered by the programme.

According to the evaluation report, the project has initiated written tenancy agreements between landlords/owners and haris that is a step forward in protecting the rights of the tenants.

Under the just-completed three-year 'Livelihood Restoration and Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable Peasant Communities in Sindh' jointly sponsored by Food and Agriculture Organisation, International Labour Organisation and UN women social uplift programme in Dadu and Mirpurkhas districts, 1200 men and 1214 women farmers signed land tenancy agreements with their landlords.

The outcome can be best described in the words of haris in one village, "our lives have changed from making do, to one of prosperity, where we can begin to think of new opportunities". They also explained that "the real way that we have changed and gained benefits, is through learning to plan and work together in various ways."

In its ground breaking initiative to mitigate oppressive tenancy conditions, the project applied the Sindh Tenancy Agreement (STA) 1950 but reached the conclusion: as most haris are sharecroppers, a suitable contract law may be more helpful.

The project was engaged in the formulation of the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013 (SIRA) to ensure the haris were specifically included as workers. This may open the door for better legal status and formation of their unions. This law could have profound deep implications for haris.

The project reached all 120 target villages across Mirpurkhas and Dadu districts. Based on a number of assumptions the project beneficiaries were estimated at 11,013 rural families (93pc) including 7,530 hari families (85pc).

The project was designed to benefit the livelihood of some 11,800 rural families in targeted villages located in the command areas of the Daulat Pur Minor-Jamrao and Gorki Minor- Mithrao Canal of Mirpurkhas District and 'tail-end' of the command area of 'Rice Canal' of Dadu District.

An estimated 64,000 haris and 22,000 non-haris have benefited from the project's overall social empowerment and capacity building interventions, under its programme 'to empower peasant organisations, farmers bodies, farmers and women groups to enhance their natural resource base while strengthening their resilience to future shocks'.

Nearly 8,000 farmer families have improved access to irrigation water, 2,400 farmer families and small holders have adopted conservation agriculture technology and practices.

Almost 1000 entrepreneurial men and women farmers increased their income by setting up forty 'producer marketing groups', while 1,500 home-based women farmers diversified their food baskets through 'integrated homestead gardening' packages.

The project was launched in the wake of the super-floods of 2010 and 2011 which severely affected 970,000 households in Sindh and resulted in agricultural losses estimated at \$23bn.

The agriculture interventions (including irrigation rehabilitation coupled with improved practices) raised crop yields by 50-100pc from previous much lower levels. Off-farm activities, such as vocational training, has seen over 90pc of the graduates earning income from their new skills, while micro-finance has been more effective in supporting off-farm and value-adding activities.

The activities addressing the entrenched social imbalances have similarly been notable. Women have achieved national identity registration, and begun to access health and social security. They have started to participate in activities previously not open to them; traveling to markets, bargaining collectively to gain higher prices (30pc) and participating in village committees.

The evaluation report says such changes are transformational as they allow the farmers to think about what else they might do and adopted viable farm practices.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271388>

HARASSMENT OF WORKERS PROTESTED

Dawn, July 18th, 2016

PESHAWAR: People belonging to minorities held a demonstration here on Sunday against harassment of sanitation workers and demanded of the government to approve a separate anti-harassment act for protection of the non-Muslim employees.

The protesters were holding banners and placards inscribed with demands for protection of the sanitary workers.

Talking to media persons, All Pakistan Hindu Right Movement Chairman Haroon Sarbdiyal said the sanitary workers in different government departments were considered like personal slaves of their high ups.

He said there were many examples that the workers were forced to work in the houses of officers and heads of different institutions which was in violation of laws.

The minorities, he said were not migrants and deserved equal rights, and asked the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure protection of the rights of minorities, especially class-IV employees.

He said a Christian woman named, who is working as a sweeper in Regional Institute of Teachers Education College was threatened by the college principal to terminate her if she did not come regularly to her residence for domestic work.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271554>

PUNJAB BANS CHILD LABOUR

The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2016.

The government of Punjab on July 14, has enacted an ordinance banning the employment of children and defined strict regulations for the employment of adolescents aged 15-18. As Pakistan is regularly near the top of the list of countries where child labour is widely prevalent, this was a necessary step to curb the exploitation of children and adolescents in hazardous or illegal industries.

The Ordinance's primary purpose is to protect children from bondage, trafficking and abuse. It also defines labour laws specific to the employment of adolescent workers by limiting their number of working hours, setting break times and listing the industries in which they cannot be employed due to health and safety risks. The law holds both the employers and parents/guardians responsible and sets out fines and imprisonment as possible punishments for violation.

The employment of child labour is a problem which has its roots in several interlinked factors. Employers select young workers because they can be paid less for the same work and can be exploited more easily.

Meanwhile, many children are forced into the labour market early because of poverty. The stark reality of life for many of the poorest families in this country is that every member of the household must contribute income to avoid

homelessness and starvation. There is also a thriving bonded labour and trafficking market in Pakistan and children are more likely than adults to be caught in its net.

Then there is the problem of education. Although government schools are plentiful, the education they provide hardly yields work opportunities which are already sparse even for the highly qualified. Technical education could provide work opportunities but a large portion of the country's industry especially small and medium-sized enterprises are under-regulated with regard to working conditions and adherence to labour laws.

For the new ordinance to be successful, not only will the authorities have to strive to implement it, there must also be efforts towards improving the education sector and job creation in the economy.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1143718/punjab-bans-child-labour/>

200 PCRWR WORKERS AWAIT REGULARISATION FOR 10 YEARS

Dawn, July 20th, 2016

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: A decade on, some 200 employees of the Pakistan Council for Research and Water Resources (PCRWR) are yet to be absorbed as regular employees.

On Tuesday, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology set aside other items on the agenda to discuss this particular issue.

The services of these employees were hired for Pakistan Safe Drinking Water (PSDW) project which was initiated by the PCRWR. These contractual employees were to be absorbed by the science and technology ministry in order to keep the 20 state of the art water testing laboratories across the country operational.

And while the project worth Rs1.2 billion has been transferred to the non-development side, its employees are yet to be regularised.

Projects in the development side are in the experimental stage while those moved to the non-development side are regular projects of a government department.

Some employees who worked on the project were present at the meeting and argued that the ministry was unnecessarily delaying the process, especially when the secretary, Fazal Abbas Makeen, has the powers to regularise them.

PSDW Assistant Director Masood Ahmed gave examples of similar cases in the past where temporary staff was appointed on permanent seats.

“It was general practice in the PCRWR that after the completion of a project, the posts were converted to the non-development side and the same staff working under the project was absorbed against the created posts. In the recent past, a selection committee consisting of representatives from the science and technology ministry shifted 68 employees from the running development projects to the non-development side,” Mr Ahmed said.

Like the rest of his colleagues, Masood Ahmed has also been working at the project without a salary since January 1, 2016.

“It is extremely stressful to work without a salary in this age and with the thought that our services can be terminated any day,” said Manzoor Hussein, who is a research officer at the project.

The meeting was told that the PSDW project was transferred to the non-development side on January 1, 2016 following directions from the Establishment Division and that the finance ministry had allocated funds for the project in February 2016. The Establishment Division had declared the secretary of the science and technology ministry as the competent authority for regularising the services of the temporary employees.

“We don’t understand why we are being discriminated against when 85pc of the process is complete according to the rules,” Masood Ahmed said.

PCRWR Chairman Dr Mohammad Ashraf, said all the resources, time and money used for setting up the water laboratories across the country and the efforts of the employees will be wasted if they were not regularised.

After the Minister for Science and Technology Rana Tanveer and Secretary Fazal Abbas Makeen said they will send a summary to the prime minister regarding the regularisation of the project staff, members of the committee including chairman of the committee PML-N MNA Chaudhry Tariq Bashir Cheema urged them to exercise the authority given to them instead of sending summaries to the prime minister.

“The summary could take long and the outcome might not be to the benefit of the 200 or so staff of the project,” Mr Cheema said.

After the meeting, Mr Cheema told the staff that members of the committee had done the best they could and that they should now pray for an outcome in their favour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271933/200-pcrwr-workers-await-regularisation-for-10-years>

WORK HAZARD: EIGHT WORKERS INJURED IN BOILER BLAST

The Express Tribune, July 20th, 2016.

LAHORE: Eight workers were injured after a boiler exploded at a factory located in Nishtar Colony on Tuesday. Police said that the accident had occurred at a garments factory situated near Masjid Ibrahim. “The explosion caused a fire which spread throughout the factory. Most of the labourers evacuated the building. Eight of them suffered burns. They are receiving medical treatment at a nearby hospital,” police said. A Rescue 1122 team later put out the fire.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1145205/work-hazard-eight-workers-injured-boiler-blast/>

SIX LABOUR BODIES OPPOSE DEVOLUTION OF WWF, EOBI

Dawn, July 21st, 2016

HYDERABAD: Leaders of six labour federations and trade unions have opposed handover of Workers Welfare Board (WWF) and Employees Old Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) to provinces and demanded repeal of Workers Welfare Fund Act 2014 enacted by Sindh government in haste.

They said the devolution of WWF and EOBI to provinces would deprive workers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan of the facilities of Tripartite Welfare Organisation because the two provinces had small number of factories and, therefore EOBI and WWF generated limited income.

They proposed that a law ensuring merit-based representation of government, employers and workers should be enacted in line with the ILO convention 144 and Workers Welfare Fund Ordinance 1977 in consultation with labour leaders.

Qamoos Gul Khattak of Muttahida Labour Federation, Rana Mehmood Ali Khan of National Labour Federation, Mehboob Qureshi of Pakistan Workers Federation, Ghulam Sarwar Chandio of All Sindh Trade Union Organisation, Ashraf Rajput of Sindh Sugar Mills Workers Federation and Mohammad Ali Khoso of Sindh Mines Workers Federation said at a press conference at the press club on Wednesday that if their demands were not met, they would launch protest sit-ins.

They alleged the portfolio of the labour department had been given to an unelected wadera, Asghar Junejo, who considered industrial workers as his personal harris and preferred to run the department through his front men.

They alleged that postings were made considering 'corruption potential' of an officer. The social security department which was responsible for labourers' healthcare had been destroyed and any inquiry by National Accountability Bureau or audit by Auditor General Sindh into the use of funds at Valika and Landhi hospitals in Karachi would reveal billion of rupees corruption, they said.

They said that facilities of death and dowry grants, scholarships, sewing machines and bicycles that used to be given by WWF were on the decline although such facilities should have been increased after the 18th amendment.

They said that bribe was being demanded for allotment of residential quarters to labourers. Students of model schools did not get books, uniforms, sweaters and shoes over the past two years despite release of funds, they said.

Students suffering from hepatitis who received the first dose of drugs in September 2014 had been left unattended since as their funds had been misappropriated, they said.

They said that 87 cases of death grant of Hyderabad region were sent to secretary of labour on May 23, 2014, but over 30 widows had not so far got their funds over different objections.

They said that secretary was not ready to talk to workers over students' scholarship and pointed out that Rs3 million meant for mine workers' medicines were embezzled in 2013-14 but no action had been taken to date in this regard despite the fact that an inquiry had proved the corruption.

They said that Hyderabad regional labour office was without additional and deputy directors and there were reports that officers were required to pay hefty amount for getting posted. The entire department was on the verge of destruction, they said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272099/six-labour-bodies-oppose-devolution-of-wwf-eobi>

WORKPLACE ACCIDENT: WORKER DIES, FOUR INJURED IN FACTORY CYLINDER BLAST
The Express Tribune, July 23rd, 2016.

LAHORE: A labourer died and four others received injuries in a cylinder blast at a garments factory in Sheikhpura Factory Area on Friday.

An Edhi Foundation worker said that fire had erupted at Fatima Fertilisers on Sheikhpura Road following a cylinder explosion. He said five labourers were injured in the incident. They were taken to a nearby hospital where one of them died. The deceased was identified just as Yousaf. A police official said the blast took place in the afternoon sometime before the lunch break.

He said a gas leak had caused the blast. He said some workers had suffered bruises as they were trying to run out of the factory following the blast.

The body of the deceased was sent to a morgue for an autopsy.

Police said forensic evidence had been gathered and statements of witnesses recorded during preliminary investigation.

On Tuesday, six people had been injured in a cylinder blast in Nishter Colony area.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1147322/workplace-accident-worker-dies-four-injured-factory-cylinder-blast/>

OUR INVISIBLE AND NEGLECTED WORKFORCE

The Express Tribune, July 23rd, 2016

Syed Mohammad Ali

Pakistan is estimated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to have the ninth-largest workforce in the world. However, since our formal employment is limited to a few sectors oriented towards exports, including textiles, leather and footwear, the bulk of our national workforce is employed in the informal sector.

The informal sector is, in fact, a pervasive economic feature of most developing economies, contributing to employment creation, production and income generation. In terms of its contribution to the GDP, it accounts for between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of annual output in developing countries in Asia and Africa (World Bank).

While on the one hand, informal employment can provide a cushion for workers who cannot find a job in the formal sector. On the other hand, a large informal sector entails a loss in budget revenues by reducing taxes and social security contributions paid by employers, and, in turn, diminishing the availability of resources needed to improve infrastructure and other public goods and services.

An informal sector also leads to a high tax burden on registered labour. A high level of informality also can undermine the rule of law and governance, when a significant proportion of a nation's productivity occurs outside the preview of state laws and regulations. The exploitation of workers in the informal sector is also a common phenomenon.

Women, migrants, religious minorities and other marginalised/vulnerable groups of workers, who are excluded from other opportunities, often have little choice but to take jobs in the informal sector.

In Pakistan as well, the informal sector provides measly remuneration to men and women who are often working under poor working conditions. These workers are often also compelled to engage their children in labour to ensure household survival, in turn denying them the right to education and hence perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty. This cycle of exploitation goes on unchallenged within the informal sector.

Pakistan's informal sector has been found the poorest paymaster in a working paper on 'informal labour markets in Pakistan' recently released by the State Bank of Pakistan. Nearly 48 per cent of surveyed firms within the informal sector were found to be paying their workers below the minimum wage, in comparison to only 17.5 per cent of the formal sector paying their workers below the minimum wage.

Informal employment lacks any form of contractual obligations, no legal protection in case of wage disputes, there are no safeguards to prevent termination of work without notice or due compensation. Informal workers also lack guaranteed social benefits such as pensions, sick pay or health insurance.

The Home Based Women Workers Foundation, for instance, has recently estimated that around 1.2 million women work from their homes, but the formula of minimum wage is not applied on them and neither are they provided with basic healthcare by their employers, nor do they have any form of unionisation which can represent them.

Multitudes of informal workers are similarly slogging away in agriculture, at brick kilns littered across the country, in fishing, mining and leather tanneries. Hundreds of thousands of poor families are trapped in bonded labour arrangements due to their indebtedness.

Our Senate Standing Committee of Law and Justice seems reluctant to ratify ILO conventions regarding rights of informal workers. This hesitation is understandable given the logistical and on-ground challenges. Tracking down informal workers, registering them and keeping track of the conditions they work is not easy.

Informally employed workers are scattered and most are not even aware of their rights. The government needs to at least set up rules and mechanisms to monitor the plight of informal workers and to punish infringements, even if implementation takes a longer time. Unless some regulatory attempt is made, the informal sector will not rectify itself on its own..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1147246/invisible-neglected-workforce/>

WELFARE FUND: LABOUR COMPLEX FOR REGISTERED WORKERS

The Express Tribune, July 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) has completed 90% construction work on the Labour Complex, being built along Islamabad expressway to provide accommodation to registered industrial workers of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The complex covers 1,476 kanals of land and would consist of 500 houses and 1,008 flats. According to official, the complex would be completed by end of August 2017 and handed over to the workers through the set criteria and policy of the department. He said around 65,000 workers of twin cities were already registered with Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and these houses and flats would be handed over to them on merit. The project will be completed at the cost of Rs3145 million and all basic needs will be available in this complex including shopping centre, community centre, schools, Masjid and playgrounds..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1147391/welfare-fund-labour-complex-registered-workers/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 11TH TO JULY 17TH 2016

PUNJAB BANS EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 15 FOR HAZARDOUS OCCUPATIONS

Dawn, July 14th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab government has through a landmark ordinance banned employment of children and restricted the recruitment of adolescents, 15 to 18 years of age, for hazardous occupations and processes.

The Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance, 2016, which was promulgated on Wednesday, significantly protects children and adolescents against any form of slavery or practices such as their sale and trafficking, debt bondage and serfdom, forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment for use in armed conflicts.

It bans the use, procuring or offering of a child or adolescent for prostitution, production of pornography or for pornographic performances, and illicit activities, particularly the production and trafficking of drugs.

Its third major aspect is the regulation of the work of adolescents at occupations and processes which are not hazardous to guard against their exploitation.

The ordinance regulates the employment of adolescents for work that is not hazardous by different means, also fixing their working hours.

It says an occupier (employer) shall not require or permit an adolescent to work in the establishment in excess of such number of hours as may be prescribed.

The occupier shall fix the period of work of an adolescent on each day which shall not exceed three hours. And if he is required to work for more than three hours in a day, the occupier shall provide a mandatory interval of at least one hour for rest to him immediately after three hours of work. The total period of work of an adolescent in a day, including mandatory interval for rest, shall not exceed seven hours.

The ordinance disallows work of an adolescent between 7pm and 8am, or overtime and says the working hours should not clash with the school or educational institution timings of the adolescent, allowing him a weekly holiday.

Employing or permitting to work a child in an establishment is punishable with up to six-month imprisonment which shall not be less than seven days, and with up to Rs50,000 fine which shall not be less than Rs10,000.

There is up to six-month imprisonment, up to Rs75,000 fine or both for employing or permitting any adolescent to indulge in any hazardous work.

The second conviction means up to five-year imprisonment which shall not be less than three months.

Enslaving children and adolescents or using them for immoral activities, prostitution, drug production or trafficking shall be punished with up to Rs1 million fine which is not less than Rs200,000 or up to five-year imprisonment, or with both.

The guardians or parents in whose immediate presence the children and adolescents are found working in contravention of this ordinance shall be equally punished along with the employer.

Presence of a child or an adolescent within the working premises of an establishment shall be presumed as his employment.

The ordinance defines the hazardous work as transport of passengers, goods or mail, catering establishment at a railway station involving the movement of a vendor or any other employee of the establishment from one platform to another or into or out of a moving train, construction of a railway station or with any other work where such work is done in close proximity to or between the railway lines.

A port authority within the limits of any port, inside underground mines and above ground quarries including blasting and assisting in blasting, power driven cutting machinery like saws, shears, guillotines and agricultural machines, threshers, fodder cutting machines, live electrical wires over 50 volts.

Other occupations include all operations related to leather tanning process, mixing and manufacture of pesticides and insecticides, and fumigation, sandblasting and other work involving exposure to free silica, exposure to all toxic, explosive and carcinogenic chemicals, cement dust in cement industry and coal dust, manufacture and sale of fireworks and explosives, work at the sites where Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) is filled in cylinders, work on glass and metal furnaces, glass bangles manufacturing, cloth weaving, printing, dyeing and fishing sections.

Inside sewer pipelines, pits and storage tanks, stone crushing, lifting and carrying of heavy weight (15kg and above) specially in transport industry, carpet weaving, working two meters or more above the floor, scavenging including hospital waste, tobacco processing and manufacturing including niswar and biri making, commercial fishing and processing of fish and sea-food, sheep casing and wool industry, surgical instruments manufacturing specially in vendors' workshops, spice grinding, work in boiler house, work in cinemas, mini cinemas and cyber clubs, soap manufacturing, building and construction industry.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270756>

KUWAIT SETS MINIMUM WAGE FOR MAIDS IN FIRST FOR GULF

Dawn, July 15th, 2016

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has set a minimum wage for its hundreds of thousands of mostly Asian domestic workers, in a first for Gulf states which have come under widespread accusations of abuse.

A decree issued by Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Sabah set the minimum wage at 60 dinars (\$200) a month and also granted domestic staff a raft of other rights, Al Anbaa newspaper reported on Thursday.

Kuwait is the first country in the Gulf to regulate the work conditions of domestic staff through legislation and Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other rights groups have urged others to follow suit to tackle widespread abuses.

The decree, which sets out measures to implement a landmark law adopted by parliament last year, also requires employers to pay overtime for any extra hours worked.

It grants domestic workers the right to a weekly day off, 30 days of annual paid leave, a 12-hour working day with rest, and an end-of-service benefit of one month a year at the end of contract.

The estimated 600,000 maids in Kuwait are among at least 2.4 million working at homes across the Gulf. They are not covered by ordinary labour legislation.

HRW and other groups have documented widespread abuses, including non-payment of wages, long working hours with no rest days, physical and sexual assault, and no clear channels for redress.

In its 2016 Trafficking in Persons report, the US State Department upgraded Kuwait from tier 3, the worst level, to tier 2 while keeping it on watch list, citing an improvement in its treatment of migrant workers, including maids.

The report places the other five Gulf Arab states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates — at the same level as Kuwait.

It moved Oman to watch list after reports of abuses. HRW warned on Wednesday that many foreign domestic workers in Oman are trapped in abusive employment and urged the sultanate to reform its “restrictive” immigration system.

The New York-based watchdog said that some of the 59 domestic workers it interviewed described “abuses that amounted to forced labour or trafficking”.

Its report documented how Oman’s visa sponsorship system for workers, known in Gulf countries as kafala, and the lack of labour law protection, leave migrant domestic workers “exposed to abuse and exploitation”.

HRW has repeatedly urged Gulf states to reform their labour laws to cover domestic workers and provide them with “equal protections” available to other workers, and to revise the kafala system.

The kafala system, or sponsorship, has been criticised as a form of bonded labour or even slavery.

It restricts most workers from moving to a new job before their contracts end unless their employers agree, trapping many of them.

In November 2014, Gulf and Asian labour ministers agreed on a series of initiatives aimed at boosting protection and improving conditions of employment for foreign workers in the Gulf.

Ahead of the conference, GCC labour ministers agreed on minimum terms in the contracts of domestic staff to improve their working conditions.

The terms included entitling domestic workers to a weekly day off, annual leave and the right to live outside their employer’s house. The contract was also to limit the working day to eight hours.

Bahrain reformed its labour law to extend some benefits to maids, while Saudi Arabia issued a decision last year limiting the hours worked by domestic staff to a maximum of 15 per day and granting one month’s leave after two years of service.

Most of those regulations, however, lack enforcement and have not been successful in halting abuse against domestic staff, human rights group say.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270882>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 3RD TO JULY 10TH 2016

SIX DIE IN GAS EXPLOSION AS ICE FACTORY COLLAPSES

Dawn, July 5th, 2016

Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: A gas leak in the ammonia tank of an ice factory killed at least six workers and brought down the multi-storey structure in New Karachi Industrial Area on Monday morning.

Six bodies were retrieved from under the rubble while rescue operation continued into the evening, officials said, adding that three of the dead were burnt beyond recognition as the anhydrous gas ripped off their skin.

Soon after the blast, police arrested a factory manager. The owner of the ice factory, 'Saqib Ice and Cold Storage', was said to have suffered a cardiac arrest and admitted to hospital.

The chief minister taking notice of the incident sought an inquiry report from the provincial industries department and labour department, as there was a divergence of opinion about exact cause of the building collapse.

According to witnesses, the factory collapsed with a loud explosion at around 7.30am, triggering fear and panic among area people.

With the help of an excavator, six bodies were retrieved from the debris, said a police officer. "Initial assessment suggested that the ice cold storage building collapsed owing to cylinder or compressor blast," said Karachi-Central SSP Muqadas Haider. He said both the compressor and the cylinder were installed on the basement of the building.

The officer believed that the foundation of the building had been damaged by the impact of the gas explosion. As a result, the building collapsed burying the workers under its rubble.

He said the police were investigating the exact cause of the building collapse.

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation administrator Laeeq Ahmed reached the spot and inspected the rescue operation. While talking to the media, he said: "The gas cylinder blast and spread of ammonia gas resulted in the building collapse and the death of six people."

However, New Karachi Deputy Superintendent of Police Irshad Bhutto told Dawn later in the evening that it was an old building whose structure had been weakened due to accumulated rainwater.

The DSP believed that the old building fell down first and then the boiler exploded. The building structure surrounded by rainwater was already weak, he added.

The officer quoted the doctors at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, where the bodies were shifted for a post-mortem examination, as saying that the workers died after inhaling ammonia gas. It ripped off their skin, with the result that three of the deceased could not be recognised.

Three other deceased workers were identified as Rafiq, 35, Zulfiqar, 38, and Mairaj 30. Zulfiqar originally hailed from Punjab, while Rafiq and Mairaj were residents of New Karachi, the police said.

SSP Haider said the factory owner, Iqbal Shah, was not found at the blast site. It later emerged that he had reportedly suffered a heart attack and was hospitalised, the officer added.

He said the police took the manager of the factory into custody for interrogation. The police authorities would write a letter to the relevant departments of the provincial government to seek information for the purpose of investigation to ascertain if the factory was established without permission and as to whether the building standard was maintained or not. Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, who recently went to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, took notice of the tragic incident, according to the spokesperson.

While expressing his sorrow and anger over the incident, Mr Shah sought a report from the provincial industries department and labour department. He asked the officials concerned to ascertain as to whether an inspection of the factory had been conducted or not. "If inspection was done, what did its report say and if inspection was not done, whose negligence was it?" he asked.

He directed the Karachi commissioner and SITE managing director to monitor rescue operation. He also asked the authorities concerned for extending full support to the heirs of the victims.

The authorities denied reports about any delay in rescue efforts. “The rescue unit of the disaster management department of the KMC reached the place soon after getting first call and started rescue work,” said the KMC administrator.

Mr Ahmed inspected the rescue operation and enquired about the incident. He said rescue workers and other staff of the disaster management department would continue rescue operation till complete removal of debris.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269127/six-die-in-gas-explosion-as-ice-factory-collapses>

WORKERS’ PROTEST OVER NON-PAYMENT OF SALARIES TURNS VIOLENT

Dawn, July 5th, 2016

KARACHI: Scores of workers of a garment factory, including women, staged a violent protest in Korangi Industrial Area over non-payment of their salaries and a bonus on the occasion of Eid, police said.

They said the protesters took to the streets, blocked the main Korangi Road near Vita Chowrangi and lit bonfires.

As a result, the vehicular traffic was suspended on the road and a large number of commuters were trapped there for a considerable period.

Then the angry protesters pelted stones on stationary vehicles, smashed their windscreens and damaged at least five cars. They also set the car of a factory manager on fire, which was destroyed.

A heavy contingent of police rushed to the spot to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

Area SHO Abdul Rasool Siyal said that the police asked the protesters to clear the road as people were facing immense inconveniences for several hours. When they refused to listen, the police resorted to baton charge. Rangers also reached the scene and helped the police in dispersing the mob, he added.

He said that the police arrested three workers of the ADM Garments. A case was registered against the three held workers on behalf of the state for their alleged involvement in rioting as they torched one car and damaged others, the SHO added.

Following the violent protest, the factory management fulfilled the demands of the workers, giving them their salaries as well as the Eid bonus, the SHO said.

The case was registered at the Korangi Industrial Area police station under Sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint) and 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage to amount of one hundred rupees or (in case of agricultural produce, ten rupees) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269126/workers-protest-over-non-payment-of-salaries-turns-violent>

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August 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29TH TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 2016

MENIAL WORKERS PAY MORE TO GET OVERSEAS JOBS: SURVEY

Dawn, August 29th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Low-skilled workers with modest education and limited assets seeking job in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pay the highest cost for acquiring a job, says a first of its kind survey.

The survey report titled “the Cost of Immigration” and released by the International Labour Organisation points out an alarmingly high cost of migration for low-skilled workers. On an average, they spend nearly \$3,500 for their overseas employment. The survey was conducted by ILO with the support of the European Union.

Its conclusion is that large benefits associated with overseas migration of low-skilled workers are eaten up in visa fee paid to intermediaries who sells visas.

The report focuses on a wide difference in the cost of migration to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The average cost of working in Saudi Arabia is almost twice (\$4,290) as compared to the UAE (\$2,358).

It is difficult to pinpoint the reason for this difference or why there is an apparent preference for working in Saudi Arabia, it says. It may be that working conditions and wages or cost of living are more attractive in Saudi Arabia than in the UAE. Average earning in Saudi Arabia is \$480, compared to \$387 in the UAE.

According to the report, if there is a fair system operating, it may help low-skilled workers in pulling their families out of poverty, sending their children to school and building their asset base and will lead to significant and sustained growth of income in future.

More than 80 per cent of reported migration cost is spent on visa fee, going to a sub-agent/broker or a relative/friend who helps the migrant in securing a job. The visa fee for Saudi Arabia is much higher than for the UAE. The high fee can be attributed to visa trading.

However, it is an undocumented fee paid to an overseas employment promoter and a sub-agent/broker or relative/friend who arranges the visa. Both promoters and sub-agents operating abroad seem to be the beneficiary of high visa charges. The visa provider in a destination country sells visas, particularly to Pakistanis working there to recruit other workers from their country.

The survey notes that improving the system does not require more rules and regulations or a greater role of the government or stricter and higher penalties. What is needed is measures that will help the existing institutions function better.

The report recommended that arbitrary powers of government-run and government-controlled institutions should be curtailed; contribution of players in visa market, primarily overseas employment promoters, should be strengthened to make them efficient and responsible; and prospective migrants should be empowered by providing them information on what is to be paid officially, and telling them about avenues where they can complain and get a fair hearing.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280678/menial-workers-pay-more-to-get-overseas-jobs-survey>

HDA WORKERS START AGITATION, THREATEN TO SHUT DOWN WASA INSTALLATIONS

Dawn September 1st, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad Development Authority Employees Union (CBA) has announced that it will disrupt sewerage and water supply system on Thursday in the first phase of its plan for a protest against the indifferent attitude of the authorities concerned towards its demands, put forward to them recently.

The CBA had set the deadline of Sept 1 for reinstatement of around 1,800 sacked employees, disbursement of pending salaries of many employees and acceptance of certain other demands.

Speaking at a meeting of the CBA here on Wednesday, its general secretary Abdul Qayyum Bhatti observed that since the provincial and HDA authorities had failed to respond to the union as yet, workers led by its office-bearers would start an agitation from the Latifabad Unit-9 pumping station on Thursday and keep it shut for two hours (11am to 1pm).

“If our demanded remained unmet for yet another day, we will go ahead with our plan to go on a full strike by closing down the entire system of the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa),” he said.

He said the decision to observe a strike was taken after the authorities concerned did not pay any heed to HDA workers’ genuine issues despite several representations and reminders made to them over the last several months.

On July 1, he said, over 1,300 contractual and work-charge workers of Wasa and another 500 regular employees of HDA’s various units had been sacked. He said that more than 1,200 regular Wasa workers had not been paid their salaries since June. Besides, the sacked employees were not being paid their dues, he added.

Mr Bhatti said that the union had presented its charter of demands to Commissioner Qazi Shahid Pervez, who was also the HDA director general, and Wasa managing director Masood Jumani. The other demands pertained to appointment/regularisation of workers, implementation of son quota of deceased workers, pending pension cases, general provident fund, gratuity and allowances. On Wednesday morning, a large number of HDA workers held a protest demonstration at the Latifabad pumping station in favour of their demands.

Led by Mr Bhatti and the CBA’s senior vice president, Imtiaz Kolachi, the protesters raised slogans against the top HDA and Wasa authorities and appealed to the Sindh chief minister to pay attention to their grievances and help address them.

Most sacked workers to be reinstated: MD

Wasa managing director has, meanwhile, hinted at reinstatement of 60 per cent of sacked employees, admitting that they were efficient workers. A list of those to be reinstated soon was almost finalised, he told Dawn when contacted for his comment on the CBA’s demands.

Mr Jumani observed that the sacked employees whose reinstatement was under consideration had been continuing to undertake their jobs despite being relieved of their duties. He said he had already assured them that they would be taken back.

He said that they had fallen victim to the overall downsizing that was actually aimed at purging Wasa of ghost workers. “Genuine employees will not only be reinstated, but their unpaid salaries will also be released to them,” he added.

Regarding unpaid salaries of other employees, the Wasa chief said that efforts were under way to recover dues outstanding against the federal and Sindh government department. “As soon as we are able to recover the dues, we will disburse salaries and dues to all employees,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281232>

POWER UTILITIES WORKERS ACROSS SINDH STOP WORK TO JOIN ‘DEMANDS DAY’ RALLIES

Dawn, September 2nd, 2016

HYDERABAD/SUKKUR: Thousands of Employees of power utilities across Sindh stayed away from their duties to participate in rallies and demonstrations held at their workplaces in connection with the ‘demands day’ observed from the platform of the All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) on Thursday.

CBA president Abdul Latif Nizamani led the main rally taken out from Labour Hall, situated in the Gari Khata area of Hyderabad. The participants carrying banners and placards inscribed with their demands marched on various roads before reaching the local press club, where their leaders spoke to them.

In his speech, Mr Nizamani highlighted the impediments to the growth and progress of Wapda-affiliated power utilities in the country and described power theft, wide gap between demand and generation of electricity, high power tariff, disputed and detection bills being issued to consumers, denial of due rights to employees and political interference in the affairs of Wapda, the country's largest organisation.

He said one of the major demand of the CBA was an upward revision of workers' salaries in accordance with the inflation rate, abrogation of unjustifiable appointments in the organisation and its affiliated companies and provision of jobs in the organisation to children of retired and working employees.

He called for the regularisation of around 800 workers, appointed on a daily wage basis in the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) in 2013, in line with the relevant agreement with the government.

Mr Nizamani said that the CBA strongly opposed appointment of retired and private chief executive officers for any power distribution company in the country as this was a violation of a Supreme Court verdict.

He alleged that officers of power utilities were harassing their subordinate staff by issuing them show-cause notices, charge-sheets and such other letters to force them to resign or get early retirement and many workers were being made to work beyond their capacity, he said, adding that all such tactics and practices were unacceptable to the CBA.

The CBA chief said that political interference in all power utilities must be brought to an end. He also called for providing proper safety gears to the workers supposed to undertake hazardous and risky assignments.

He demanded better health and education facilities to be provided to employees and their family members.

Sindh general secretary of the CBA Mohammed Iqbal Kaimkhani and other office-bearers also spoke.

Power utility workers in Matiari, Tando Mohammed Khan and Tando Allahyar also took out rallies and held demonstration as part of the 'demands day'

Employees of Wapda and the Sukkur Electric Supply Company in Sukkur, Jacobabad, Ghotki, Kandhkot-Kashmore districts wore black armbands and stayed away from their duties on Thursday to take part in rallies held at their respective workplaces.

Sukkur chapter Wapda union leaders Syed Zahid Hussain Shah, Riaz Ahmed Lashari, Abdul Haleem Akhund, Lala Dhani Bukhsh Pathan, Aftab Ahmed Kalwar, Aqeel Ahmed Junejo, Shujaat Ghumro and others led a demands day rally taken out in Sukkur city. Power utility employees from Rohri, Salehpat, Old Sukkur and other areas participated in the rally, which emerged from Sepco's Sukkur operation sub-division-I and ended outside the local press club.

Speaking to them, the leaders urged the authorities concerned to accept all demands put forward by the CBA in order to end the unrest prevailing among workers for years.

Another Wapda union leader Mehboob Ali Lashari along with Mohammed Hanif Lashari, Mohammed Ali Shaikh and others led a similar rally taken out from Sepco offices in Jacobabad. The participants converged on the local press club where they held a demonstration raising slogans for acceptance of their demands.

Demands day rallies and demonstrations were also held at Sepco offices in Ghotki, Mirpur Mathelo, Daharki, Pannu Aqil, Thull, Kandhkot, Shikarpur, Khairpur and many other towns.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281393/power-utilities-workers-across-sindh-stop-work-to-join-demands-day-rallies>

PLAN DEVELOPED TO CUT GENDER PAY GAP TO 10 PC

Dawn, September 3rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting on Friday developed a road map to minimise the gender wage gap from 36 per cent to 10pc in the next three years in favour of women workers.

The decision was taken in an interprovincial moot as part of the compliance with United Nations conventions under the Europe's GSP+ preferential tariff scheme.

Provinces were asked to introduce new legislation and implement administrative steps for human, women, child and labour rights, anti-corruption, narcotics and environmental protection.

An official statement said the decisions were taken during 12th meeting of Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC), chaired by its convener and Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP), Ashtar Ausaf Ali. Senior officials from provinces and federal government departments also attended.

In order to implement national and international obligations, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif recently reformulated the TIC with federal/provincial secretaries, representatives from UN, women organisations, International Labour Organisation and Pakistan Workers' Federation, and the chairman of National Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as its members.

It was decided that labour laws would be simplified and six dozen laws would be merged into five major categories in the light of Justice Shafiur Rehman Commission report.

With a model followed by Sindh, the rest of the federating units were asked to translate all the laws into Urdu. The moot declared that provincial heads of the Higher Education Commission would be recommended to introduce degrees and diplomas on labour-related matters.

Mr Ali, the AGP, said the TIC has become a vehicle to implement and coordinate implementation on international conventions and agreements.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281706>

FREE WORK VISAS LURING PAKISTANIS TO SAUDI ARABIA

Dawn September 4th, 2016

Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: Saudi Arabian companies are offering free work visa to attract Pakistani workers, reflecting a slump in the kingdom's economy.

Meanwhile, local recruiting agents say Pakistanis — mostly labour class — are still going for Saudi jobs despite the fact that thousands of workers — mostly labourers working in the Saudi construction industry — from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal are stuck in the kingdom and have not received their salaries for months.

Work visas for KSA were once hot cakes and extremely costly; sometime the visa buyer had to pay his entire salaries of 6 to 12 months to meet the cost.

To enter and work in KSA legally, a worker needs a Kafeel (sponsor). Permission from the Kafeel is needed to leave the country, buying a car/house, and even opening a bank account.

“Fifty per cent Kafeels (Saudi individuals or companies offering sponsorship to workers) are not charging fees these days,” says Mr Mazhar, who runs a recruiting firm in Karachi.

He said local agents of Kafeels are minting money in the name of 'Kafeel fee'.

However, sources — within the recruitment business and having links to Saudi companies — say the economic situation is not good for workers.

When questioned why Pakistanis are still going to the Kingdom, sources said those having government jobs have no problems.

"It's only the private sector employees — mostly related to the construction industry — who are facing problems but highly educated and skilled people have faced no such issue in Saudi Arabia," they added.

"The major reason behind Pakistanis seeking work in Saudi Arabia is that there are no jobs in Pakistan for them. These are frustrated people who are willing to take risks to go to the Kingdom despite knowing that things can go much worse," explained Mr Mazhar.

In a telephonic conversation with Dawn, A highly skilled engineer working in Saudi Arabia said he was not getting his salary for the past nine months.

A doctor working in the kingdom said most of the skilled foreign staff working in hospitals has been replaced with locals.

"Foreign physicians and surgeons are slowly being replaced too," the doctor added.

So far, foreign doctors employed in government hospitals are getting regular salaries.

Recently, the State Bank of Pakistan said a 16pc increase was noted in the number of Pakistanis proceeding abroad in 2016. Out of these, 47pc went to Saudi Arabia. However, the SBP did not specify in which sectors Pakistanis are getting jobs in the kingdom.

The 20pc decline in July 2016 remittances compared to July 2015 is being considered as a warning sign for Pakistan which is highly dependent on remittances. In FY16, Pakistan received remittances worth \$20 billion.

The State Bank stresses that the 20pc decline has technical reasons: June received very high remittances due to Eidul Fitr and July received less than normal inflow due to 10 days holidays which created a bigger gap.

The oil price shock badly hit the Gulf countries particularly Saudi Arabia. Pakistanis working in the kingdom provide more than 60pc remittances for the country. Pakistan also saved over \$4bn as windfall due to massive decline in oil prices which reduced its oil import bill.

The government has yet not come out with a strategy to address falling exports, declining foreign investment and changing economic dynamics in the Middle East.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281884>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: 50,000 JOBLESS YOUTH TO BE TRAINED
The Express Tribune, August 23rd, 2016.

Islamabad: The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NVTTC) would train over 50,000 unemployed youth across the country in different trades by the end of this year, said NVTTC Executive Director Zulfiqar Ahmad Cheema. All courses and trades are being offered free of charge and stipend will also be paid to the trainees.

The government was fully committed to providing technical and vocational education along with conventional education, which would benefit the economy in the long run, he said.

According to Cheema, skills competitions are being introduced across the country to create awareness among the youth of the importance of technical and vocational education. He suggested that entrepreneurs should be encouraged to get their employees trained at NAVTTC institutions.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1167975/employment-opportunities-50000-jobless-youth-trained/>

SUPPLEMENTARY CHARGE SHEET IN BALDIA FACTORY FIRE CASE FILED

Dawn, August 24th, 2016

KARACHI: Police finally came up with a supplementary charge sheet carrying relevant sections of the anti-terrorism law before a judicial magistrate on Tuesday in the Baldia fire-wrecked garment factory case.

The report, which was submitted after a lengthy reinvestigation of the case, said that only two men had been charge-sheeted in the case and around a dozen others were left out for lack of evidence while the owners of the industrial unit were listed among the prosecution witnesses.

Over 250 workers were burnt alive in a devastating fire that engulfed a multi-storey garment factory building in Baldia Town in September 2012.

Initially, the police had charge-sheeted the owners and some employees of the factory in the tragic incident. However, the reinvestigation of the case was ordered in March last year through a joint investigation team after a JIT report submitted in the Sindh High Court in February 2015 revealed that the factory was set on fire after its owners failed to pay protection money.

In March, the police through a progress report informed the court that the factory fire was a planned terrorist activity and the JIT had recommended that a new case was registered under the anti-terrorism law and proposed former chief of the MQM Karachi Tanzeemi committee Hammad Siddiqui, his alleged frontman and then Baldia Town sector incharge Abdul Rehman, alias Bhola, Hyderabad-based businessmen brothers Ali Hasan Qardi and Umer Hasan Qadri, Dr Abdul Sattar, Zubair alias Charya and others as accused in it.

However, according to the supplementary report, the police only charge-sheeted Hammad, Abdul Rehman and three to four unidentified suspects and shown them absconders, adding that they had not found any incriminating evidence against rest of the proposed accused in order to charge-sheet them.

Referring to the JIT report, the supplementary charge sheet said that Hammad through Abdul Rehman had approached the factory owners to demand protection money of Rs250 million and partnership, but the owners only offered Rs10 million to which the alleged extortionists did not agree and they allegedly set the factory on fire “in order to teach the owners a lesson”.

Interestingly, the supplementary charge sheet was filed before a judicial magistrate (west) regardless of the fact that it also contained Sections 6 and 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 and to be tried by an antiterrorism court.

However, special public prosecutor Sajid Mehboob said that they wanted to follow a procedure in which the magistrate would send the charge sheet to the relevant sessions court, where the case was already pending and then it would be referred to the relevant forum/trial court.

Police incorporated Sections 302 (premeditated murder), 324 (attempted murder), 337 (shajjah), 384 (punishment for extortion), 385 (putting person in fear of injury in order to commit extortion), 386 (extortion by putting a person in fear of death or grievous hurt), 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage etc), 436

(mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house etc), 109 (abetment) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code read with Sections 6 and 7 of the ATA in the supplementary charge sheet and a list of 58 prosecution witnesses was also attached with it.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279549>

‘LABOUR-RELATED ISSUES CAN NOT BE RESOLVED WITHOUT INDUSTRIAL GROWTH’

Business Recorder 27, August 2016

KARACHI: Advisor to the Chief Minister Sindh on Labour & Human Resource, Senator Saeed Ghani has said that a year target has been fixed to resolve issues pertaining to labour.

Addressing members of Korangi Association of Trade & Industry (KATI), Saeed Ghani said the issues will be resolved in consultation with industrialists and no decision will be imposed in isolation.

He said that representatives of labours will be onboard for any consultation process.

He said that labour-related issues can not be resolved without industrial growth.

The advisor said that number of registered workers is much lower than the actual work force of the industry. Owners and industrialists should step forward to make this ratio balanced, he added.

He said initial consultation process has been completed for issuance of new social security cards form NADRA and the decision would be implemented soon.

Ghani told that action underway against ghost employees of SESSI and Labour Department and measures are under consideration for the improvement of medical facilities of SESSI.

President of KATI Zahid Saeed gave him a presentation regarding concerns of Industry on labour , factory and other related laws.

He said that after 18th Amendment many laws are being reenacted by the provincial government but industrialist were not taken onboard for any meaningful consultation, due to this missing link now the laws are not only ambiguous and contradictory but many parts are not even implacable.

Zahid Saeed demanded that all such laws should be reviewed with the consultation of industrialists and all other stock holders.

He told that due to conflicts many factory owners are in courts for litigations and only the workforce is suffering.

He also told that due to ban on independent labour contractor industry is facing more hurdles in international market because in many countries this has been regularized.

Zahid said that after 18th Amendment establishment of Sindh Old Age Benefit Institution was announced , but still we are dealing with federal institution , this announcement should be materialized as soon as possible.

He also suggested to follow the one window operation module for collection of funds regarding worker welfare and other charges and suggested that government can authorize SRB for a lum sum collection of funds, fee and charges.

President of KATI also pointed out the unavailability of SESSI’s medical facility in Bin Qasim Industrial Area.

Head of KATI's standing committee on Labour, EOBI & SESSI affairs, Amjad Ullah Khan briefed Senator Saeed Ghani regarding low standard services and under staffing at SESSI's medical facilities. Advisor to the CM assured quick resolution of all problems and also promised to consider establishment of medical facility at Bin Qasim.

Secretary Labour Sindh Abdul Rasheed Solangi, Commissioner SESSI Farooq Laghari, Senior Vice President of KATI Saleem Uzzaman, former presidents and Chairmen of KATI Zubair Chaya, Gulzar Feroz, Masood Naqi, Akbar Farooqui, Farhan Urrehman, Zubair Tufail, Shakeel Dhingra, Shujat Baig from FPCCI and other senior official of labour department were also present on the occasion.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/08/27/5-page/789024-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 21ST 2016

MINISTER REVIEWS IMPLEMENTATION OF LABOUR LAWS

Business Recorder, August 16, 2016

Provincial Minister for Labour & Human Resources, Raja Ashfaq Sarwar while chairing a meeting on Monday to review implementation of labour laws has said that keeping in view the post-18th Amendment scenario, there is an urgent need to increase awareness level among all the stakeholders as we are facing the challenges of enforcement of labour laws in letter and spirit. Punjab government is complying with the International Labour Standards (ILS) and related labour rights defined by ILO and other donor agencies.

DG Labour Welfare Muhammad Saleem Hussain, Director Labour (HQ) Daud Abdullah and other concerned officers attended the meeting. The minister stressed the need for creation of such an environment that foster generation of productive employment under decent work (DW) comprising freedom, equality, security and rights, not only pulling working women and men out of poverty but for sustaining a benevolent socio-economic development.

The minister said that human capital based on educated and trained work force together with improved Human Development Indicators (HDIs), were essential for competitiveness and global standards compliance.

He directed the concerned labour authorities to evolve actionable plans ensuring decent work for all, involving opportunities of such work which is productive, delivering fair income, providing security at work place and ensuring social protection for these workers and their families. He said the provincial government is taking concrete measures to improve working conditions of labour class, demonstrating decent wages, minimum wages, accepted working hours, health and safety measures.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/75487:minister-reviews-implementation-of-labour-laws/?date=2016-08-16>

ARSON ATTACK: BALDIA FACTORY FIRE SUSPECT GRANTED INTERIM BAIL

The Express Tribune, August 17th, 2016.

KARACHI: A district and sessions court granted on Tuesday interim bail to a Hyderabad-based businessman, Ali Hasan Qadri, one of the accused in the joint investigation team's (JIT) report on the Baldia factory fire incident.

Ali, said to be a close associate of Pak Sarzameen Party's imprisoned leader Anis Kaimkhani, is nominated as a middle-man in the reported money transaction between the Baldia factory owners – Abdul Aziz Bhaila and his sons Arshad and Shahid – and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Two-hundred-and-sixty people were burnt to death in the fire at Ali Enterprises garment factory in Baldia Town on September 11, 2012. The incident was initially deemed an accident. However, the recent and third investigation report called it an arson attack and revealed the extortion factor involved in it.

According to the latest JIT report, the fire was caused by miscreants belonging to MQM over non-payment of extortion money, said to be around Rs200million, by the Bhaila family. It is said that some leaders of the party also kept threatening the factory owners after the fire and a deal of Rs59.8 million was struck between them to settle the matter.

Ali and his brother Umar Qadri are referred as the middle-men who allegedly brokered the deal between the Bhaila family and the MQM. They are said to be close to Kaimkhani, who at the time was MQM's deputy convener.

Ali's bail application was filed with the District West's sessions court in July this year. Meanwhile, the bail remained pending as the plaintiff did not show up for a follow-up and the court had put it aside on a previous hearing. However, the plaintiff turned up again and pleaded to make it active. On Tuesday, West's additional district and sessions judge-V heard arguments on the plea and after listening to the defence and prosecution approved the interim bail till August 20 against a surety of Rs100,000.

The proposed suspect was granted bail for four days only and on the next hearing the matter will be argued again over the issue if it could be held for long or not, said Sajid Mehmoob Sheikh, the special public prosecutor tasked the case, while talking to The Express Tribune.

More than 10 people have been nominated in the recent investigation report, including former MQM Karachi Tanzeemi Committee chief Hammad Siddiqui, former MQM Baldia Town sector in-charge Rehman alias Bhola as the alleged extortionists, factory employee Zubair alias Charya and four unidentified persons as the alleged executors of the arson, the Qadri brothers as the alleged brokers of the deal between the party, Kaimkhani's aides Dr Abdul Sattar whose bank account was deposited with the deal money and Iqbal Adeeb Khanum, who benefitted with the money as a bungalow was purchased in her name. Despite Kaimkhani's alleged role mentioned in the report, his name has not been brought up as a proposed accused.

The recent development in the case, as per the investigating authorities' statement, reads that a supplementary charge sheet inclusive of the Anti-Terrorism Act's clause seven is going to be submitted in a court against the accused.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1163986/arson-attack-baldia-factory-fire-suspect-granted-interim-bail/>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE: VICTIMS' FAMILIES DECRY PM'S EMPTY PROMISES

The Express Tribune, August 19th, 2016.

Zubair Ashraf

KARACHI: Four years on, families of the victims of the Baldia factory fire are still waiting for the day when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will fulfil his promise of providing financial aid to them.

On Thursday, a large number of victims' families took to the streets to remind the PM what he promised them on September 14, 2012, during a visit to the ill-fated factory – three days after the fire claimed more than 250 lives.

Before he became the country's premier, the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz leader had, on behalf of the Punjab government, pledged that the victims would be given Rs300,000 in aid. He had also urged upon the then incumbent Pakistan Peoples Party government to compensate the victims in every possible way.

“We have not been given justice nor have the promises made to us materialised,” lamented Jabir Khan, the president of Ali Enterprises Fire Affectees Association (AEFAA), while addressing the demonstration outside the Karachi Press Club. “It now seems that Mian Sahab [PM Sharif] played a political card on our misery at that time just to garner support.”

Khan, who lost his 22-year-old son to the fire, added that they [the victims' association] had tried to remind the PM of his promise a number of times through press conferences and demonstrations but nothing came of it. "The announcement is still limited to words only," he said.

The demonstration was jointly organised by AEFAA and National Trade Union Federation (NTUF). Besides the victims' families, a large number of labourers associated with different unions participated in the protest to express solidarity with their lost comrades.

AEFAA senior vice-president Saeeda Khatoon said that the victims' families were in bad conditions and the situation was worsening day by day. "Most of those perished in the fire were bread earners of their families," she said. "Their dependants are now living hand to mouth because of the apathy of the government, which does not pay heed to their concerns."

So far, the victims have been paid around Rs1million, inclusive of death grant, compensation by the government and financial aid. They, however, still await the long-term compensation from the German discounted cloth retailer, KiK, which was the major buyer of the products made at Ali Enterprises. They demand around 30,000 Euros for each of them and assert that otherwise the calculation should be done under the International Labor Organisation conventions.

Khatoon, who herself is concerned about her life after the one year's courtesy awarded at the end of the pension from the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), demanded that the monthly financial support be extended throughout one's lifetime.

Among the ill-fated factory workers, only a few were registered with the EOBI. The rest got no benefits such as medical, loans, gratuity and other perks from their employer, despite the presence of a law to ensure these rights. In the factory case, the victims were registered with the pension fund after their demise. The prevailing rules say that the parents of a registered worker can get their pension for a period of five years, while this monthly payment was for lifetime if the beneficiaries were a spouse or children.

"Have the rulers whom we elect through our votes ever pondered [over] what would happen to the parents of the victims who are partially or fully dependent on the EOBI pension?" she asked. "This issue should be resolved at the earliest."

NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor commented that the pension issue could easily be resolved if the prime minister were to direct the authorities to make changes in their rule book.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1165439/baldia-factory-fire-victims-families-decry-pms-empty-promises/>

SEHAT GHAR: OVER 300 BRICK KILN WORKERS BENEFITED

Business Recorder August 19, 2016

ISLAMABAD: More than 300 brick kiln women and men workers have benefited from a newly established health facility "Sehat Ghar" in Batapur Area District Lahore here on Thursday.

According to the announcement of the Development Impact Solutions (DIS) issued here on Thursday, this is a pilot initiative to promote Public-Private Partnership. A member of Brick Kiln Owners Association provided building and Punjab Health Department deputed doctors, LHVs and other paramedical staff to offer brick kiln women workers. This is under an innovative project launched by Development Impact Solutions (DIS) with Palladium support and UKAID funding.

Dr.Zulfiqar, Executive Director Officer, while appreciating the project said that his department has formed a project Steering Committee, and happy about the project intervention.

Fayyaz Khan, Team Leader, Palladium said that they are very happy with the project results and would like to extend support to scale up the project. Representative of Brick Kiln Owners Association, Mehar Abdul Haq, expressed his full commitment to support this initiative.

Ms. Samia Raoof Ali Project Director earlier explained the project intervention and gave detailed of patients who have benefited from the project and those who have been referred to Basic Health Units. She said that in the month of July 2016 more than 300 brick kiln women and men workers have benefited, she said that pilot phase will complete in Dec 2016.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/08/19/9-page/786859-news.html>

CENTRE ASKED TO GIVE WWB FUNDS TO PROVINCES

Dawn, August 21st, 2016

KARACHI: The adviser to the Sindh chief minister on labour has urged the federal government to transfer the administrative control of the Workers Welfare Board (WWB) and its funds to the provinces so that they can solve the issues being faced by workers.

Chairing the third meeting of the Sindh Workers Welfare Board (SWWB) at the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution on Saturday, Senator Saeed Ghani said the funds of the WWB should be distributed among the provinces according to their share so that development schemes for betterment of workers could be implemented.

Sindh labour secretary Rasheed Solangi, industries and commerce secretary Raheem Soomro, SWWB secretary Shah Mohammed Shah, Sindh Revenue Board Tax adviser Mohammed Mushtaque and senior labour leader Habibuddin Junaidi and others attended the meeting.

He said that owing to non-transfer of funds to provinces, not only day-to-day affairs of the SWWB were suffering, but its welfare programmes in the fields of health, education, dowry, etc, for workers and their families could not be fully implemented.

He said that billions of rupees of the WWB were pending with the federal government, which, he claimed, was using delaying tactics, but further delay would not be tolerated and the issue would be raised at all relevant forums so that funds could be obtained from the central government so that workers problems could be solved.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278840/centre-asked-to-give-wwb-funds-to-provinces>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 8TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2016

RESCUING THE JOBLESS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, August 8th, 2016

Afshan Subohi

PAKISTAN is in constant touch with the Saudi government to resolve issues being faced by retrenched Pakistani workers in the kingdom. It has mobilised its mission there to support distressed nationals, while the situation has served to alert the State Bank about the possible impact on remittances.

An insight into the profile of the Pakistani workforce in the Middle East — fast losing higher oil revenues — or a sense of urgency to understand and evolve a strategy to deal with the emerging situation in the long run, seems to be missing in official circles.

The readjustment in the Gulf economies to the oil price crash, political violence and future uncertainties, are beginning to impact the labour market and economy of the home countries of immigrant workers who make up as much as over 30pc of the population in some Gulf States. Pakistanis are among the top three immigrant nations.

Manzoor ul Haq, Pakistan Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, told Dawn on the phone from Riyadh that the mission was persistently pursuing the cases of the 8,520 Pakistani workers who have been laid off by two companies — Saad Trading and Contracting Company, Al-Khobar (520 workers) and Saudi Oger Limited (8,000 workers) — to help them claim several months' unpaid salaries and withdrawn service benefits.

“We are in touch with the management of those companies and the relevant Saudi officials for an amicable resolution of the issue”, he told Dawn.

“We have distributed cash sustenance allowances and are providing food in labour camps where there is a need. The relief activities of the Pakistan Embassy cover all major cities of the kingdom where Pakistanis are concentrated including Riyadh, Dammam, Taif and Jeddah. We enjoy the full blessing and support of Islamabad”, he said.

Commenting on the evacuation of hapless workers currently huddled in labour camps without a visa, since that expired when they lost their job, he said the Saudi government had granted them permission to stay till the final settlement.

“We are ready to fly retrenched workers back home any day but they do not wish to come back home without settling their dues. They have been asked by the Saudi government to designate someone to receive dues on their behalf by giving power of attorney. We have volunteered our services in this regard but hardly 300 of the 8,520 workers showed willingness”, he elaborated.

According to him, there are in all about 2.6m Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia. He did not have any data mapping the profile of Pakistani immigrants but believed that more than 85pc are construction workers. The rest are associated with the service industry and a very few are associated with the oil industry.

“I know that some very well reputed doctors and bankers are Pakistanis but I am not sure about others”, he said.

Dr Nadeem Javed, chief economist, Planning Commission, who was in Saudi Arabia recently with the Planning Minister Ehsan Iqbal, agreed that there was a need to take stock of the situation in the broader context of readjustments in economies and the impact on resident Pakistanis.

“Yes it would help to evolve a more effective strategy in order to deal with the issue if we have factsheets detailing the profile and other related information about the workers. If such details are available I am not aware of it. No, in the planning commission there is no project currently looking into this issue”, he informed Dawn over the phone, discussing the problem that has the potential to become a crisis.

He said “For a country that lacks the capacity to absorb its indigenous human resource in the economic mainstream and requires a growth rate of over 8pc to deal with the unemployment issue, the return of migrants is bound to increase stress in the labour market.

“The return of experienced construction labour at a time when the country is at the cusp of a construction boom in the wake of CPEC- related projects may actually prove to be a blessing in disguise”. In this regard he mentioned the concept of ‘brain circulation’ referring to the gain of intellectual capital of the host nation for skilled labour.

He was more worried about the brain drain of experienced faculty from seats of learning in Pakistan and thought that would deprive the country of valuable educationists. “The five-year bond period of teachers who acquired doctorates under HEC sponsorship is expiring. Some have already left and many more are planning to move out as our pay and perk structures are not competitive”.

A senior official researcher who was not permitted to interact with media privately told Dawn that Pakistan's dependence on a steady inflow of remittances, particularly from Saudi Arabia, the country's single biggest source, can't be over emphasised, specially at a time when the government had decided not to seek the IMF programme.

“Yes reserves are currently reasonably high but no one must forget that export earnings are not even half of import payment obligations. The country also has huge foreign debt obligations while repayment schedules are quite rigid. Pakistan can’t afford a major dent in remittance inflows expected to be over \$21bn in the current fiscal.

“We are monitoring closely and not particularly worried, for migration from Pakistan to the Middle East is still quite high. Based on whatever little we know about the profile of people leaving the country to work abroad, my hunch is that the composition is shifting towards better skilled, higher earning people. In place of raw labour, IT professionals, engineers, nurses, beauticians, fashion designers, bankers, accountants and doctors are going there.”

“No I do not expect any dent in remittance inflow in the near term. The impression that the pace of remittance growth has slowed down is not correct. Yes inflows were exceptionally high in 2015 but it was because instead of the two, three Eids that fell in that year”, she explained.

The SBP said it was closely monitoring the situation but formal comments on the issue were not received till the deadline of this article.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276090>

NYC TRANSIT WORKERS

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

I HAD come to believe that the gloom that surrounds trade unionism in my part of the world was a global phenomenon, and that collective bargaining negotiations were dying practices. Not so in New York.

The public transit union, called Local 100, which represents 42,000 workers and retirees of the city’s public transportation system (subway, buses and surface trains), is currently gearing up its campaign for a new charter of demands with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), due in January 2017.

The union holds elections every three years and negotiates a collective bargaining contract every five. In the first week of August, the union held a two-day workshop to discuss campaign strategy in order to win a fair deal.

“The union is strategising to achieve an on-time agreement,” James Gannon, director of communications for Local 100, tells me when I call for queries. “Last time, the contract was delayed for two and a half years due to the financial crisis. We want to make sure the 2017 agreement is secured on time as the MTA is now financially strong.”

The union is demanding protection of healthcare and retention of job titles of conductors and cleaners — workers whose numbers the MTA are reducing with the induction of new technologies, said Gannon. Wages for subway workers are much higher than the national minimum wage. The lowest subway worker wage is \$27 per hour, compared to \$15 national per hour minimum wage effective from April 2016.

Local 100 is the parent union of Transport Workers Union of America, founded in 1934 by New York subway workers. Today, TWU has 140,000 members nationwide working in four divisions of transportation: air, railroad, transit, and universities and schools. Overall, union density in the public sector in the US is 35.2pc.

TWU has succeeded this year in a national campaign to bring blue-collar jobs back to American cities. The US government has agreed to offer railcar producers additional incentives to increase manufacturing within the country instead of outsourcing the work overseas.

This campaign was launched by a coalition called Jobs to Move America, formed by transport and other unions, along with over 40 community, civil rights, philanthropic, academic and environmental groups.

The New York City underground subway system impressed me the first time I used it during a visit in 1982 and then in 1985. Now, 31 years later, I happen to be in NYC and I find the subway system upgraded and improved: carriages are gleaming, platforms are spick and span, elevators and escalators are installed in many stations.

I encounter workers — mostly African-Americans and some South Asian immigrants — working around the clock operating the trains, maintaining the tracks, cleaning platforms, repairing elevators and escalators.

Another change for the better relates to advertisements. In the 1980s, all the ads displayed in subway carriages were for consumer items — food, cosmetics, etc. Now the ads are about services — vocational education, social security, tips to save electricity, etc.

“Employers expect a lot from you. Expect a lot from them” runs an ad from Justworks Inc., a company that provides services related to benefits, payroll and payments, and compliance for start-up businesses.

The city has preserved the history of its transit system in a museum located in an actual subway station in Brooklyn that opened for service in 1936. Established in 1976, the NYC Transit Museum was previously used for trainings, I was told when I asked a museum officer.

Sprawled over one full city block, it houses carriages dating back from 1907 on both sides of the platform. Photographic installations tell the story of how this remarkable engineering feat was accomplished, and by whom.

The subway system was built during 1900 to 1925 by 50,000 workers who dug underground and underwater tunnels, toiling under harsh conditions. Many suffered from silicosis. The workers fought for their rights since the very beginning — when the subway lines were owned by the private companies.

Also noted was the fact that the craft unions, during those years, had barred black Americans from membership. In May 1901, the workers went on strike over their wages. The trade unions won when labour rules were also deemed applicable to subcontracted labour.

When you read all these installations in the museum, you realise how much sweat and blood, sacrifice and struggle had gone into the making of NYC into a commuter-friendly city, and how significant the role of trade unions in this was.

I spotted two groups of lively children — toddlers and primary school kids — under the wings of their teachers, sitting inside carriages, listening and asking questions. This country does inculcate a sense of pride in its history and achievements of its workers from an early age through field trips such as these. I felt envious.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276690>

MINISTRY OPPOSES MOVING ILO TO HELP PAKISTANIS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Dawn, August 12th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis on Thursday disagreed with a legal expert’s view that Pakistan could ask the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to intervene in the matter of about two million Pakistanis who were being expelled from Saudi Arabia.

“Pakistan is not in a position to file a case against Saudi Arabia or write to the ILO because Saudi Arabia can expel them with a single order,” said Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis Secretary Khizar Hayat Khan .

Speaking at a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis, chaired by Senator Baz Mohammad Khan, the secretary said the matter of Pakistanis stranded in camps and not paid by their employers had been taken up with the Saudi government

Earlier, Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tasawar Khan said 10,395 Pakistanis were moved to 20 camps of three companies that were facing financial problems.

He the ministry had started receiving complaints in February about Pakistanis not being paid their salaries and that the matter was taken up with the Saudi government. The employers were then paid a month's salary, but the situation worsened in July.

He said the Pakistani embassy in Saudi Arabia was providing food to the stranded Pakistanis or paying them 200 Saudi riyals each. He said the prime minister had allocated a fund of Rs500 million for the stranded people and that their families in Pakistan were being paid Rs50,000.

"The Saudi king has also taken notice of the matter and allocated 100 million riyals for addressing the issue," Mr Tasawar added.

However, Senator Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif, who was specially invited to the meeting to give his legal opinion, said the workers were sent under an agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and that international labour laws apply in this case.

"The issue has been going on for nine months and the government took no interest in it. The government can write to the ILO and ask it to play its role in addressing the matter," he said.

"We never hear similar complaints from Chinese workers in Saudi Arabia because China takes up the issues of its citizens with other countries properly," he added.

To this, Mr Hayat Khan said: "Pakistan is not China and it is not possible for us to take legal action against Saudi Arabia. Also, the issue has arisen because oil prices have dropped and Saudi Arabia is fighting a war at its border with Yemen. This should not be looked at as a permanent problem."

Senator Saif then said taking up the matter with Saudi Arabia did not mean starting a war.

"There are many ways to address the issue. The civil society can be used to convey the message to international human rights organisations and make the Saudi government address the matter," he said.

Mr Hayat Khan explained that three types of workers go to Saudi Arabia: those who go under an agreement between states, via employment promoters and those who travel on independent visas. He said the government had no control over the workers who go on independent visas. Senator Rehman Malik said under the 1979 Immigration Rules, the government was bound to ensure that the company which was recruiting Pakistanis was capable of paying them salaries.

"Labour is sent under an agreement and Pakistani law provides full protection to workers. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) should be directed to investigate why these workers were allowed to go to Saudi Arabia without the companies' financial position being scrutinised," he said.

He suggested that the funds for the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation should be used to help the stranded Pakistanis because the foundation was funded by overseas Pakistanis but "does nothing other than build housing societies."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1277086/ministry-opposes-moving-ilo-to-help-pakistanis-in-saudi-arabia>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 7TH 2016

WORKERS' WELFARE

Dawn, August 3rd, 2016

Parvez Rahim

THE Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, was promulgated with the purpose of providing for participation of workers in the profits of companies. Under this act, every company is required to establish a workers' participation fund as soon as the accounts for the year in which the scheme becomes applicable to it are finalised, and pay annually to the fund, no later than nine months after the close of that year, five per cent of its net profits during such year.

The fund is managed by a board of trustees comprising two representatives from the company's workers and two persons nominated by management. Initially, the act was applicable to workers drawing a monthly gross salary of Rs500 and employed in the company for no less than six months. The share of eligible workers in annual allocation to the fund was disbursed to them in accordance with a formula prescribed under the act, based on three salary slabs prescribed in ascending order.

The share distribution formula was devised by legislators in a such a manner that only a fraction of the total amount allocated by a company on this account is disbursed to its workers and the remaining bulk amount goes to the government. The latter amount is transferred to the fund constituted under Section 3 of the Workers' Welfare Fund Ordinance, 1971. Companies have to contribute annually an additional two per cent of their total income to this fund. The total amount — collected under the Companies Profits (Workers Participation) Act, 1968 and the Workers Welfare Fund Ordinance, 1971 — is supposed to be utilised on welfare schemes for workers and some other beneficiaries chosen by the government. Having a common pool of funds, both these laws are interlinked.

The ordinance states that money in the welfare fund shall be applied to the financing of housing projects for workers and other welfare measures including education, trainings, re-skilling and apprenticeships. A dilemma exists here, as the grant of these benefits is restricted to low-paid workers. Employees of companies contributing huge amounts to the welfare fund do not meet the eligibility criteria to apply as they draw competitive salaries.

In the Finance Bill, 2007, the then government made drastic amendments to the Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, with the purpose of not only increasing the workers' share in the distribution of their company's profit but also bringing more workers within the domain of this act.

The wage ceiling of Rs10,000 prescribed for eligibility of workers to receive benefits under the act was removed by changing the definition of 'worker'. Benefits were now extended to all those employees of the company who fell within the definition of 'worker' under the Industrial Relations Ordinance. It implied that all those employees who were not employed in managerial or administrative capacities were covered. The contractors' workers serving in the company were also brought within ambit of the act.

The three wage slabs for eligibility were improved as follows; average monthly wages of workers not exceeding Rs7,500; exceeding Rs7,500 but not exceeding Rs15,000; and exceeding Rs15,000. The maximum allocation of profit sharing for workers was increased from three times the minimum wage to four times. However, due to a procedural lacuna this amendment brought about by the Finance Bill, 2007, was declared ultra vires by a double bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) — vide its judgement dated Feb 26, 2011. Since then, companies' and contractors' workers have been deprived of the enhanced benefits.

Recently, the Sindh government has promulgated the Sindh Workers Welfare Fund Act, 2014 and the Sindh Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 2015. Until now, the federal government has been administering both these acts and managing the funds collected from companies all over the country. No such legislation has been made in the other three provinces, and the federal government is displeased over the Sindh government's self-propelled initiative.

In the act of 2015, the provincial government has restored all benefits discontinued on account of the SHC's judgement. However, other provisions of the act have created total confusion among employers and workers of trans-provincial organisations and the other three provincial governments. The act offers the following definition: "a company whose registered office is situated in the Province of Sindh and has its office, department and branches in Islamabad, the capital territory, or falling in more than one province and has a common balance sheet".

The majority of companies with huge investments have their registered offices in Karachi and some of them have factories in other provinces. It will be highly unfair if these companies pay the total share of their contribution only to the Sindh government, depriving their workers in other provinces of the benefits of the welfare fund. The federal government should therefore intervene immediately in order to prevent this usurpation of funds by one government.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274910/workers-welfare>

ASIAN WORKERS FORCED TO SCROUNGE AROUND FOR FOOD

Dawn, August 3rd, 2016

MANILA: Thousands of jobless Indians, Filipinos and Pakistanis are stranded and destitute in Saudi Arabia after the plunge in oil prices sparked construction layoffs, activists and officials said on Tuesday.

Some Filipinos are forced to beg or sift through garbage to survive after going unpaid for months, said Garry Martinez, chairman of the Migrante Group which works for the millions of Filipino overseas workers worldwide.

"Some of them have nothing to eat and have to go through the garbage for food," said Martinez.

India said on Monday it was negotiating with Saudi authorities to repatriate thousands of its own nationals after they lost their jobs, leaving them with no money to return home.

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj told parliament in New Delhi she was sending a junior minister to Riyadh after reports that around 10,000 Indian workers had been left to starve.

Indians are among millions of poor Asians working in Gulf states where human rights groups say many suffer exploitation and abuses including non-payment of wages.

In Manila, Migrante coordinator Gilbert Saludo — who returned from Saudi Arabia last month after working there for two years — said as many as 20,000 Filipinos could be affected.

Saludo said that while Manila had extended financial aid to them so far, it was not clear how long this could last.

The labour problem appeared likely to worsen, he added.

"It will get much worse because so much of the income of Saudi Arabia comes from oil... so their budget for infrastructure and other projects will not be met and more people will be affected," Saludo told AFP.

The Philippine Labour Department said Labour Secretary Silvestre Bello had visited Saudi Arabia last month to address the problem but would not elaborate.

Pakistan said 8,520 of its nationals in Saudi Arabia had not been receiving their salaries for several months.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275009/>

CALL FOR ELIMINATING MENACE OF CHILD LABOUR

Business Recorder, August 04, 2016

Newly appointed Secretary for Labour & Human Resource Department Sohail Shehzad, in his meeting with Minister Labour & HR Raja Ashfaq Sarwar has shown his resolve to eliminate the menace of child labour from the province and ensure all out efforts to complete welfare-oriented projects of the labour community within stipulated period.

Minister Labour Raja Ashfaq Sarwar welcomed the new Secretary Labour & HR in the department and expressed the hope that Sohail Shehzad will extend all out cooperation, utilizing his abilities and experience for the welfare of the labourers. Secretary Labour was briefed regarding the different initiatives and ongoing schemes of the department. Director General Labour Welfare Muhammad Saleem Hussain, Secretary Punjab Workers Welfare Board Shahid Zaman Lak, Senior Manager M&E Urban Unit Abdul Razzaq, Project Director Muhammad Rehan Nabi and other officers of the Department were also present on this occasion.

Minister Labour Raja Ashfaq Sarwar said that the department will utilize all available resources for the elimination of child labour below the age of 15 years from the province particularly in auto workshops, hotels and restaurants, petrol pumps and service stations in the light of the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. He said that Provincial Child Labour Survey conducted by Bureau of Statistics had reached in its second phase.

He further said that Labour along with Education Department and BOS is determined to get authentic information regarding the children involved in child labour in these three sectors. The department in collaboration with active and prominent NGOs has enrolled 1662 children under the age of 15 years in the formal and non-formal schools through social mobilisation by convincing their parents and the employers.

Moreover, as many as 1265 adolescents from the age of 15 to 18 years have been enrolled in different vocational training institutes in collaboration with Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC) to impart a demand driven 6-month duration skills development training course.

Briefing the meeting, Secretary Punjab Workers Welfare Department (PWWD) Shahid Zaman Lak informed that Labour Welfare Complex Warburton Nankana Sahib, Workers Welfare Boys Primary School Sher-e-Bangal Colony Rana Town and Workers Welfare High School for Girls Dandot, district Jhelum will be completed this month.

Shahid Zaman Lak apprised the meeting that PWWD has disbursed Rs 7 billion to the deserving families of industrial workers during the last five years whereas stipends are being given to more than 1600 children of industrial workers studying in medical colleges and 1000 students at COMSAT on regular basis.

The computerization of welfare grants in the 9 districts with bigger population of labour community has been finalized and Federal Workers Welfare Board has approved the recruitment of technical staff to run this software which will help out in speedy redressal of grievances. Minister Labour directed the concerned officers to perform their duties diligently so that after completion of these projects, labour community could be benefited from all these welfare projects.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/71827/>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE: ILO PROBE MISSION EXPERTS RETURN

Dawn, August 5th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Two independent experts, who had arrived here on July 25 as part of a five-member fact-finding mission formed by the Internatio

nal Labour Organisation to investigate the 2012 factory fire at Ali Enterprises, left on Thursday.

The experts, who earlier investigated the April 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, were the last ones to leave the country, after two other members from Geneva and an ILO officer from Islamabad left on July 29 after speaking to the families of the victims, and officers responsible for compensation.

The stakeholders, who were part of some recent meetings with the ILO, said the delegation seemed to think the Ali Enterprises compensation matter is “falling prey to overcompensation”.

The ILO was requested by the German government earlier this year to become a mediator between German textile discount store chain, KiK, and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler), after an earlier agreement between the two parties on compensating the Ali Enterprises fire victims in December 2012 didn't go as planned.

The German brand KiK, who earlier paid one million dollars as one part of the compensation refused to provide for the life-long compensation for the families of the victims. In the ensuing feud, the German government sought help from the ILO as a third-party investigation into the matter that the labour organisation accepted in May 2016.

The decision was accepted by all the stakeholders including the Sindh government, National Trade Union Federation and Pakistan's Worker's Federation including Piler. The ILO delegation met all the stakeholders during their visit, including a visit to the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution and Employees Social Security Institution. They, however, couldn't meet the Sindh High Court commission's head Justice (retd) Rehmat Hussain Jaffery who was not in the city.

Executive director of Piler Karamat Ali said: “Some people within the ILO delegation believe that the Ali Enterprises victims' compensation is falling prey to over-compensation, which we don't believe is an accurate view.”

Counsel in the Baldia Town factory fire case, Advocate Faisal Siddiqi, said the delegation focused on three issues. How much compensation has already been disbursed among the families of the victims and injured, and how much is needed, and what is and should be the contribution of KiK.

Officers close to the meeting said a report on the findings of the mission is expected by the end of August. The report will also make it in time before the fourth anniversary of the factory fire considered to be the worst factory fire in the country's history. At the same time, ILO delegation also focused on the lessons Pakistan should learn from the catastrophe of Baldia Town factory fire, labour laws and its implementation in the country, said the executive director of Piler.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275470>

PLIGHT OF OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS: MINISTER HAS YET TO TRAVEL TO SAUDI ARABIA

Business Recorder, August 07, 2016

Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Pir Sadaruddin Shah Rashidi has yet to travel to Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi authorities on the issues faced by thousands of stranded Pakistani workers two days after the Prime Minister directed him to proceed to Jeddah to resolve all issues. The Saudi government, on Wednesday pledged to assist around 3000 Indian workers who are stranded without food or pay in Saudi Arabia, after the direct intervention of the Indian government.

This delay on the part of the Pakistan government reflects poorly on its performance considering that an Indian minister has already visited the Kingdom and resolved all outstanding issues, sources added. Reports also indicate that the Indian government has procured a special deal for its citizens that would allow them to seek employment in other companies within the kingdom, a condition not allowed to foreign workers.

When asked about Pakistan's government efforts towards the stranded Pakistani after the reports of the Saudi government assurances to the Indian government, Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said that Saudi

government had given these assurances to Pakistan much before the media reports appeared on Saudi assurances to India for her workers.

“Saudis at ministerial level have assured all facilitation to affected Pakistani employees. They said those who want stay for receiving claims can stay even if their stay permits have expired,” Zakaria told Business Recorder on Saturday. He said the Saudi authorities also assured that no affected Pakistani would be asked to leave before the matter is settled.

“They [Saudis] expressed their no objection in case affected employees get ‘Naqal kafala’ and find job elsewhere,” he said, adding the authorities also impressed upon the companies to settle dues immediately. Secondly, he pointed out that the policy of any country never varies on the basis of nationality. “Whatever facility is offered to a country’s workers, same is offered to the workers of other countries. Besides Pakistan, there are nationals of many countries including some Saudi nationals,” he added.

According to the spokesperson, the Saudi king has also directed companies to settle the issue of workers. He said that Pakistan Ambassador in Riyadh was received by the Saudi Foreign Minister and Saudi Minister for Manpower and they assured full co-operation.

He added that embassy has provided food on various occasions to Pakistanis in companies’ various camps, adding our ambassador visited every camp personally to express support. He further said the embassy officials have been visiting these camps regularly since May this year and earlier. “Those who were receiving 200 riyals per month for food from the companies, are being paid that amount by the Embassy,” he added.

When asked about an update on the minister’s visa, the Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said that he was not aware whether the Minister had applied for a visa to travel to Saudi Arabia or not. But he did not deny that the visit of the Minister or any other relevant staff to travel to Saudi Arabia to talk to Saudi authorities on the problems of Pakistani workers is still pending.

“Let me clarify ...there are some people within the media who are spreading rumours,” he said while commenting on the allegation against the Foreign Office for its inaction to effectively take up the issue with Saudi authorities. The Foreign Office, earlier, estimated around 8,520 Pakistanis working in two companies, namely M/s Saad Trading and Contracting Company, Al-Khobar (520 workers) and Saudi Oger Limited (8000 workers) are currently facing problems in getting their salaries and End of Service benefits.

Zakaria told his weekly media briefing on Thursday that the government has taken all measures and is constantly in contact with the Saudi government, the companies and the Pakistani employees. He said that Saudi government has extended co-operation and the matter has been addressed to a great extent.

According to the spokesperson, the resident permits of many of the employees have not been renewed by the companies and while they do not refute the claims of their employees in terms of the number of back salaries due yet they are unable to pay in the given strained economic circumstances. He added that most of the workers want to leave these companies but want their dues settled first.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs last week approved an amount of SR 100,000 (equivalent to Pak Rs 2,785,000) from PCW&E Fund for providing relief to the workers by Pakistan embassy in Riyadh. The Embassy was also instructed to keep pursuing the authorities concerned to ensure food supply and medical facilities to workers, settle salaries and outstanding dues of the employees as soon as possible, facilitate workers to return home if they opt to do so and to facilitate them to transfer their work permits to another company for those who wish to stay in the kingdom. There are around 520 workers from M/s. Saad trading and Contracting Company living in three camps namely Dessert camp, Al-Azizia camp, and Abqiaq Camp, all located in the eastern region. The estimated number of affected Pakistanis in the Saudi Oger company is up to 8,000 and around 20 percent are living on their own while majority of them are living in various camps set up by the company in Riyadh, Dammam, Jeddah, Taif and Makkah regions.

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September 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 26TH TO OCTOBER 2ND 2016

'NO CHILD LABOUR SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 20 YEARS'

Dawn, October 1st, 2016

KARACHI: Speakers at a seminar on Friday said none of the provinces was eager to conduct a fresh child labour survey even though the last survey was conducted 20 years ago.

They said useful social protection policies that were sensitive to children's needs were needed in Pakistan to eradicate child labour.

The seminar "A child employed is a future destroyed" was organised by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), Child Rights Movement (CRM), and Sindh labour ministry at a hotel.

Experts and officials said Pakistan faced the 'worst' form of child labour where workers were subjected to physical and mental torture.

They said there should be zero tolerance for forced child labour with a national policy against it.

The audience was told that a child labour rehabilitation fund needed to be revived and child labour rehabilitation centres at the district level be established.

They said the Employment of Children Act 1991 was abolished after the 18th amendment. The labour ministry in Sindh should adopt and move the provincial draft of Employment of Children Act Sindh for further process.

They said in Pakistan, 25 million children were not going to school out of which 15mn were earning for their families through various forms of manual labour.

A senior official in the labour ministry said the ministry was drafting a strategy to conduct a child labour survey.

He said the government was taking keen interest to activate the already existing vigilance committees on child labour at the district level.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287147>

MINING SECTOR: HRCP UNDERSCORES NEED FOR PAYING ATTENTION TO WORKERS' RIGHTS

Business Recorder, October 01, 2016

The regulation of the mining industry in all parts of Pakistan needed to be urgently looked at in order to prevent injury and loss of lives among mine workers, mitigate hazards to the environment and minimise mining-related displacement and its impact. This was the consensus of a two-day national consultation on concerns regarding the mining sector organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in Karachi that concluded on Friday.

HRCP's 'National Consultation on Mining, Environment and Workers' Rights' brought speakers together from all the provinces as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Representatives from the academia, civil society, the legal fraternity, media and activists were in attendance. The speakers expressed grave concern over the authorities' failure to ensure implementation of the legal provisions that could protect the lives and

the rights of the mine workers and also prevent serious damage to the environment on account of unregulated mining operations.

The speakers noted that as an industrial sector, mining had tremendous potential in providing viable economic development and sustainable employment opportunities. Yet, in terms of the applicable regulatory regime, lack of enforcement, and punishment and penalties, much reform was required. The participants stressed that an important step towards that end would be a comprehensive survey to collate the actual labour employed by sector, which should inform an urgently needed policy on protecting the lives and rights of mine workers. They said the workforce in the mining sector was particularly vulnerable because most workers were seasonal and migratory and there was no check on mine owners putting profit over their safety.

Taking all possible steps to eliminate the health hazards and loss of life in mines, ensuring that workers had equitable compensation and all the benefits that they were entitled to at least under the prevailing laws, and sufficient disability recompense was urgently needed, the participants said.

These challenges were further aggravated in FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan because both regions were not only outside the national mainstream but also outside the pale of constitutional safeguards available, at least on paper, to the workers elsewhere. The impact of the 18th constitutional amendment on workers' right to organise at the national level was singled out as a matter of grave concern. Ensuring uniformity of the minimum legal standard across the country and consolidation of a plethora of labour and industry related law was stressed.

Equally critical, the environmental impact of mining needed to be understood and mitigated. The suitability of resources being mined, the technology deployed, and disposal and conservation had to be important components of the planning process and the grant of mining leases. The impact of mining upon the surrounding environment and rehabilitation of the areas after mine closures needed to be regulated.

The participants emphasised that while all eyes remained on CPEC as an economic game changer, the abundance of mineral and gem resources with which Pakistan was endowed, if properly excavated while ensuring workers' welfare, could redefine the country's economic destiny. The consultation concluded with a consensus that the following recommendations must be implemented:

Immediate estimation and documentation of the actual workforce employed in the mining sector; Extension and effective enforcement of the regulatory regime to all workers employed in the industry, including the small-scale mining, across the country; Compensation and benefits in the mining industry must be commensurate with the difficulty and hazards in relation to the work, even as meaningful efforts must be made in consultation with the workforce to systematically mitigate risks;

Inspection and other regulatory functions of the government needed to be strengthened and greater transparency, accountability and regular information sharing ensured; The existing penalties, for failure to comply with prescribed standards and other offences by mine owners/operators, must be made harsher to deter recurrences; Environmental impact must be assessed independently and in a transparent manner, and infractions penalised;

Conservation and recycling of important resources, especially water, needed to be made mandatory and must also be enforced; Displacement of communities must be minimised and adequate compensation, going beyond mere land value, paid to avoid marginalising affected populations; Mining operations must be prevented from affecting archaeological and cultural heritage.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/89504:mining-sector-hrcp-underscores-need-for-paying-attention-to-workers-rights/?date=2016-10-01>

STRANDED WORKERS START RETURNING FROM SAUDI ARABIA

Dawn, September 11th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Pakistani workers sacked by some construction companies in Saudi Arabia continue to return home, with a group of 10 workers reaching here on Saturday.

The number of labourers coming back is low but it is part of an ongoing process of workers returning home after not receiving their dues.

It all began about eight months ago when one after the other groups such as the Saad Trading and Contracting Companies, the Saudi Oger Limited and the Bin Laden Group declared bankruptcy after reportedly facing a “financial crunch”.

For about 12,000 Pakistanis working in different capacities for the companies operating from Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam and Ta’if, the domino effect was sudden and unexpected.

The labourers have been living under lamentable conditions in 19 camps set up by the companies in the four cities for the past few months. Most of them, according to officials and workers who have returned home, are still there to claim the money owed to them by the companies.

According to Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria, at present there are around 2.6 million Pakistani nationals working in Saudi Arabia.

Some of the sacked workers belong to Karachi’s Rajput Colony in Liaquatabad’s Gharibabad area. About 400 labourers from the colony are working as marble setters and marble carvers in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman. The colony is unique in a way as almost everyone in the area has a family history of working as marble setters and marble carvers.

Mohammad Rafi, 26, is one of them. He belongs to the fourth generation of marble setters and jointly lives with his parents, siblings and their extended family. “I’m among the lucky ones in my family to have worked in Makkah’s Grand Mosque as a marble carver and a marble setter,” he said while talking to Dawn.

According to historian and writer Gul Hassan Kalmati, the Urdu-speaking residents of Rajput Colony earlier lived with people belonging to Marwari and Salawat communities in Ranchhore Line before partition. The Marwaris and Salawats, originating from Kutch in the Indian state of Gujarat, were involved in construction of buildings and had perfected the art of brick masonry.

According to a resident, the Urdu-speaking workers along with the Marwaris and Salawats moved to Rajput Colony, also known as Al-Kurait Colony, after partition. Soon, migrants coming from Delhi and Rajasthan in India, having skills in marble setting, also found a place in the colony.

Explaining the process of going to Saudi Arabia, Rafi said that labourers found work in the kingdom through agents who either gave an advertisement in a newspaper or contacted labourers through a ‘reference’. The reference usually comes through labourers who have previously gone to Saudi Arabia through the agents. They get 25 per cent share in the money the agents receive from a client.

“We have to pay Rs300,000 which includes payment for our visa and air tickets but only if the agent is playing fair; otherwise we have to pay separate amount for tickets and visas,” Rafi said. The offices of the agents are located in the posh areas as well as dingy streets in the supposedly ‘conflict’ areas of Karachi.

In most cases, the salary is decided beforehand. But it is not always what is promised. For instance, Rafi was promised 1,500 Saudi riyals a month for his work. “But on reaching Riyadh, I was told that I would get 1,100 riyals monthly salary with 300 riyals food allowance,” he said. “At times, I won’t get food allowance, so had to rely on salary. It seemed fine in the beginning but later I realised that the salary is not much.”

Similarly, he said that the process was not always legal and the documents not always authentic. “In such cases, workers are usually offered two conditions on beginning work for a company, either to hand over their identity documents, such as Pakistani passport or Iqama or Muqem card, Saudi identity card which also works as a residence permit for expatriates, in return for extra money or keep the documents but get a salary less than promised.

After spending about 22 months in the Saudi Oger Company in Riyadh, Rafi was ousted without a reason in December last year. Since his Iqama or Muqem card is with the company, he was left only with his medical insurance card to show it as evidence to claim his six-month salary.

“I spoke to the company about my salary before leaving but to no avail. They were kind enough to give me and other workers 200 riyals for food for two months after the company went bankrupt. But it stopped soon after the number of workers being sacked by the company increased,” he adds.

The plight of the workers started coming to the fore after some of them protested outside the Pakistani consulate and the companies on July 22. Such protests were also fuelled by complaints of Pakistani consulates in Riyadh and Jeddah not providing help to the stranded workers.

The Foreign Office spokesperson says that the Pakistani workers who are still in the camps are there by choice. “They want to reclaim their dues and will be back as soon as they get it. On our part, we have spoken to the Saudi authorities who assured us that they won’t arrest or deport the workers whose visas have recently expired,” he said.

About the role of Pakistani consulates, he said, “I can recount hundreds of other labourers who have been facilitated by our representatives in Saudi Arabia.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283455>

FOUR YEARS ON, FAMILIES, ACTIVISTS GATHER TO MOURN BALDIA FACTORY FIRE VICTIMS
Dawn, September 12th, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: On the fourth anniversary of the Baldia factory fire, the worst industrial disaster in the country’s history, the victims’ families and labour rights organisations on Sunday welcomed the decision from Geneva about compensating the families of the victims of the blaze.

The Ali Enterprises Fire Affectees Association (AEFAA), National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), and other rights groups called the agreement in which German cloth discounter KiK submitted to pay the compensation to the victims’ families as “historic”.

KiK would pay \$5.15 million in compensation to the families of those who died in the fire overnight. This has been done with the help of international actors’ involvement in the negotiation process, said the individuals and bodies that have been struggling for the cause since 2012.

“We are indebted to International Labour Organisation (ILO), IndustriALL Global Union, Clean Clothes Campaign and German government for their help. With this decision, a long-standing demand of labourers will be fulfilled,” said a statement drafted by the organisers of the event outside the factory where hundreds of labourers perished in 2012.

Victims' families, industrial and home-based workers, and other organisations attended the event in hundreds to pay homage to their fallen comrades. The event began with a one-minute silence.

AEFAA senior vice president Saeeda Khatoon, NTUF's Nasir Mansoor and Rafiq Baloch, advisor to Sindh CM on labour Saeed Ghani, social worker Faisal Edhi, rights activists Karamat Ali, Habib Junaidi, Zehra Khan, Gul Rehman, and others spoke at the event.

Speakers said the incident was one of the worst industrial disasters globally in which 260 people perished. Four years on, the victims' families were still awaiting justice. Mentioning the charge sheet of the case, they expressed reservations about its contents.

The charge sheet and police's decision to clear the factory owners of the charges would be challenged in the higher court, the speakers said, adding that whatever were the causes, most deaths occurred because the victims found no escape route. The factory itself and its working conditions were in violation of the labour laws in place, they said.

Excluding owners and others from the case despite having evidence on record against them was inexplicable, they added.

Describing the plight of the heirs of the victims, speakers said during the four years many of them had died after suffering excessive mental stress. They said 17 bodies charred beyond recognition were still unidentified showing the government's apathy. "Their DNA reports have not arrived," said an activist.

They referred to the pledge of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, when he was the opposition leader, promising to pay Rs300,000 to each family and the announcement of former Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah to provide a plot and job to each of the victims' families, none of which, added the speakers, ever materialised. Similarly, the promise of monetary relief by a builder had not yet been fulfilled completely, they added.

A 'pain and suffering' case had been filed in a German court against KiK to create a global network against human and labour rights violations across the world. "Recently," said a speaker, "the German court has decided that case expenses of the litigants will be paid by the German government."

They said the victims had also filed a case against Italian social auditing company RINA for issuing a fake safety certificate to Ali Enterprises.

Talking about the compensation deal with KiK, they said an ILO fact-finding mission recently visited Pakistan to make assessments. Afterwards, they added, talks were held in Geneva on Sept5-6 in which IndustriALL Global Union and Clean Clothes Campaign represented the victims. "KiK has agreed to pay USD5.15 million in compensation to the victims."

Participants at the event called for all factories be registered under the Factories Act and labour laws be implemented. They proposed that Sept11 be observed as health and safety day, particularly in Sindh.

The participants said the burnt factory be turned into a monument of the martyred workers where a facility to train labourers on health and safety be established.

Later, Advocate Faisal Siddiqi at a press conference at Karachi Press Club spoke in detail about the deal agreed upon with KiK.

He said the compensation included \$250,000 margin for a fluctuation in costs, meaning that US\$4.9 million would go to victims. A mechanism for the payment would be devised by the provincial and federal governments.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283575>

233 MORE STRANDED WORKERS RETURN FROM SAUDI ARABIA

Dawn, September 17th, 2016

Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: Pakistani construction workers sacked by their employers in Saudi Arabia continue to arrive back home. On Friday two more groups — one of 188 workers and the other of 45 — arrived here at Benazir Bhutto International Airport.

The group of 188 workers came from Jeddah by Saudi Arabian Airline flight SV-888 in the early hours of the day. The other group arrived here by Saudi Arabian Airline flight SV-724 in the evening.

Mohammad Iqbal, one of the deported workers who belonged to Azad Kashmir, told media personnel that there were more than 6,000 Pakistani workers stranded in Saudi Arabia who were waiting to be sent back to their country as they were facing problems.

He claimed that he was not among those who received aid by the Pakistani mission in the kingdom on the orders of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He alleged that the aid was being given to only some selected people.

Mr Iqbal said because of their unemployment in Saudi Arabia families of workers in Pakistan had been facing financial difficulties.

He claimed that a large number of Pakistani workers had not been paid their salary by their Saudi employers over the past 10 months.

He said Pakistani workers had been living in a very bad condition in camps where they were served unhygienic food.

Another Pakistani worker told Dawn without giving his name that he would never again think of going abroad through recruiting agents. He said he would stay in his own country and work hard.

After brief questioning by the immigration staff, all the deported workers were allowed to go home.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284304>

THREE WORKERS KILLED AS ROOF OF BAKERY UNIT COLLAPSES

Dawn, September 18th, 2016

LAHORE: Three labourers were killed while as many others suffered injuries when the roof of a factory collapsed shortly after a chiller exploded in Shahpur Kanjran, police said on Saturday.

Initial reports suggested that the incident took place when sweets were being prepared at the bakery unit located on Multan Road.

Police said more than 10 employees were working when the chiller exploded and a portion of the roof caved in. Six workers were trapped under the debris while others managed to move away, according to a police official.

He said rescuers had to face a great deal of inconvenience due to a lack of access to the affected area.

Three of the trapped employees lost their lives at the spot while others were rushed to the nearby hospitals, he said adding the deceased were identified as Safdar, Khyzer and Waqas.

Quoting relatives of the deceased workers, the police official said the factory management had closed the main gate as a result rescuers could not get quick access to the affected area.

He said: "It is yet to be ascertained as to why the main entrance was closed by the management instead of helping rescuers in reaching the area."

On the basis of these allegations two supervisors were taken into custody, the police official said adding action would be taken against the factory owner and others on the basis of the statements of injured workers.

A joint inquiry was launched by the police as well as the city district government authorities, he said.

Meanwhile, residents also staged a demonstration against the factory owner and the management for not following safety protocol.

The district coordination officer has ordered an inquiry into the roof collapse incident and directed the department concerned to submit a detailed report.

Taking notice of the incident, the chief minister has sought reports from the respective government departments, including CDGL and the police. He also directed the health department to ensure treatment to the injured.

The CM announced Rs500, 000 each for the deceased workers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284497>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

A FLAWED CHILD LABOUR LAW

Dawn, September 8th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

WHILE one should have liked to welcome the Punjab government's efforts to eliminate child labour at brick kilns, its instrument, the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, that is to come into force the other day, suffers from quite a few serious flaws.

The act replaces the ordinance on the subject promulgated in January this year. Instead of removing the defects in the ordinance, the lawmakers have opted for a more problematic piece of legislation.

As with the ordinance, the new law protects only children between the ages of five and 14. Obviously, the government is still determined to reject its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to treat all under-18 persons as children. Child rights activists and those who love children in general will never accept this position.

Further, while the ordinance held only the occupier (owner) liable to punishment if a child was found working at a brick kiln, the act makes the parent equally liable. This has been done to appease the brick-kiln owners who maintained that they do not like children to do labour, the sole culprits being the parents. They had also gone on a strike in support of their demand.

This must rank as one of the most bizarre strokes of legislation in the world. It is true that poor parents often put their little children to work and the Punjab Compulsory Primary Education Act also penalises parents who do not send their children to school. But the new act does not distinguish between a school and a brick kiln. The owner of a brick kiln is under no obligation to put a child to labour if his parent so desires.

This attempt to minimise the employer's culpability can only be deplored. In case some poor workers are ready to work for longer hours per week than is stipulated in the law, the employer alone is held responsible and not the workers. Powerful brick-kiln owners could exploit the dual liability rule to oppress hapless workers.

Besides, the new law rolls back to a greater extent than the ordinance had attempted the progress made over the past many years to rid brick-kiln workers of the curse of peshgi (loan against future wages), the foundation of the bonded labour system.,

It may be pertinent to recall that the Supreme Court, in its landmark judgement of 1989, had said that the “peshgi system in future is to be discontinued”. However, it made an exception “in proper cases” and said that “if a valid agreement on this point is reached between a labourer and a brick-kiln owner, the latter shall give to the former an advance loan, which shall not be in any case more than seven days wages”. Parliament went a step further in 1992 when it banned peshgi altogether vide Section 4 (2) of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act.

Although the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, which was adopted by the Punjab government with minor amendments in 2012, overrides all other laws, the provincial ordinance of January 2016 revived the system of peshgi and fixed its limit at “six times the wage of a worker for one wage period, if his wages are time-rated, and earned wages during one month, if his wages are piece-rated”. The difficulty caused by confusion in interpreting this provision has been met by fixing the peshgi limit now at Rs50,000. This amount is much higher than the limit conceded by the Supreme Court “in proper cases”, and could push the debtor into bondage.

Apart from the apparent impossibility of reconciling this retrogressive provision with the bar to peshgi in the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, the lawmakers have ignored the entire debate held during 1988-1992 on the way the peshgi amount had been manipulated for decades to inflate the workers’ liability, and to justify workers’ slave-like status and their sale when the peshgi amount could not be repaid.

The Punjab bureaucracy had been trying for many years to resuscitate the peshgi system through an amendment to the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and that, perhaps, would have been a fair route to take. Failing in that effort it has decided to revive the peshgi system vide a law aimed at banning child labour when the object and theme of the new legislation do not permit such shoddy patchwork. How is peshgi relevant to a measure against child labour?

There are several other problems with the new law. The inspector, whose task should be limited to reporting to the police or other authorities instances of non-compliance by brick-kiln owners, has been given the power to seal a brick kiln for up to seven days for any violation, a power that should be allowed only to judicial tribunals, the deviations permitted in several other areas notwithstanding.

The government may also set up district labour committees for the effective implementation of the law. The lynchpin of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act is the district vigilance committee — and we know how the provincial governments dragged their feet to avoid creating these committees. There is no guarantee that the district labour committees will be created soon. Their task could well be assigned to the vigilance committees.

Public opinion attaches great importance to the project of ending child labour at brick kilns, especially in view of its promise to put all children freed from labour in schools. The government is claiming that thousands of children have already been admitted to schools, and that the scheme of giving each child a stipend of Rs1,000 per month and a compensatory allowance of Rs2,000 per child to the parents is working well. This part of the project demands a fuller discussion. For the moment, it may be sufficient to call for guarantees that all children relieved of labour are indeed attending schools and that the arrangements for offering them proper instruction are adequate at all institutions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282778>

LABOURERS TO GET HEALTH FACILITIES

Dawn, September 9th, 2016

PESHAWAR: Provincial minister for labour Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli has said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will provide all medical equipment and fulfil the deficiency of doctors in the hospitals of Employees Social Security Institution (ESSI) across the province. She said that the hospitals would be equipped with modern facilities for the welfare of labourers.

She said that new doctors had been recruited through NTS for the ESSI hospitals and according to the requirement while the recruitment of the specialist doctors, and surgeons in various fields for the industrial units would be finalised in the second phase soon.

According to a statement, the minister expressed these views while addressing a ceremony arranged for handing over of appointment letters to the newly-recruited doctors in ESSI at Peshawar on Thursday.

On this occasion, ESSI DG Anwar Khan and doctors were also present. The newly-appointed doctors include surgeons, gynaecologists and male/female medical officers, who would be further posted to the hospitals of ESSI at Peshawar, Mardan, Hattar, Haripur, Swabi, Charsadda, Abbottabad and D.I Khan, she said.

The minister said that provision of health professional allowance to the doctors and paramedics of ESSI was under consideration. She said that they were recruiting competent doctors in the health centres designated for labourers to provide them all sorts of facilities.

She said that medical tests facilities and equipment would be made available at these hospitals. Earlier, Ms Tahirkheli visited the ESSI Polyclinic Hospital, Kohat Road, Peshawar, and went round its various wards, X-ray room, laboratory, etc.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283001/labourers-to-get-health-facilities>

US JOBLESS CLAIMS FALL AS LABOUR MARKET REMAINS STRONG

Business Recorder, 9 September 2016 ASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week, pointing to sustained labour market strength even as the pace of job growth is slowing.

Despite signs of underlying labour market strength, also corroborated by record high job openings, August's slowdown in job growth, together with sluggish factory and services sector activity could encourage the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates unchanged at its Sept. 20-21 policy meeting.

"The labour market has not been this good since the 1970s. The Fed has operational risk," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG Union Bank in New York. "Rates are a long way from normal levels and the Fed has no firepower to come to the aid of the economy if a recession were to hit."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits decreased 4,000 to a seasonally adjusted 259,000 for the week ended Sept. 3, the lowest level since mid-July, the Labour Department said on Thursday. Economists had forecast first-time applications for jobless benefits rising to 265,000 in the latest week.

It was the 79th straight week that claims remained below the 300,000 threshold, which is associated with robust labour market conditions. That is the longest stretch since 1970, when the labour market was much smaller.

The four-week moving average of claims, considered a better measure of labour market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, fell 1,750 to 261,250 last week.

A report on Wednesday showed job openings hit a record high in July, though hiring continued to lag, suggesting a possible skills mismatch. The very low level of claims together with all-time high job openings suggests the labor market remains healthy, even though employment growth moderated in August after payroll gains averaged 273,000 jobs per month in June and July.

The economy created 151,000 jobs in August, still well above the roughly 100,000 jobs that Fed Chair Janet Yellen says is needed to keep up with growth in the working-age population.

“The labor market remains tight. The problem with the labor market is the shortage of workers who have the necessary skills and are willing to work at the prevailing wage,” said John Ryding, chief economist at RDQ Economics in New York.

With the labor market near full employment and the economy’s recovery from the 2007-09 recession showing signs of aging, the slowdown in job growth is normal.

Despite labor market resilience, data so far for August suggest some cooling in economic activity. Manufacturing contracted in August for the first time in six months and services sector activity was the slowest in 6-1/2 years.

Thursday’s claims report also showed the number of people still receiving benefits after an initial week of aid fell 7,000 to 2.14 million in the week ended Aug. 27.

The four-week average of the so-called continuing claims slipped 4,000 to 2.15 million.—Reuters

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/09/09/11-page/792557-news.html>

CALL TO BAN FACTORIES PRIVATE AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION COMPANIES

Dawn, September 10th, 2016

KARACHI: On the occasion of fourth anniversary of the worst industrial fire incident of the country at the Ali Enterprise Factory in Badia Town, trade unions and labour support organisations on Friday asked the government to implement efficient labour inspection mechanism in light of the joint action plan framed in consultation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Speaking at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club, Karamat Ali, executive director of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler), Nasir Mansoor of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), Saeeda Khatoon of the Ali Enterprise Factory Fire Affectees Association, and trade unionists Habibuddin Junaidi and Usman Baloch, and Rehana Hakeem asked the federal government to declare Sept 11 National Workers’ Safety Day.

They also called to convert the Ali Enterprise factory building into a labour community centre or a memorial museum. “We demand that an effective occupational health and safety system at factory and shop levels is laid down under the Factories Act,” said a statement they distributed.

Currently the provincial labour ministries were unable to conduct regular inspections in industrial and commercial units due to lack of capacity and number of trained inspectors, they said, adding that capacity building of labour officers was a must. They demanded that private audit and certification companies be banned in Pakistan.

The speakers spelled out the efforts of the labour support organisations for provision of compensation to the deceased workers’ families and injured workers.

A total of 256 workers, including women and children, had lost their lives in the fire incident. Barred windows and locked doors of the factory prevented workers from escaping the building. Some 55 survivors could only save their lives by jumping from upper floors, and sustained lifelong injuries.

They said it was a matter of concern that out of 1,500 workers, only 200 were registered with the Employees Old age Benefit Institution and a small number with the Sindh Social Security Institutions. The factory was not registered with the labour ministry, Civil Defence, SITE Limited, etc, and its building design was not approved by the building control authority.

They said that Piler, NTUF, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Hosiery Garments General Workers Union and an individual citizen, Javed Iqbal, had filed a constitution petition in the Sindh High

Court against the factory owners, relevant state officials and the accrediting agency RINA for non-compliance with laws.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283131/call-to-ban-factories-private-audit-and-certification-companies>

TEACHERS' REGULARISATION: SENATE PASSES MOTION TO REGULARISE DAILY-WAGERS

The Express Tribune, September 10th, 2016.

Asma Ghani

Islamabad: The Senate on Friday passed a unanimous motion to regularise the services of daily-wage teaching and non-teaching staff at government schools and colleges in Islamabad.

These daily-wagers have been working for years in different federal government institutions falling under the Federal Directorate of Education. The daily-wagers also staged a sit-in for 70 days, besides regular street protests demanding regularisation, only to be told to approach one authority or the other.

A week ago, a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat had taken up the issue and decided to take up the matter in Senate. On January 25 this year, the committee had directed the Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) to regularise the services of the daily-wagers.

A CADD official had told the committee that the division had moved a summary to the Prime Minister's Office regarding daily-wage teachers, but the PM Office had turned it down due to some objections.

A motion was moved by Senator Kalsoom Parveen on the behalf of the standing committee to regularise some 1,500 daily-wagers on the same lines as employees of other ministries, who were regularised in 2011-12 by a special committee headed by PPP's Khursheed Shah.

The standing committee has been discussing the issue since then, and the Islamabad High Court had also given directives in favour of the teachers.

While visiting a school, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had also directed the officials to look into the case of daily wagers. Some of the teachers recommended for regularisation were denied joining letters at the eleventh hour after teachers who were not regularised challenged the selective process.

On Friday, the committee members moved the motion in the upper house in favour of the daily-wager employees and that was unanimously passed. No senator opposed the motion, while, two senators Babar Awan and Parveen, spoke on the floor in favour of the motion.

"Employees working for just Rs8000 for years have become rolling stones between various ministries," said Senator Parveen. "The bureaucracy is not ready to regularise them, even though other employees are being regularised. The committee has decided to resolve this issue once and for all by putting it before the house," she said.

After Eid, the process of regularisation will be started, she said, adding that they will get the same benefits as regular employees.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1179609/teachers-regularisation-senate-passes-motion-regularise-daily-wagers/>

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October 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 24TH TO OCTOBER 30TH 2016

PRESIDENT SEEKS MORE QUOTA FOR PAKISTANI WORKERS IN QATAR

Dawn October 24th, 2016

DOHA: President Mamnoon Hussain called upon the Qatari government on Sunday to enhance the quota for Pakistani workers and relax visa regime for them as Islamabad could provide unskilled, skilled and highly professional manpower to Doha in various fields.

The president was talking to Qatari Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Special Affairs Dr Issa Saad Al-Nuaimi, who called on him here and discussed bilateral relations and cooperation in the area of manpower.

Mr Mamnoon said that around 125,000 Pakistanis work in Qatar and they were playing a vital role in the development of Qatar and considered the country as their second home.

He recalled that Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani during his visit to Pakistan in 2015 had expressed interest in importing more manpower from Pakistan. The matter was again discussed during Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Qatar in February this year, he said.

The Qatari labour minister said that his country was interested in hiring Pakistani professionals in the fields of medicines, nursing and engineering. He said the process for the import of Pakistani manpower would be expedited after devising a mechanism.

He also praised the role of Pakistani expatriates working in Qatar.

Qatari Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah also met President Mamnoon Hussain on Sunday and discussed prospects for defence cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed in detail the prospects for defence cooperation and the Qatari minister expressed his country's keen interest in the purchase of defence equipment and hardware from Pakistan.

The president said Pakistan attached great importance to its cordial relations with Qatar and added that the relations between the two countries were based on mutual respect and shared values.

He expressed satisfaction over the level of defence cooperation between the two countries and desired to enhance mutual cooperation to take the relationship to newer heights.

The president said that exchange of defence delegations and interaction strengthened the bonds of friendship between the two countries. He said Pakistan looked forward to have more positive outcome from the scheduled Oct 27-28 visit of the Qatari minister of state for defence to Pakistan.

He informed Dr Khalid bin Mohammad that Pakistan had developed state of the art defence production facilities and could fulfil growing needs of Qatar, especially in the military equipment and hardware.

He also expressed Pakistan's desire to further enhance defence collaboration with Qatar, adding that training of Qatari armed forces' personnel and deputations from Pakistan armed forces were central to their defence cooperation.

The president said Pakistan could share its expertise of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) by providing specialist military officers to train Qatari armed forces personnel, adding that the two sides could also explore possibilities of establishing joint industries to meet requirements of the Qatari armed forces.

The president further said that Pakistan could provide technical assistance to the Qatari ministry of defence for establishing their own facilities for manufacturing of arms and ammunition.

Pakistan could also offer special courses in the fields of Anti-Terrorist Training (ATT) and curriculum development for Qatari armed forces, Mr Mamnoon said.

The Qatari minister lauded services of Pakistani defence personnel in Qatari armed forces and said they were doing a great job in serving Qatar.

The Qatari minister said his country was keen to have joint ventures with Pakistan in defence production.

The president visited the Pakistan Education Centre (PEC), a school being managed by the Pakistan Embassy in Qatar, and interacted with students.

He visited a few classrooms and the library of the Pakistan Education Centre.

The president held frank interaction with the students and also signed a visitors' book and recorded his expressions.

Earlier upon his arrival at the PEC, the president was received by Principal Nargis Raza Otha and staff members of the education centre. He was presented a bouquet by two children clad in traditional Pakistani dress.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291901/president-seeks-more-quota-for-pakistani-workers-in-qatar>

PUNJAB CRIMINALISES CHILD LABOUR

The Express Tribune, October 25th, 2016

Aroosa Shaukat

Lahore: Following fierce sloganeering demanding accountability of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the opposition benches in the Punjab Assembly walked out of the House on Monday, allowing an unopposed passage of as many as three government bills, including the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Bill, 2016.

With the passage of the child labour law, employing a child aged less than 15 years, or an adolescent aged between 15 and 18 years in hazardous occupations are now crimes punishable by jail time as well as monetary fines.

Called the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act 2016, the law has been enforced at once and will also be applicable to the entire province.

As many as 38 occupations have been identified as hazardous under the law in connection with the employment of an adolescent. Primarily these include those exposing an adolescent to toxic or explosive chemicals, bangles manufacturing, textile processes, stone crushing, tobacco manufacturing, cinemas and cyber clubs.

The law proposes the constitution of a committee – the Provincial Committee on Child Labour – that will advise on legislative and administrative measures for the eradication of child labour and propose a minimum age for purposes of employment.

Other provisions for adolescents include a mandatory day off in a week as well as working hours in a day that should not exceed three hours, and if required to should allow for a mandatory one-hour break.

It allows for a maximum of seven hours of work in a day for an adolescent that would include the one-hour break further binding that working hours should not hinder the adolescent's educational or vocational training.

Penalties under the law include a jail term of a maximum of six months and a fine up to Rs50,000 for employing or permitting a child to work or for allowing the same for an adolescent in hazardous occupations.

For employing a child or adolescent in slavery, prostitution or for illicit activities, including production and trafficking of drugs, the convicts shall be imprisoned for up to seven years and fined up to Rs1 million. The law also recommends penalties for repeated offenders and abettors.

Amendments to the Provincial Motor Vehicles Bill, 2016 pertaining to making fitness certificates a prerequisite for grant of route permits, mandatory registration of vehicles and display of security featured number plates and penalties for counterfeiting or preparation of unauthorised number plates were also passed by the House.

The Punjab Halal Development Agency Bill 2016 was also introduced in the House.

What was initially a light-hearted exchange between the treasury and the opposition benches over the sorry state of affairs of Punjab prisons, took a nasty turn as Opposition Leader Mehmoodur Rasheed accused the government of 'preparing lists' of PTI leaders to detain before their November 2 protest in Islamabad.

The House soon started echoing with the patent slogans of both the opposition and treasury benches.

The continuous failure of the parliamentary Home secretary, Mahar Ijaz Achlana, to respond to the lawmakers' queries did not help much to end the mockery being created in the House, as lawmakers invited each other to visit jails in their district in jest to be aware of the ground realities.

A persistent Zaeem Qadri, the Punjab government spokesperson, demanded the jail manual be revised, resulting in the matter being referred by the chair to the parliamentary committee on home affairs.

He also took a jab at the opposition leader for potentially being in a position to comment over the situation in the jails after November 2.

Incessant remarks from the government MPAs hinting at a potential crackdown on the PTI ahead of the Islamabad lockdown irked the opposition, with the opposition leader Mehmood not only warning the government against a crackdown but also offering his arrest after the session. If the government did resort to aggression, it would solely be responsible for the PTI's movement taking a violent turn, he forewarned.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1208643/hazardous-occupations-punjab-criminalises-child-labour/>

ABOUT 2,384 OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS DETAINED IN SAUDI ARABIA, UAE JAILS: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PANEL TOLD

Business Recorder, October 25, 2016

A parliamentary panel was informed on Monday that about 2,384 overseas Pakistanis are detained in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) jails due to minor or major crimes. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development met under the Chairmanship of Mir Aamer Ali Khan Magsi here on Monday. The committee was given briefing on the overseas Pakistanis detained in Saudi Arabia and UAE, attitude of Kafeel/employer towards overseas Pakistanis, and developments upon the complaints made by the overseas Pakistanis related to BNP building.

The Committee was informed that there were 1,834 Pakistanis detained in various jails in Saudi Arabia and 550 were in UAE, due to some minor and major crimes. The Committee also discussed the attitude/behaviour of Kafeels/employers towards Overseas Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia/United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Committee was informed that the attitude/behaviour of the majority employers and owners of big companies is good and the workers including Pakistanis are satisfied with their work. However, there are some issues regarding the direct employment visas.

The Committee considered the issue of BNP Building and expressed concern over it. The Committee was informed that the OPF had sent a reference to CDA for taking further necessary action regarding the BNP Building. Rana Muhammad Afzal Khan, Mian Najeebuddin Awaisi, Mian Imtaz Ahmed, Sabiha Nazir, Musarat Rafique Mahesar,

Shagufta Jumani, Suraiya Jatoi, Sheikh Salahuddin, Aliya Kamaran, Sardar Kamal Khan Bangulzai, Shakila Khalid Luqman, Aisha MNAs and Pir Sadruddin Shah Rashdi Minister for Overseas Pakistanis & HRD attended the meeting, besides officials of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/96342/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016

PROTEST THREATENED OVER SACKING OF CONTRACT WORKERS

Dawn October 17th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board Employees Union has expressed concern over the sacking of contractual employees and warned to launch a protest campaign if the workers were not reinstated without delay.

According to a statement issued here on Sunday, the decision to start protests was taken at a meeting chaired by union's president Sahibzada Naseem Khan.

The association's senior vice president Imtiaz Ahmed, vice president Badshah Gul and general secretary Fazal Khuda also spoke on the occasion.

The labour leaders said that 70 employees, including women, had been recruited on contract basis in 2010 in 14 centres of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board across the province, but they were sacked for unknown reasons.

They alleged that the provincial government was filling the vacant seats with people on the basis of political affiliations, but made clear that the workers union would not let it happen.

On the occasion, Imtiaz Ahmed said that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, on one hand, was claiming to give due rights to poor, but on the other, its provincial government was bent upon snatching livelihood from the workers.

"We will observe protest sit-in outside the Chief Minister House," he warned and added that the protest was the only option left with them to press ahead for reinstatement of the sacked employees.

He demanded of PTI chairman Imran Khan to take notice of the injustices and help reinstate the workers at the earliest as they had no other source of income to meet their routine expenditures, including schooling of their children.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1290457/protest-threatened-over-sacking-of-contract-workers>

ORGAN TRAFFICKING RING'S DETAINEES NARRATE HARROWING TALES

Dawn October 20th, 2016

Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: Mohammad Ijaz, a brick kiln worker, was brought to Rawalpindi from Sahiwal by an organ trafficking ring operating in the city and was one of the 24 people detained in a multi-storey building in Bahria Town, who were recovered by the police earlier this week.

Talking to Dawn, he said members of the organ trafficking ring had told all those detained that if they tried to escape, the police will kill them, thinking they were the Taliban.

The detainees were taken to a private hospital to test their blood and kidneys for transplantation and then taken back to the building where they were illegally detained, he said.

The detainees were given two meals a day and were not allowed to talk to their families, he added.

Ijaz is in his 30s and was among the 24 individuals who were lured into Rawalpindi from Punjab with promises of a better life by agents about four weeks ago.

“An agent contacted me at the brick kiln I was working at and he first took me to Lahore where he recorded a statement from me on a stamped paper, saying this will help me in case the police created hurdles in Rawalpindi,” he said.

Ijaz added that he was promised to be given Rs290,000 for his kidney and that the police had conducted the raid before the transplant could take place.

Another brick kiln worker from Sahiwal, Mohammad Bashir, told Dawn he was also brought to Rawalpindi by an agent and that he, too, was promised Rs290,000 for his kidney.

“My mobile phone was taken away a month ago, when I first came here, and so was my CNIC and the money I had on me,” he said, adding that he was worried about his family, who had no idea about his whereabouts.

Abdul Khalid is a father of seven and is a daily wage labourer from Kasur who says he left his family a month ago in search of a better job in Islamabad. He said his wife works in the fields in order to help with the expenses and had accompanied him up till Lahore on his way to Rawalpindi. She had gone back home from Lahore while he had boarded the bus to Rawalpindi.

Talking to Dawn on the phone from Kasur, Abdul Khalid’s wife said her husband had never been involved in any crime and would often travel out of the city in search of work.

She said he had told her he was going to Islamabad to deal with an important matter.

“He did not tell me nor the children that he was going to sell his kidney or that he had been jobless for while,” she said.

Abdul Khalid and the other detainees were produced before the court of Area Magistrate Naveed Iqbal Tarar on Wednesday to record their statements under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

An investigation team was formed by City Police Officer Israr Ahmed Khan Abbasi to investigate into the organ trafficking case, which is headed by Senior Superintendent of Police CIA Maria Mahmood and includes SP Saddar Iftikharul Haq, DSP Saddar Inspector Tahir and SHO Rawat Inspector Javed Akhtar.

The police have also arrested four suspected members of the organ trafficking ring operating in Rawalpindi, all of whom have been sent to jail on judicial remand, though the four doctors of the private hospital who are nominated in the FIR are yet to be arrested.

SP Haq said raids were being conducted to arrest the doctors, who are missing since a case was registered against them.

“A letter has been written to the secretary health and other concerned authorities to initiate an inquiry into the illegal kidney trade while the DCO Rawalpindi has been requested to seal the private hospital,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291083/organ-trafficking-rings-detainees-narrate-harrowing-tales>

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER VISITS NORTH WAZIRISTAN

Dawn October 20th, 2016

PESHAWAR: Gen Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, UK Army Chief of General Staff, on Wednesday visited North Waziristan Agency and was briefed about Operation Zarb-i-Azb, army spokesman Lt Gen Asim Bajwa said in a tweet.

He said that Gen Carter was briefed about the operation, dismantled infrastructure of militants, rehabilitation of internally-displaced persons (IDPs) and reconstruction of infrastructure in the conflict-hit area.

Peshawar Corps Commander Lt Gen Hidayatur Rehman was present on the occasion.

The operation against militants was launched in the area in June 2014 and the government has started return of the IDPs to their homes.

Earlier, the British general called on Chief of the Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, adds APP.

During the meeting, regional security issues and matters of mutual interest were discussed.

The visiting dignitary acknowledged sacrifices and achievements of the Pakistan Army in the fight against terrorism along with its efforts to bring peace and stability to the region.

Gen Carter laid a wreath at the Yadgar-i-Shuhada. A smartly turned out contingent of the Pakistan Army presented a guard of honour to the guest.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291111>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 10TH TO OCTOBER 16TH 2016
ONE IN FIVE JAPAN EMPLOYEES FACE 'DEATH FROM OVERWORK: REPORT
The Express Tribune, October 8, 2016

TOKYO: A fifth of the Japanese workforce faces the risk of death from overwork, according to a new government survey into the country's notoriously strenuous working culture.

Hundreds of deaths related to overwork — from strokes, heart attacks and suicide — are reported every year in Japan, along with a host of serious health problems, sparking lawsuits and calls to tackle the problem.

The survey was part of the nation's first white paper on "karoshi", or death from overwork, endorsed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet on Friday.

While the popular image of Japanese salarymen toiling long hours for the company before taking the last train home is changing, many still spend far more hours in the office than counterparts in other modern economies.

According to the paper, 22.7 per cent of companies polled between December 2015 and January 2016 said some of their employees logged more than 80 hours of overtime each month — the official threshold at which the prospect of death from work becomes serious.

The report added that approximately 21.3 per cent of Japanese employees work 49 or more hours each week on average, well above the 16.4 per cent reported in the US, 12.5 per cent in Britain and 10.4 in France.

The survey concluded that Japanese employees also reported feeling high levels of stress related to their work, pushing officials to call on companies to improve working conditions.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1195508/one-five-japan-employees-face-death-overwork-report/>

21,000 CIVIC AGENCIES WORKERS NOT PAID SEPTEMBER SALARIES

Dawn October 12th, 2016

KARACHI: Over 21,000 workers of the civic agencies have not yet been paid their salary for the month of September owing to which many of them could not participate in various religious rituals on the occasion Ashura in Muharram.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's Sajjan (CBA) union said that over 17,000 workers of KMC, over 4,000 workers of District Municipal Corporation Korangi and over 2,000 workers of DMC (South) had not yet been paid their monthly salary for September owing to which many of them could not perform their religious rituals.

Union chief Zulfikar Shah said that the workers were expecting that after the public representatives assumed office the payment of salary to workers would be made timely but rather than being made on time the salaries were being delayed.

He said that while the salaries were not being paid, the workers were being made to perform additional duties and that also without the payment of overtime.

He urged the chief minister to look into the issue of non-payment of salaries to workers and take stern action against those responsible and direct the officials concerned to make timely payments.

Meanwhile, the union chief said that the workers of KMC Municipal Services, Malaria Control, Fumigation, Solid Waste Management, City Wardens, etc, despite promises had not been paid the honorarium for the additional duties that they had performed during the past two years.

He said that while these staffers who worked in the field were not being paid, the employees of the administrator's secretariat, municipal commissioner's secretariat, finance, payroll section, etc, who sat in the air-conditioned rooms / offices were paid four additional salaries as honorarium last year and this year also similar exercise had been started and documentation had been done and case had been prepared and was awaiting approval in the finance department.

He said that such 'stepmotherly' attitude towards field staffers and pampering the office staffers was causing unrest among the field staffers. He demanded that their arrears be paid to them immediately.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289571>

BRICK KILN WORKERS' CHILDREN PROTEST SCHOOLS CLOSURE

Dawn October 11th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The children of brick kiln workers held a protest against closure of their schools and staged 'Ehtijaji school' outside the press club on Monday, demanding the government open their schools immediately and eliminate corruption from the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF).

The Society for the Protection of Rights of Child (Sparc) organised the protest in which the children were reading aloud 'P for protest' and 'C for corruption' and Humein dushman kay bachhay samajh kar parhaya jaye (teach us treating us as the children of enemies).

The protesting children belonged to Azad Nagar Hari Camp, brick kiln schools of Tando Ghulam Mohammad and Jamali Colony in Tando Hyder.

The All Sindh Bhatta Mazdoor Ittehad president Punhoon Bheel told reporters that of around 10,000 brick kilns in Sindh, only 1,300 had been registered but none had any educational facilities for their children.

He lauded the services of Sparc head Kashif Bajir who helped open three schools in Tando Hyder, Hyderabad district, with the help of the SEF.

The schools were opened six months ago at Azad Nagar Hari camp, Tando Ghulam Muhammad and Jamali Colony Tando Hyder in Tando Hyder, where 1,200 children of brick kiln labourers were getting education.

But all of a sudden, the schools were closed two months ago on the pretext of want of funds, he said, adding that when the school operators failed to pay commission to the SEF officials, the schools were closed.

Sparc's Kashif Bajir termed Sindh a graveyard of school buildings which were built to please voters only.

The SEF was the last hope to save sinking boat of education but it too had fallen prey to corruption.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289341/brick-kiln-workers-children-protest-schools-closure>

REMITTANCES FALL 9.3% IN SEPTEMBER

The Express Tribune, October 14th, 2016.

Farhan Zaheer

KARACHI: Overseas Pakistani workers remitted \$1,609 million during September 2016, down 9.3% compared to \$1,776 million in the same month of last year, according to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Thursday.

Moreover, remittances dropped to \$4,698 million in the first three months (Jul-Sept 2016) of the current fiscal year, down 5.3% compared with \$4,966 million during the same period of preceding year.

Like many other developing countries, Pakistan's remittances are under pressure due to world economic slowdown mainly because of low oil prices.

Remittances play a major role in stabilising the country's external sector, as they make up for almost half of the import bill and cover the deficit in the trade of goods account.

Pakistan received remittances amounting to \$19.9 billion in 2015-16, up 6.4% from the previous fiscal year.

In July 2016, remittances dropped by a significant 20.2% compared with the same month of previous year, prompting some analysts to warn of an imminent balance of payments crisis if the trend continued in coming months.

Declining exports and a gradual slowdown in remittances are major challenges for the economic managers of Pakistan. However, the SBP governor is confident that the country faces no immediate threat from the slowdown in remittances and it is in a much better position to repay debt in the next four to five years.

Country-wise details of remittances for Sept 2016 show that inflows from all major sources have declined significantly.

Remittances from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, US, UK, GCC countries (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman) and EU countries amounted to \$437.87 million, \$361.89 million, \$210.82 million, \$210.18 million, \$182.16 million and \$43.6 million respectively in Sept 2016 compared with the inflow of \$483.21 million, \$428.13 million, \$260.43 million, \$233.27 million, \$201.34 million and \$33.31 million respectively in Sept 2015.

However, remittances from Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Japan and other countries during September 2016 jumped to \$162.77 million compared with \$135.46 million in Sept 2015

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1198494/overseas-workers-remittances-fall-9-3-september/>

RS14,000 PER MONTH MINIMUM WAGES FIXED FOR UNSKILLED WORKERS

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Friday accepted the Minimum Wages Board's (MWB) proposal for the minimum wage rate for the unskilled adult and juvenile workers employed in the industrial or commercial establishments and fixed equal rates for workers irrespective of their gender and age limit.

In a notification issued by the labour and human resources department, the MWB had proposed Rs540 per day or Rs14,000 per month for unskilled adult and juvenile workers employed in industrial or commercial establishments in Sindh.

The notification said the Sindh government accepted the MWB's proposal and declared that the minimum rate of wages of such workers in the province would be as given above with effect from July1 this year.

In its recommendations of the minimum wages for unskilled adult and juvenile workers, the board said a female worker of a category "shall get the same minimum wages as allowed to a male worker of the category of such work".

It said the recommended wages would be applicable uniformly throughout the province as per the Sindh Minimum Wages Act, 2015 and would come into force with effect from the beginning of the current fiscal year.

Adult unskilled and juvenile workers of the given category would be regulated by the Sindh Factories Act, 2015 (Sindh Act No. XIII of 2016), the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 (IV of 1936) and other relevant labour laws.

The minimum rate of wages of other categories of workers (skilled and semi-skilled) employed in any industry would in no case be less than the minimum rates of wages for adult unskilled and juvenile workers.

It said employers in all industries whether registered or unregistered would pay to the adult unskilled and juvenile workers at the rate not less than the proposed in the schedule.

"The employers shall revise, where necessary the rates of remuneration for piece-rated workers so as to ensure that workers in each piece-rate occupation are enabled to earn not less than Rs67.5 per hour in any working day," it said.

It added that the proposed minimum wages should not be regarded as the maximum rates and existing wages, higher than the minimum wages now fixed, should not be reduced.

"The employers shall, however, be free to pay higher wages either unilaterally on their initiative or by collective agreement in view of any special consideration, including experience or higher cost of living to a particular locality or other reasons."

It said the recommended rate should be applicable to time-rated or whole time workers, including temporary piece-rated workers, with effect from the date of notification by the Sindh government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1290056/rs14000-per-month-minimum-wages-fixed-for-unskilled-workers>

HRCP VOWS TO REVIVE STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE, REHABILITATE BONDED HARIS

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

HYDERABAD: A two-day workshop on 'Bonded labour laws and rights' organised by special task force of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in a local hotel has called for reviving efforts for the liberation of bonded haris and their rehabilitation.

HRCP secretary general I.A. Rehman and vice president Asad Butt, Sikandar Brohi of the Participatory Development Initiatives, Palwa Shah, Sohail Sangi, Naz Sehto, Comrade Taj Mari, Pehlaj Kohli, Veeru Kohli, Veerji Kohli and Ms Sita were among the participants.

Veteran rights activist Hussain Naqi moderated the Friday session during which liberated haris (mostly women) shared their ordeals during captivity of influential cruel landowners. They spoke of hunger, starvation, violence and sexual assaults by henchmen of their employers.

Ghulam Hyder, an activist working for the welfare of bonded haris, said a landowner having as small land as four acres would hold haris in bondage and make men, women and children to prepare liquor and do such other works. While liberating bonded haris is a noble cause, some unscrupulous elements have now turned it into their business, charging Rs10,000 per family from such people, according to him. "Such elements are even involved in human trafficking," he revealed.

A member of a liberated family, Mannu Bheel, narrating his ordeal said that his nine family members had gone missing in May 1998 while working for a landowner of Sanghar. "The HRCP task force had got them freed but they were later kidnapped in Jhuddo, he recalled. He said he himself was nominated in half a dozen false FIRs for continuing his struggle for the recovery of the missing family members.

I.A. Rehman told the participants that the basic objective of the workshop was to see what the rights activists had learnt from the struggle and what should be done for the effective implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992 enacted years ago.

"The struggle against bonded labour has to be revived with a new vigour," he said and stressed the need for the rehabilitation of liberated haris.

Expressing concern over plight of women peasantry in bondage, he said they not only lost honour, but also failed to take care of their children as there was no concept of 'home' in their lives.

He called for lobbying with Sindh's legislators who could do something in this regard as it was state's weakness that a hari always remained a peasant. "The HRCP doesn't want to claim its monopoly over the cause but can bridge the gap between labour federations, women's rights organisations and hari bodies," he said.

He sought suggestions from stakeholders about adding the clause of 'an agreement between haris and their employers' to the Act on the pattern of one included in the law enacted by Punjab for kiln owners and workers. In Sindh, he said, such an agreement could be registered with a mukhtiarkar.

Speaking at a programme 'Issues of religious minorities in Pakistan and priorities of political parties' organised by the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI) in a local hotel on Friday, HRCP secretary general I.A. Rehman observed that religious minorities were taken better care with regard to basic amenities around the world. Pakistan's Constitution also guaranteed due rights of its religious minorities, he added.

"Despite that, minorities here face serious problems due to issues with the present system," he noted, and emphasised the need for seriously pondering over these issues.

He said the federal and provincial governments should pay due and immediate attention to the issues. He condemned the trend of forced marriages in Sindh and urged the Sindh government to take appropriate measures in this regard. If it failed, the sense of insecurity among Hindus would continue to deepen, he warned.

PTI MNA Lal Malhi, Zulfikar Halepoto, Veeru Kohli, Ramesh Kumar and Punhal Sario were among the other speakers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290047/hrcp-vows-to-revive-struggle-to-liberate-rehabilitate-bonded-haris>

RURAL WOMEN MAKE UP NEARLY HALF OF AGRICULTURE LABOUR FORCE WORLDWIDE: REPORT Business Recorder, October 15, 2016

The UN Secretary General on Friday said that, “Rural women make up nearly half the agricultural labour force around the world. They grow, process and prepare much of our food. They are the backbone of rural communities, and in many households they have the key responsibility for food security, education opportunities and healthcare.”

“But the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are forcing many rural women to migrate, increasing instability for their families and communities and creating an obstacle to development and growth,” he added. In his message on the “International Day of Rural Women,” he said that, “Natural disasters, together with recurrent slow-onset crises like drought, affect rural women disproportionately, adding to the challenges they already face in accessing food, healthcare, education and information.”

“Many rural women move in order to find more productive land and improve their lives and those of their families. But migration can increase their isolation and marginalization. Others are left behind when male family members leave to seek opportunities elsewhere. Both groups need the support of the international community, as an integral part of the debates around migration and development,” he said.

“Simple changes in policy can benefit rural women and help them to cope with the effects of the changing climate. For example, regulating remittances and reducing transaction costs can empower rural women economically, so that they can build the resilience of their families and communities. Training and access to information on climate-resilient agriculture and technology can make a critical difference. But too often, these are considered to be men’s issues and women are excluded from benefiting,” he said.

“As we consider how we can better respond to the movements of refugees and migrants, I call upon everyone to take the special needs and concerns of rural women into account,” he said.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/93483/>

COMBATING SILICOSIS

Dawn October 16th, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

IT may sound like a strange word for many of us urban dwellers, yet for those involved in the world of hazardous work it raises alarm — silicosis is an incurable lung disease that leads to respiratory failure and death.

Caused by inhaling silica dust while engaged in industrial operations such as mining, quarrying, sandblasting, rock-drilling, road construction and stone masonry, silicosis afflicts tens of millions of workers and kills thousands of people every year worldwide, according to ILO. The silver lining is that the disease is preventable and thus European countries, the US and Canada have reduced its incidence to a minimum. In South Asia, however, including Pakistan, silicosis mortality rate remains very high.

As there had been no specific law, to date, to deal with silicosis in Pakistan, the recent news of a draft law on the health and safety of workers exposed to silica dust warrants some attention.

For decades, labour and human rights activists and researchers have raised concerns over the lack of safety measures in mines and quarries, and workers’ severe health issues as a consequence. The rising incidences of silicosis affliction and mortality was brought to the fore when the members of the Public Lawyers Front filed a petition in the Lahore High Court, citing cases of silicosis in Gujranwala quarries in April 2014.

The Supreme Court took up the case suo motu in July 2014. Since then, things have been moving, albeit slowly, towards addressing this crucial issue. The court directed the concerned departments and officials in the provinces to come up with situation analyses, identification of causes, adequate legislation and remedial courses to reduce silicosis affliction and mortality rates.

The Punjab Labour and Human Resource Department prepared and finalised the Punjab Hazardous Occupation (Silicon) Rules in a tripartite consultation held in December 2014. The rules were notified in the public gazette in October 2015 seeking comments. The other provinces have so far only submitted reports. Apparently, the draft law on silicosis, the final version of the Punjab Hazardous Occupation (Silicon) Rules, has yet to be passed and enacted.

Affliction and death by silicosis due to disregard of health and safety measures in the mining industry is not just a provincial concern. It is a national issue and must be dealt with at the federal level through a national plan, as advised by the ILO and WHO in 1995. The ILO/WHO Global Programme for the Elimination of Silicosis identified the elimination of silicosis as a priority area for action in occupational health, urging member countries to give it top priority.

Under this initiative, the country is required to establish a national programme for the elimination of silicosis complemented by a national action plan. The country has to develop a consensus policy document, focusing on the prevention of silicosis as a priority in occupational health and safety. So far Brazil, Chile, China, India, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam have all established national programmes with the joint support of the ILO and WHO.

It is time for the federal government to take the lead and establish a national programme, similar to the National TB Control Programme, to protect workers in all four provinces against silicosis. Elimination of silicosis would require fewer resources than the TB programme as the cost of primary prevention — ie dust control, use of appropriate technologies, ventilation and local exhaust, process enclosure, wet techniques and substitution of less hazardous materials — would be borne by the industrial enterprises. Also, the target population — workers in hazardous occupations — is limited compared to the population suffering from TB.

The main cost would go into strengthening and establishing a proper labour inspection system, training inspectors for surveillance of workplaces, organising the reporting system on silicosis occurrence, and placing qualified doctors for early detection and treatment of silicosis among workers. An effective prevention strategy should be devised through tripartite consultations with the employers' organisations and the workers' unions.

The centre must not shirk from its responsibility to protect citizens from a preventable disease. Workers are an important pillar of the economy; a country can never progress without recognising its labour.

Under the 18th Amendment, the Federal Legislative List empowers parliament to legislate on labour. Matters relating to international treaties and conventions also come under the federal legislature. The centre needs to come up with a broader national legislative occupational health and safety framework based on constitutional rights and international labour standards. What is needed is strong political will, the absence of which is described by ILO as the most significant blockage "to the effective development, transfer and implementation of knowledge on hazard prevention".

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290227>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016

PAKISTANIS LOSING OUT IN HUNT FOR JOBS ABROAD

The Express Tribune, October 3rd, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli

ISLAMABAD: For Pakistanis, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are still the leading providers of employment outside their country. This is largely true even though job opportunities are shrinking for a Pakistani workforce due to increasing demand for highly skilled human resource.

Last year, a total of 947,718 workers landed jobs abroad out of which a little more than half, or 522,932, secured jobs in Saudi Arabia which amounts to 55.17 per cent of the total workforce sent abroad, according to statistics submitted in the Senate by Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Pir Syed Sadaruddin Shah Rashidi.

Another 326,995 persons were sent to the UAE for employment purposes — forming 34.50 per cent of the total workforce. Statistically, Saudi Arabia and UAE together hosted around 90 per cent of the total Pakistani workforce sent overseas.

Available statistics show that Pakistanis rarely find job opportunities in developed countries including the United States and Britain. Pakistani workers are also exploring African countries for possible jobs.

Employment of Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia is, however, also under constant threat in the backdrop of the worldwide oil prices crisis which has also jolted the Saudi Arabian economy.

The crude oil that fetched over \$100 per barrel in 2014 was sold for only \$26 per barrel in February this year. Being dependent on oil production, the Saudi economy has also suffered as a result. However, it has been accepting the Pakistani human resource, contributing a major chunk of foreign remittances.

Malaysia and Qatar are some other countries that offer job opportunities to Pakistanis. Malaysia provided jobs to 20,218 Pakistanis while Qatar gave employment to 12,751 Pakistanis last year. Another Arab country Bahrain provided jobs to 9,048 Pakistanis.

War-hit Yemen accommodated 24 Pakistanis last year while Somalia provided jobs to 23 Pakistanis. Another African country Uganda hosted 37 Pakistanis by giving them job in 2015. Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Nigeria, Libya, Oman, Sudan and some other countries also provided jobs to Pakistani workers.

These statistics show that Algeria hosted 211 Pakistani workers while the southern African nation, Angola provided jobs to 22 Pakistanis. Azerbaijan provided jobs to just eight persons and Cameroon provided jobs to two Pakistanis. These statistics maintains that 355 persons were sent to China and Cyprus employed 500 Pakistani last year.

Germany provided jobs to 44 Pakistanis, Greece two, Hong Kong 29, Italy 431, Japan 84, Singapore 68, South Africa 140, South Korea 734, Sweden 34, Switzerland 15, Turkey 57, UK 261 and USA provided jobs to 350 Pakistanis.

When contacted to comment on these statistics, renowned workers' rights activist Habibuddin Junaidi said the trend of going to Middle East countries began in 1970s when relaxations were given during ZA Bhutto's regime for obtaining international passports.

He said during that era a large segment of the Pakistani workforce, mostly unskilled labour, got employment in countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar.

“However, as advanced and developed countries need highly skilled workers, Pakistanis cannot get many job opportunities in countries like the US, UK, Australia and others,” he added.

According to Junaidi, there is no crisis management system over here to handle any untoward situation which may emerge if the oil price issue deepens further and Pakistanis working abroad lose their jobs.

“An age has arrived when authorities must understand that producing a highly skilled workforce is the demand of the day and quality education is key to success to overcome any disaster regarding human resource,” he added.

WORKERS: MLW ORG PROVIDING FREE HEALTHCARE FACILITIES: MINISTER

Business Recorder, October 03, 2016

Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals, Chaudhry Sher Ali Khan has said that 'Mines Labour Welfare (MLW) Organisation' is providing free educational and healthcare facilities to the children of the mines workers and their family members. The organisation has established four Mines Labour Welfare Boys Higher Secondary Schools in Sargodha Region whereas Mines Labour Welfare Girls High School Dandot, MLW Middle School Pidh, MLW Primary School Dhok Burj, Jehlum for provision of free education to the children of Miners along-with free books, uniforms, shoes and educational stipends.

He said this while presiding over a meeting to review the affairs of Mines Labour Welfare Organisation, last day. The meeting was informed that Mining Labour, being low-paid class of the society, is provided free-of-cost education in MLW Schools and their children are granted stipends on annual basis as well as.

The children of the Mines workers studying at different institutions are provided Rs3000/- per annum to pre-metric, Rs9600/- per annum to post-metric classes and students studying in Medical, Engineering, Graduation and Post-graduation are provided Rs18000/- per annum whereas, the students of Higher Education section are being given Rs24000/- per annum. The meeting was informed that Mining Labourers working in hazardous atmosphere in underground Mines and open quarries had to face risks of backbone injury and they are usually prone to lungs diseases.

To provide best possible healthcare facilities to these Mining Labourers, Mines Labour Welfare Organisation has established four hospitals and nine allied dispensaries in the main Mining Areas. Out of these two hospitals and two dispensaries are situated in Sargodha Region whereas two hospitals and seven dispensaries in Rawalpindi Region. The Minister was informed that Miners and their family members are issued Medical Identity Cards, to enable them to get free medical facilities from these Health Units.

The meeting was apprised that two Mobile X-Ray Units are established to provide X-Ray facilities to Mines workers for detection of occupational diseases.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/90279/>

TWO WORKERS KILLED IN KARAK MINE COLLAPSE

Dawn, October 4th, 2016

KARAK: Two labourers were killed when a gypsum mine caved in at Jatta Ismail Khel area of Banda Daud Shah tehsil here on Monday.

The local people said the labourers were busy in their routine work inside the mine when it collapsed, burying alive two workers identified as Mohammad Ayub and Shah Wali Khan under the debris.

Help was sought on the loudspeakers for pulling the workers. People reached the spot with an excavator and retrieve the bodies of labourers, which were later handed over to their relatives for burial.

Meanwhile, the district president of the labour union Malik Naveed expressed deep sorrow over the sad incident, and demanded of the quarters concerned to provide death grant to the families of the deceased.

In a statement, he regretted that such incidents had become a routine as lease holders did not follow the requisite procedure of mining. He demanded that the standard operating procedure should be followed in the mines.

Mr Naveed recalled that in past such incidents had occurred but the victim's families were not compensated. He demanded that compensation as per government rules should be provided to the families of the two labourers without delay.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287930/two-workers-killed-in-karak-mine-collapse>

LABOURERS THREATEN PROTEST

Dawn, October 4th, 2016

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Workers Federation has expressed serious concern over the delay in payment of salaries to the teachers of working folks grammar schools and warned that workers will agitate if government failed to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Workers Federation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (chapter) president Razim Khan, in a statement issued here on Monday, said that the salaries of 45 teachers had been pending for the past six months. The teachers, he said had no other source of income and as result they were facing acute financial crisis, adding the affected teachers had no option except to come to the streets for demanding their withheld salaries.

Razim Khan said the uncertain situation had also badly affected the teaching at the said schools wherein labourers' children were enrolled who could not afford to go to other private sector educational institutions.

He said it was duty of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take immediate notice of the worsening situation and help release the salaries so that the study of poor students would not suffer any longer.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287912>

OVERSEAS WORKERS' DUES

Dawn, October 5th, 2016

CONSIDERING the decades-old Saudi-Pakistan economic relationship, and the fact that around 2.6m Pakistanis work in the kingdom, citizens of this country are beginning to feel the pinch of the ongoing Saudi labour crisis. Over the past few weeks, hundreds of Pakistani workers have returned home due to financial hardships that several major Saudi firms — especially in the construction sector — have been facing. Last month, around 300 individuals were flown back to Rawalpindi, while smaller batches have been arriving in Karachi.

The fact that the out-of-work labourers are back is welcome; eyewitness accounts from the workers, as well as Pakistanis still in the kingdom, suggest deplorable conditions prevailing in the camps the men had been housed in, including food shortages and lack of sanitation facilities.

However, what is worrying is that many of these workers have left behind several months of pay; one recently returned worker told this newspaper that he was owed nine months of pay. Moreover, some foreign media outlets have reported that certain Saudi firms only returned their workers' passports after securing promises that the men would not pursue claims of delayed wages.

Pakistan is not the only country affected by the Saudi labour crisis; thousands of workers from India, the Philippines and other states are in similarly dire straits. There have even been extremely rare strikes in the kingdom — which have included Saudi workers — over delayed pay, while the kingdom has also recently announced cutbacks in the salaries and privileges of ministers and other public servants.

All these indicators point to the fact that the Saudi labour crisis, and, in fact, the overall Saudi financial crisis triggered by the drop in oil income, won't be resolved anytime soon. The Pakistani state must use its good offices with the Saudi government to ensure the dues that workers have left behind are paid.

These hardworking individuals have contributed to the economy and now, in their time of difficulty, the state must stand by them to see that their rightful wages are paid. In the longer term, a contingency plan is needed so that the returning workers are either absorbed locally, or sent to other foreign labour markets for employment. As things stand, the economic stability of the petrodollar-fuelled Gulf sheikhdoms looks a little shaky too, and Pakistan must be prepared for the fallout if more of its citizens are affected by financial woes in these places.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288050>

THREE DROWN IN FACTORY'S CHEMICAL TANK

Dawn, October 5th, 2016

KARACHI: Three workers drowned after falling into the chemical tank of a textile unit in the Bin Qasim industrial area when its roof collapsed in the wee hours of Tuesday, officials said.

Two other factory workers were rescued by their colleagues, said police and rescue workers.

In all, five technicians were busy in the regular maintenance work at the industrial unit when the roof of the tank on which they were standing collapsed, the police said.

“The situation caused panic among other workers who rushed to save the life of their colleagues,” said an official at the Bin Qasim police station. “Within half an hour two of the five workers, Mohammad Hussain and Saifur Rehman, were pulled out. But the three others might have fallen unconscious due to which they drowned in the chemical.”

In the meantime, rescue teams from Edhi and Chhipa arrived at the factory. It took more than five hours to the rescue workers to pull out the bodies of the three workers, said the police official.

The deceased were identified as Raheel, Amir and Ejaz, he added.

“The families of the victims are in a state of shock and anger. They are blaming the factory owner for not maintaining industrial unit’s infrastructure that put the lives of over more than 150 workers at risk,” said Bin Qasim SHO Inspector Dhani Bux.

He said that the deceased were company’s technical staffers who performed this work as a matter of routine.

“But there might be other facts needed to be taken into account before arriving at a conclusion.

“We have been questioning the owners of the company, named Indigo Textiles, after requesting the Sindh government’s relevant department to examine the factory’s infrastructure and guide the police in the investigations,” the SHO added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288001/three-drown-in-factorys-chemical-tank>

ADVISER PROMISES LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS WORKERS’ SAFETY, HEALTH ISSUES

Dawn, October 5th, 2016

SUKKUR: Adviser to the Chief Minister on Labour Senator Saeed Ghani on Tuesday announced that a labour policy being prepared with input from all stakeholders would be announced soon and the labour class would get due relief in terms of conditions of services and fringe benefits.

He was addressing a convention of power utility workers organised by the All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) in local hotel on Tuesday.

Mr Ghani said that a bill would be moved in the Sindh Assembly to address the safety and health issues of workers. He noted that workers of all government, semi-government and private concerns had been demanding the issues to be resolved on a priority basis. He said that the labour class was the most powerful segment of society and it played a significant role in the country's economic growth. Their rights must be safeguarded, he said.

Unfortunately, he said, labour unions had systematically been rendered ineffective during the non-civilian rules in the country. Unscrupulous elements in the garb of labour leaders had caused colossal damage to CBAs and they along with anti-workers forces managed to minimise the role of labour unions to an extent that it had now become almost negligible.

The adviser also stressed the need for a close coordination among stakeholders — government, investors and workers — to ensure a healthy working environment at workplaces which was beneficial to all of them. All these stakeholders must fulfil their respective responsibilities to achieve desired results, he said, adding that the government and investors should work for the welfare of workers, who should also do their utmost to come to the expectations of government and their employers.

He observed that there was unrest among workers at most organisations but it was due to a lack of proper coordination among the stakeholders.

He held out the assurance that the new labour policy would be beneficial to employers and employees as proposals from both sides would be incorporated in it.

Expressing the hope that labour unions would regain their strength and importance under the Pakistan Peoples Party's rule, Mr Ghani advised CBAs to keep a close eye on the groups working against the interests of the working class.

The labour adviser visited the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (Sessi) hospital and Workers Model School in Sukkur during his visit to Sukkur.

He expressed his displeasure over the poor condition of the school building and a lack of essential facilities for students and teachers. He also noted absence of many teachers and asked the labour secretary, who was accompanying him, to look into the matter and submit a report to him.

He asked the principal to pay special attention to the school's administrative matters and essential facilities like lighting arrangement, furniture and fixtures, books etc.

During his visit to the Sessi hospital, the adviser expressed his dissatisfaction over the the conditions prevailing on its premises and asked the administration to ensure hygienic conditions and proper treatment facilities as well as availability of adequate stocks of medicines.

Senator Ghani also took round different parts Labour Colony and inspected the under-construction residential flats. He was informed that a total of 1,024 flats were being constructed for entitled workers.

At a briefing given to him by Sessi officials, the adviser was informed that around 10,000 workers of more than 1,700 industrial units had been registered with the institution.

He asked the officials concerned to ensure registration of all workers entitled to the government medical facilities at Sessi hospitals.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288002/adviser-promises-legislation-to-address-workers-safety-health-issues>

CM APPROVES DRAFT LAW ON WORKERS' SAFETY
Dawn, October 6th, 2016

LAHORE: Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has accorded approval to the draft legislation about occupational safety and health to secure the industrial workers who remain exposed to dust particularly silicon that causes a dangerous lungs disorder “silicosis”.

The draft law after its formal approval from the provincial cabinet will be placed before the Punjab Assembly without delay.

This was stated by Punjab Additional Chief Secretary Shamail Ahmad Khwaja while presiding over a meeting of subject core committee regarding directions of the Law & Justice Commission of Pakistan to prepare consensus implementation plan of the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to chalk out action plan regarding control, rescue and treatment of the victims of silicosis.

The committee reviewed the proposed action plan in detail and decided to send it to the Law & Justice Commission of Pakistan. The implementation status of this action plan includes introduction of new law on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). According to the proposed law, mandatory health screening of the industrial workers of stone crushers, ceramics industry and marble grinding industry along with nomination of certified surgeons to treat the workers suffering from silicosis and another plan meant for capacity-building of labour inspectors at district level through an ADP Scheme came under discussion.

The meeting was also told that silicosis had been included in the checklist of occupational hazards.

Mr Khwaja directed provision of OSH kits to the inspecting staff of provincial Labour and Human Resource Department working in 18 districts of the province. The PC-II for training programme of labour inspectors will be prepared by the Punjab Bureau of Statistics, while the data of mine workers will also be submitted to the Law & Justice Commission of Pakistan within a week.

The Labour Department has fixed a toll-free universal access number 0800-73774 to get registered any complaint regarding occupational hazards by the vulnerable industrial workers. The assistant chief secretary also directed the Information and Culture Department to launch awareness plan for safety from silicosis and said periodical media campaign would be launched in the days to come so that industrial workers would not unnecessarily be exposed to silicon dust causing silicosis.

Labour and Human Resource Department Secretary Sohail Shahzad, Mines and Minerals Department Additional Secretary Raja Khurram Shahzad, Environmental Protection Department Director General Dr Javed Iqbal, PESSI Commissioner Mansoor Qadir, Information and Culture Additional Secretary Syed Tahir Raza Hamdani and Additional Secretary Labour Muhammad Shakir participated in the meeting.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288332/cm-approves-draft-law-on-workers-safety>

DEADLY MISHAP: ROOF COLLAPSE LEAVES TWO LABOURERS DEAD
The Express Tribune, October 8th, 2016.

LAHORE: The roof of a three-storey, under-construction house collapsed, killing two labourers while injuring four more people in Madina Colony on Friday.

A rescue official said two floors of the house had been already constructed and work on the third floor was under way. Construction workers were placing lenter of the third storey when the surrounding walls collapsed under the weight of the concrete.

The debris fell on the roof of the second floor that also caved in. Two labourers were buried under the rubble while four others received injuries.

Imtiaz Ahmad, who lives nearby, said he had returned after offering prayers when he heard a loud rumbling noise. He came out of his house and rushed towards the site, where he heard people screaming. Other neighbours also gathered at the place and started rescue efforts.

Police and rescue teams were also called in and shifted the victims to a nearby hospital, where doctors pronounced two of them dead on arrival. The deceased were identified as Danish and Ramzan. They were related to each other and lived nearby.

Another rescue official said the incident took place because of the poor standard of construction. There were no pillars in the three-storey house and four-inch-wide bricks were used for the walls that could not support the weight of the building.

This is not the first case of roof collapse in Lahore. On September 17, three labourers had died when the roof of a bakery in Chohang collapsed after a cylinder blast. On September 3, two women were killed in another roof collapse in the Youhanabad area of Nishtar Colony.

On August 21, five people were killed and several others injured near Masjid Wazir Khan when the roof of a house caved in during a wedding ceremony.

In September 2014, eight people had died while eight more were injured when roofs of several houses collapsed due to heavy rains near LDA Plaza.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1195301/deadly-mishap-roof-collapse-leaves-two-labourers-dead/>

HAND IN HAND: LABOURERS TAKE TO STREETS AGAINST PRECARIOUS WORK

The Express Tribune, October 8th, 2016.

KARACHI: Home-based workers (HBWs) and labourers came out on the streets on Friday and demanded job and workplace security.

The demonstration was held at Regal Chowk, followed by a rally which culminated at Karachi Press Club. The protest was held to mark the World Day for Decent Work, celebrated across the globe on October 7, on which IndustriALL Global Union called all affiliates to mobilise members and join the global fight to stop precarious work.

“More than 90% of labourers do not even know their rights and laws in this country,” said National Trade Union Federation’s information secretary Mushtaq Ali Shan, adding that only 1.5% labourers are affiliated with trade unions. “Workers should be given the rights [which are listed in employment letters] to secure their jobs.”

The protesters demanded that unsafe and uncertain conditions should be rectified, health and safety laws should be passed and labour inspection system should be implemented. “Third party contract system should be abolished,” said Shan, adding that all the workers should be given appointment letters and rights to collective bargaining.

The rally stands against industrial incidents involving labourers deaths and third-party contract systems, said home based women workers federation’s general-secretary, Zehra Khan. She also added that the women who work more than men in their houses are not considered as labourers.

Khan, who was representing HBWs, drew attention to their plight and said that these women are not considered as formal labour because they work in their homes.

“They are the cheapest form of labour and none of them actually know their employers because they work on third party basis,” she said, adding that there is also no minimum wage for HBWs.

Informing about the policy for HBWs, Khan said that a policy was presented to the chief minister three years ago but he has yet to sign it. Things will become better as soon as the policy will be signed after which social security, minimum wage and work agreement will be made, she added.

Thirty-three year old, Saira Feroze, who is working as a HBW since she was six-years-old was also among the demonstrators. “We are paid very less by the employers, I get Rs35 to Rs40 for cutting and stitching a dozen frocks which includes designing and frill,” she remarked.

Workers such as Feroze cannot stop working even if they are ill as they fear that their jobs will be given to someone else and they will be left without work. “Our work is not fixed, sometimes we do not have work for months,” she pointed out.

Afroza Khatoon, who was wearing a red cap, spoke about her grievances. She said that she usually stitches 48 dozen trousers in four days and is paid Rs15 per dozen. Her wage excludes the travel expense for delivery. “My employer usually pays me about four to five months late and never helps us when we need money,” she added.

Shan also said that HBWs should be brought into the legal net through legislation so that they are entitled to benefits which are enjoyed by other labourers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1195205/hand-hand-labourers-take-streets-precarious-work/>

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NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016

IMPLEMENTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, November 28th, 2016

Mohammad Hussain Khan

WORKERS in both the agriculture and fishing sectors are defined as formal labourers under the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013.

However, a big question mark hangs over the Act's implementation as its relevant rules — those that ensure the unconditional right of association — have not been framed, something that the existing law does not permit.

Thus farm labourers are denied their right of association — their own union that will enable them to become a collective bargaining agent — a right guaranteed under Article 17 of the constitution.

Section 3 of the SIRA 2013 on ‘trade unions and freedom of association’ says that ‘workers without distinction, whatsoever, shall have the right to establish, subject to the rules of the organisation concerned, joint trade unions and associations of their own choice without previous authorisation’.

Farmers have been demanding their right to form unions so that they can organise themselves into a unit for collective bargaining enabling them to address the menace of bonded labour.

A recent study on cotton pickers of the Matiari district by Javed Hussain, who runs a non-governmental organisation, has highlighted the plight of women who work in the cotton sector.

They get poor wages and remain vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation. They are denied women rights and are exposed to the poisonous effects of pesticides in the absence of desired safety measures.

A noted labour rights activist Karamat Ali of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research says SIRA 2013 has been enacted, but until the list of exclusion is minimised in different labour laws, its implementation would remain a huge challenge.

He stressed that the right of association has to be unconditional. “These restrictions or exclusions limiting the number of office-bearers must go if workers are indeed to be protected. And an employer is to be clearly identified under the rules. Existing rules don’t allow a union’s formation”, he says.

He points out that the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950 described a hari as a ‘share cropper’. The act was amended and this definition done away with.

Therefore, he says, it is important that new rules of SIRA 2013 must be framed otherwise this legislation, too, would be considered eyewash. According to him, the same is the case with fishing sector workers. The government must address these issues without delay and come up with clarity. “Since our elected upper and lower houses mostly have landed gentry, they rarely come up with pro-worker laws”, he observes.

Sindh Abadgar Board’s Vice President Mehmood Nawaz Shah says that unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labourers are working in the agriculture sector and it is encouraging indeed that they are being covered under some law at least because the Sindh Tenancy Act deals with only a specific category of haris.

Under the SIRA 2013, two unions of farm workers were registered in Mirpurkhas and Dadu districts with assistance from the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF). These unions have membership of 150 agriculture workers each and farmland owners are seeking their own registrations as employers.

These farmland owners are small and middle class landowners. Unions would, however, remain dysfunctional as they are treated as collective bargaining agents and the employer is clearly defined.

NTFU’s Nasir Mansoor asserts that initially these unions are seeking occupational, health and safety measures by employers’ and focusing on how a crop’s income and expenses are to be shared. “It is a positive sign that something has happened considering the fact that it is an evolving process”, he maintains.

Mansoor believes that multiple laws are applied to different segments of workers and these laws are simultaneously generalised and special in nature.

He says the government has to elaborate how cases of agriculture and fisheries workers are to be addressed: whether are to have separate courts or labour courts.

Under the SIRA 2013, farm and fishing sector workers are entitled to social security cover and protection under the Employees’ Old Age Benefits Institution for which their respective employers have to make some contribution.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298997/implementing-workers-rights>

GOVT EXPLANATION SOUGHT ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS’ EXEMPTION FROM LABOUR LAWS
Dawn, December 1st, 2016

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench on Wednesday issued notices to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and provincial Assembly’s speaker seeking their comments on a petition challenging the government’s move to end applicability of different labour laws, including the one about the minimum wages, to the private educational institutions in the province.

Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth and Justice Roohul Amin Khan Chamkani directed the petitioner, Saleem Shah Hoti, to submit the list of lawmakers running educational institutions in the province.

The provincial advocate general was also told to assist the court on the matter.

The petitioner requested the court to strike down the relevant amendments to the laws by declaring them illegal and unconstitutional.

Mr. Hoti filed the petition in the larger public interest saying private educational institutions across the province have been subjecting teachers to the worst form of exploitation but they've been removed from the purview of the labour department for being owned by several lawmakers.

The respondents in the petition are the speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, the provincial government through chief secretary, provincial law secretary, provincial advocate general, and chairman of the ruling PTI Imran Khan.

Mr. Hoti contended that there was no law in the province to regulate private educational institutions, especially the salary of teachers and working conditions for them.

He pointed out that last year, the provincial assembly had passed The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Amendment Laws) Act 2015 through which different amendments were made to different labour laws, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Payment of Wages Act 2013, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial and Commercial Employment (Standing Orders) 2013, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minimum Wages Act 2013 and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial Statistics Act 2013.

He said after those amendments, the labour laws in question no longer applied to private educational institutions in the province.

Mr. Hoti said after the enforcement of the Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act 2010, the four labour laws in question were passed in the province in 2013. He added that the provincial legislature had passed those laws for the welfare of the workers associated with private sector institutions and units.

The petitioner said those laws were meant to regulate the minimum wages to certain classes of persons employed in factories, industrial establishment and commercial establishment, regulate the payment of wages, provide for regulation of industrial and commercial employment in the province, and facilitate the collection of statistics of certain kinds relating to factories, and industrial and commercial establishments.

He claimed the minimum monthly salary had been fixed at Rs13,000 in the province but the private educational institutions had employed highly educated and qualified male and female teachers and ancillary staff members for few thousand rupees, which was both disrespectful and insufficient for them.

The petitioner said in several private educational institutions, the staff members hadn't been paid salary during summer and other vacations, an act of sheer injustice and exploitation.

He said the labour department had launched a campaign to collect the statistics of private educational institutions in the province and carry out their inspection to address the grievances of the people and staff members. However, following the controversial amendments the labour department had no authority to check these exploitations.

The petitioner claimed that the assembly's speaker and other lawmakers from the government side owned educational institutions due to which the impugned amendments were made.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299813>

KEY SUSPECT IN BALDIA FACTORY FIRE CASE HELD IN BANGKOK

Dawn, December 4th, 2016

BANGKOK: A Pakistani man suspected of starting a devastating factory fire in Karachi four years ago that killed over 250 people has been arrested in Bangkok, Thai police said on Saturday.

Abdul Rehman, 46, was detained at a hotel on Friday evening, said Thailand's Interpol chief.

"Thai Interpol tracked this suspect following an arrest warrant sought by the Pakistani authorities," Major General Apichart Suriboonya told AFP.

"He will be repatriated as soon as Pakistan is ready," he added.

He said Rehman was suspected of being part of a criminal gang that was extorting the owners of a Karachi garment factory. The gang torched the facility when the owners refused to pay \$200,000, he said.

The fire at the Ali Enterprises factory in September 2012 was one of Pakistan's worst industrial disasters. A judicial probe into the blaze was damning, pointing to a lack of emergency exits, poor safety training for workers, the packing in of machinery and the failure of government inspectors to spot any of these faults.

In Karachi, officials said that the held suspect would be brought back to the country by the Federal Investigation Agency in a couple of days, adds our staff reporter.

"Rehman is an absconder in the Baldia factory fire case," said Karachi police chief Mushtaq Mahar. "His custody will be handed over to the Sindh police for further investigation and legal disposal after he is brought back to the country."

He explained that under the existing laws, the FIA was authorised to arrest an absconder from other countries with the help of Interpol.

Two days ago, the FIA had approached the interior ministry for a no-objection certificate for the arrest of the absconding suspect Rehman.

In the letter dated Dec 1, the FIA asked the interior minister to allow its two officials — deputy director Badaruddin Baloch and Inspector Rehmatullah Domki — to go to Bangkok to arrest "Pakistani national namely Abdul Rehman" in the Baldia factory fire case.

FIA sources said that the team would leave Karachi for Bangkok next week to formally arrest the suspect.

Suspect Rehman's alleged involvement in the case came to light in February last year when the paramilitary Rangers submitted in the Sindh High Court a report stating that a suspect, Rizwan Qureshi, told interrogators that the Baldia factory fire was an act of arson.

He was said to be a "sector in charge" of the Baldia Town sector of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement's organisational structure in 2012.

The party has now been divided in three factions — the MQM-London, MQM-Pakistan and the Pak Sarzameen Party — which demanded a high-level transparent probe and exemplary punishment for whosoever involved in the killing of over 250 workers.

Social media was abuzz with reports that the held suspect was now affiliated with the PSP.

A party membership form with Rehman's photograph and pictures of his family members with PSP leaders Mustafa Kamal and Anis Kaimkhani were circulating on Twitter.

However, Mr Kamal told reporters in Lahore that Rehman was the “sector in charge of the MQM” and he was never part of the PSP.

MQM-Pakistan leader Rauf Siddiqui told the media in Karachi that he was not aware whether Rehman was a party worker or not.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300355>

RICE MILLS IN LARKANA SHUT AS WORKERS GO ON STRIKE

Dawn December 4th, 2016

LARKANA: A large number of rice factories workers, after their unproductive talks with rice millers on enhancing wage, took to the streets of the city on Saturday after announcing an indefinite strike at 42 mills.

Led by Rice Factories Labour Union president Qadir Bakhsh Kurd and Rice Mills Workers chairman Abdul Aziz Abbasi, the participants marched from Labour Colony to Jiannahbagh gate, where they held a demonstration.

Speaking to them, Mr Kurd said that currently around 4,000 workers were serving in 42 rice mills functioning in Larkana and on its outskirts alone.

“Normally they get different percentages on loading, unloading, stocking, milling and weighing processes at the mills. In 2014, mill-owners and rice factories labour union had agreed to enhance 40 per cent in the present wage.

“This year, the agreement has expired and the labour union had in August given the notices to the rice millers to sign a new agreement with certain enhancement and revisions in the earlier wages. But they are running away from talks which has resulted in mounting unrest among workers,” he said.

Workers were demanding an overall 20 per cent rise, Mr Kurd said, but the millers were not ready to accept their demand.

On Friday night, talks between millers’ representative, Ramesh Lal, and labour leaders in the presence of labour department official Nagina Memon were held but the session remained fruitless, which compelled workers to go for a strike, said Aziz Abbasi.

The workers did not turn up to their assignments on Saturday which led to closure of mills. The labour union had announced continuing the strike till the acceptance of their demands.

An official word and mill owners’ statement about the strike and inconclusive negotiations between the two sides were yet to be made public.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300276/rice-mills-in-larkana-shut-as-workers-go-on-strike>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 21ST TO NOVEMBER 27TH 2016

PROTESTERS SEEK REINSTATEMENT OF TOBACCO WORKERS

Dawn, November 24th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The activists of Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party (PMKP) on Wednesday held a protest demonstration against the dismissal of 144 labourers of Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) and demanded their early reinstatement.

They also condemned the arrest of their president Ihsanullah and urged the government to release him forthwith.

The protesting workers gathered at Sher Shah Suri Road outside the Peshawar Press Club, holding placards and banners inscribed with different slogans in favour of their demands.

The protesters were led by Afzal Khamoosh, PMKP central president, Shakeel Wahid Ullah, central general secretary, Mukhtar Bacha and others.

Talking to reporters, Mr Wahid Ullah termed the workers suspension and the arrest of their president as illogical and a preplanned act of the government to suppress the poor workers.

The PTC administration, he said was responsible for the violence against the workers, saying the labourers would continue protest demonstrations until their demands were met.

Similarly, he added that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa labour department as well as KP minister for minerals development and labour Anisazeb Tahirkheli were least bothered to find solution to the issues of poor workers.

They demanded of the government to dismiss the Nowshera DSP and form an independent inquiry commission. They threatened to extend their protest to other parts of KP if sacked workers were not reinstated and their leader was not released forthwith.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298338>

FAMILIES OF GADANI TRAGEDY CONTINUE SEARCH FOR LOVED ONES

The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2016.

KARACHI: More than three weeks on, four families are still searching for their loved ones who were believed to be on board the decommissioned oil tanker for its dismantling when a blast ripped through it, triggering a blaze that could not be put out for three days.

Addressing a press conference, the families of three missing workers, Shafiq, Sherdad and Laloo, said that they have searched all the hospitals and morgues in Karachi and Hub but have not found them. The family of the fourth, Imran, could not make it to the event.

They came to the Karachi Press Club along with National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and its affiliate, Ship Breaking Workers Union (SBWU), representatives to put forward their demands before the government through media.

NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor said that there have been 28 deaths and 42 injuries confirmed with them but the government has yet to ascertain how many people were actually on board the oil tanker when the incident happened.

“The government’s apathy towards the workers’ plight can be gauged from the fact that they have still not been provided with any sort of financial aid nor has any official bothered to visit them to at least inquire about the incident or extend condolence,” Mansoor remarked.

Nothing is known about the federal government investigative committee report, he said, adding that it was expected to complete its work and furnish its findings with fixing responsibilities on those involved in negligence within a week. “The same is the case with the provincial government report.”

He lamented that instead of taking action against the responsible, the authorities sealed the entire ship-breaking yard, taking away the means of livelihood from around 12,000 directly-employed workers and affecting 300,000 indirectly-linked and working in re-rolling mills in Karachi, Hub and Quetta others.

He said that the closure has only benefitted the stockholders as they are selling the steel rods at around Rs68,000 per ton as compared to its last month’s rate of Rs57,000 per ton, citing lack of supply.

SBWU president Bashir Mehmoodani said that due to closure of work, more than 70% of the workers, mostly belonging to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and southern Punjab, have moved to other places in search of work. "What else could they do?" he asked. "They had to earn to eat, so they moved. Hopefully, they would have found some work."

Mehmoodani demanded from the government to immediately lift the ban on work at the ship-breaking yard and bring about reforms ensuring health and safety for the workers.

"The authorities must make sure that yard owners get their each and every worker registered with the labour department, social security institutions, EOBI and others."

The NTUF and SBMU also urged upon the government to introduce legislation for a ship-breaking code in light of the guidelines laid by the International Labor Organization and the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1243505/no-respite-families-gadani-tragedy-continue-search-loved-ones/>

TWO WORKERS KILLED IN OIL STORAGE TANK FIRE

Dawn, November 27th, 2016

Shazia Hasan | Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: At least two workers were killed and several others injured as a huge fire erupted following an explosion inside a storage tank at the Keamari Oil Terminal on Saturday.

Eyewitnesses at the boat harbour at Keamari said they saw everything while boarding people on their boats for crabbing as many arrive for picnics through the weekend. "At around 11.30am, there were two men on top of the chemical tank near Gate 1 when the explosion took place," boatman Ali Mohammad told Dawn. "They had opened the tank lid when there was a loud explosion throwing both of them up in the air. They died almost immediately," he said. "Some seven to eight men around the tank were also injured," he added.

"We saw smoke coming out the place for a long time after that. From the colour of the smoke it was evident that it was not an oil fire because then the smoke is black. This had to be a chemical tank," said another boatman, Bilal, who had also been there around the time of the incident.

Soon after the incident, Karachi Port Trust and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation fire tenders rushed to the spot but it could not be completely extinguished even till late in the evening. "It is under control now but not completely extinguished," said Adbul Nasir a KMC fireman near Gate 1 of the Oil Terminal. "It was a chemical fire, methanol actually, and we used foam to extinguish it. But frankly, until the entire chemical burns out, the fire cannot be put out completely," he said.

Both Gate no 1 at Keemari and no 2 at Shireen Jinnah Colony were closed for the public to pass through while firefighters doused the flames inside. Some of the men trying to go inside from Gate 2 said they were oil tanker drivers and tankers were still parked inside. "We must go inside but they have shut the gates and are not letting anyone through," said a tanker driver.

With the gates closed there was also confusion about details coming from inside. A Byco employee, who did not want to be named, said five men, including two officers, had died in the accident. "It was a methanol tank," he confirmed. Some people said the bulk storage tank belonged to Pakistan State Oil while others said it was an RCL tank.

The PSO, however, clarified later that the tank did not belong to it.

"There was another terrible accident at a Shell tank only three days ago, where one labourer received severe burn injuries," the Byco employee said. "That fire broke out at 6am. This one was at 11.30am."

However, Jackson SHO Rao Khalid said one worker identified as Arif Aslam, 26, died while another, Tahir, was missing and believed dead though his body could not be found.

According to senior medico-legal officer of the Civil Hospital Karachi Dr Qarar Ahmed, Arif died from wounds caused by hard metal pieces after the explosion in a chemical tank.

“It is not possible to put out the fire till the chemical in the storage tank burns out,” said Karachi Port Trust fire chief Saeed Jadoon. Talking to the media, he said the firemen were trying to prevent the fire from spreading to other oil storage tanks there.

He said at least 10 fire tenders belonging to the KPT, Pakistan Navy and KMC were trying to extinguish the blaze. “Two persons have died in the fire incident,” said Mr Jadoon.

He said the height of the storage tank was around 60 feet, having a capacity of storing around 1,400 tonnes of liquid. At the time of the fire, the tank had about 1,000 tonnes chemical.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298818>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

TWO KILLED IN FACTORY ROOF COLLAPSE

Dawn, November 14th, 2016

LAHORE: Two workers died and one was injured when the roof of an electronics factory collapsed after a boiler explosion at Jia Bagga, Raiwind Road, on Sunday.

According to Edhi Foundation, the workers were busy in routine work when the boiler exploded apparently due to gas leak. The roof of the factory collapsed with the explosion and several workers were trapped under the debris.

Rescue 1122 staff pulled out the workers and shifted them to hospital where two of them, Naveed Raza of Peshawar and Naveed Kashif of Kharian, were declared dead. The injured worker, who could not be identified, was stated to be in stable condition.

The rescue officials said they had faced hurdles in reaching the factory as most of the roads were blocked due to security measures for the Tableeghi Ijtimaa at Raiwind and it took them time to reach the spot.

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif sought a report in next 24 hours.

Meanwhile, an unidentified labourer was killed when an under-construction basement of a plaza collapsed near the railway station. The roof of the basement caved in reportedly under the weight of the building material placed on it. Rescue department reached the spot and pulled out the injured labourer and shifted him to nearby hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Earlier, three labourers were burnt to death in a fire in a garment factory at Goal Bagh, Ravi Road, four days ago. In September, three labourers died when a boiler had exploded in a manufacturing unit of a bakery in Kahna.

In June, one worker was burnt in a steel factory in Baghbanpura while 45 workers had died when a three-storey factory collapsed in the Sundar Industrial Estate last year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296247/two-killed-in-factory-roof-collapse>

COAL MINE BLAST KILLS TWO IN DUKKI

Dawn November 17th, 2016

QUETTA: Two coal miners were killed and another one was critically injured as a result of a blast in a coal mine in the newly-created Dukki district on Wednesday.

A group of coal mine workers was engaged in digging coal in the Dukki field area when the powerful explosion occurred and a fire broke out.

Coal miners working nearby, along with Levies officials, rushed towards the affected mine and launched a rescue operation. However, the huge fire engulfed the mine and did not allow the trapped miners to escape, causing two workers to burn alive while another received serious burn injuries.

“Bodies of two workers were retrieved from the burning mine,” the Levies said, adding that another worker was recovered from the mine in a critical condition.

“Methane gas accumulated deep inside the coal mine caused the blast and the fire to spread,” official sources said.

The deceased were identified as Nasibullah and Muhammad Rehim, while the injured, Kamaluddin, was shifted to the Bolan Medical College Hospital.

The mines chief inspector ordered an inquiry into the incident.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296880>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016

GADANI TRAGEDY FUELS CALLS FOR SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

Dawn, November 7th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: A large number of labourers working at the ship-breaking yard in Gadani have called for payment of compensation to the families of workers who lost their lives in the Nov 1 accident.

Eleven workers died and scores were injured when an explosion occurred at an oil tanker that was brought to the yard for dismantling. The death toll rose to 26 on Sunday after the death of three injured workers.

Work at the ship-breaking yard remained suspended for the fourth day running on Sunday.

The protesters, mostly from Gadani, Hub and Karachi's Baldia Town, marched from Regal Chowk to the press club in the afternoon. Relatives of those who were killed in the 2012 Baldia Town factory fire also participated in the protest.

The protest was organised by the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF). Addressing the protesters, NTUF general secretary Nasir Mansoor called for doing away with the contract (Thekedari) system at the ship-breaking yard. “If we want safe working conditions, certain issues need to be immediately addressed,” he added.

He said compensation for the workers should be given priority. “We suggest Rs3 million as compensation for every family which lost a breadwinner in the accident and Rs500,000 for the injured.”

He urged the authorities to ensure safe working conditions at the ship-breaking yard.

Mr Mansoor said India had a far bigger ship-breaking industry and used to have tragedies bigger than in Pakistan. But, he added, the country had managed to bring down the number of incidents by introducing a code and imposing rules and regulations.

As majority of the workers at the ship-breaking yard and those present at the protest were Pakhtuns, the president of the NTUF's Sindh chapter, Gul Rahman, spoke in Pushto.

Mr Rahman asked workers to forge unity for getting their rights. He said around 12,000 people were working at the yard in Gadani without the cover of the Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), insurance or any social security.

He said since 1968, 800 workers had lost their lives in accidents at the site.

He criticised the government for "showing a lacklustre response" to the incident. The chief minister of Balochistan visited Gadani three days after the explosion and that too only for seven minutes, the NTUF leader recalled. "Such apathy can be changed only through agitation by workers."

Bashir Ahmed Mahmoodani, who heads the Gadani Ship Breaking Workers Union, thanked the Edhi Foundation for despatching volunteers to Gadani soon after the explosion. After the explosion, fire tenders had backed off and no senior official was present at the place, he regretted.

The speakers called for introduction of a "ship breaking code", similar to one being followed in India.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has said it will compile a report about the accident. According to an HRCP fact-finding committee which visited Gadani after the incident, there is no record of the exact number of people working at the yard at the time of explosion. The entry sheets, according to some officials present at the site, is not available as the office had been "locked for outsiders" soon after the incident.

Abdul Wahid Shahwani adds from Khuzdar: A large number of protesters carrying bodies of two labourers who died in Gadani blocked the Karachi-Quetta highway for several hours on Sunday.

The two labourers, identified as Sanaullah and Alam Khan, succumbed to their burn injuries in Karachi's Civil Hospital on Sunday.

Hundreds of vehicles remained stuck on the highway for several hours.

However, the protesters agreed to call off their protest after negotiations with the administration.

Meanwhile, police have arrested four people, including the contractor and the manager of the ship in which the explosion occurred. But the owner has not been taken into custody because he is in a hospital these days.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294814/gadani-tragedy-fuels-calls-for-safe-working-conditions>

IRRIGATION WORKERS PLAN INDEFINITE STRIKE FROM NOV 17

Dawn, November 9th, 2016

SUKKUR: The All Sindh Irrigation Trade Unions Federation on Tuesday organised a sit-in in front of the local press club against the irrigation department's failure to fulfil its promise to consider a 25-point charter of demand presented to the secretary concerned and other relevant authorities.

Abdul Raheem Bharo and Iqbal Ahmed Larik, the president and general secretary of the federation, respectively, spoke to the participants and the media.

He said that the irrigation secretary had assured a representative delegation of the department's officers and employees of due consideration of the charter.

They said that the charter contained no undue demand as the 25 points were based on legitimate rights of workers. They said the demands included implementation of the son quota for retired and deceased employees, time scale, promotion to higher grade, removal of encroachment from state-owned properties.

They said all these demands were approved by the department but no progress was made so far towards issuance of relevant orders and their implementation.

In reply to a question, the labour leaders said that the charter was accepted at a meeting between the federation's delegation and former chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah at the CM House. Incumbent Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who was the finance minister in those days, was also present at the meeting, they added.

They said the federation was now compelled to observe a token hunger strike in front of the Karachi Press Club on Thursday (Nov 10).

Several thousands irrigation employees would go on an indefinite strike on Nov 17 if the demands were not met by then, they added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295115/irrigation-workers-plan-indefinite-strike-from-nov-17>

10 WORKERS MISSING SINCE GADANI SHIP BLAST, SAYS LABOUR LEADER

Dawn, November 10th, 2016

KARACHI: At least 10 workers have been missing since Gadani ship-breaking yard blast, while 60 others are in critical condition at hospitals as the death toll rose to 28, said National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) deputy secretary general at a press conference on Wednesday.

Accompanied by labour union members from Gadani and Hub, as well as families of the missing workers with an injured worker, NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor was speaking at the Karachi Press Club.

Currently no work was under way at the ship-breaking site due to the ban imposed on the assembly of more than four people in the area under Section 144 of the criminal procedure code, he said while pointing out that the move had further put the livelihood of around 12,000 workers of Gadani ship-breaking yard at stake.

Information about the total number of workers is based on estimates because "office-bearer responsible for managing records at the ship-breaking yard is under custody", said Mr Mansoor.

It is estimated that 250 workers were working at the site when a gas cylinder exploded and started a fire inside an oil tanker in the shipyard. As work on the ship was to begin on Nov 1, the NTUF was told by the injured and the workers present at the site that around 150 of them "spent the night at the ship to begin work early in the morning", said Mr Mansoor while speaking to journalists.

Visibly shaken the 32-year-old injured worker, Abdur Rehman, couldn't speak much about his ordeal at the press conference. However, he did mention that he was "emptying oil from the vessel through a small bucket when the explosion occurred, throwing me a few feet away. When I came through, I was informed that my family recognised me as I didn't receive burn injuries to my face."

Mansoor, who addressed multiple issues at the presser, said that after exhaustive search across city's hospitals, the families of 10 missing workers recently approached the NTUF. He also requested the media to confirm figures with the union as information about the number of workers at the site was based on estimates.

Also present at the presser, Saira Bano, a resident of New Karachi, is among the families searching hospitals for their family members.

She told Dawn that she received information about her son, Mohammad Shafiq, the same evening. “I was informed by a friend of his that he tried looking for Shafiq after the explosion but couldn’t find him. I looked at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Civil Hospital Karachi, Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and Edhi Foundation’s various centres across Karachi, but couldn’t find him,” she said, while holding a pile of documents including her son’s birth certificate.

What’s also causing problems in the search, she adds, is the fact that she doesn’t have a picture of her son. As a result, she’s carrying all of his documents that have his monochrome picture.

Mr Mansoor lamented the current crop of “speculative stories calling the Gadani tragedy an international conspiracy. It is similar to what happened with the Baldia Town factory fire. It is obvious to anyone who has seen labour conditions in Gadani that the incident occurred due to lack of safety conditions. Reducing such an incident to a conspiracy of a neighbouring country is shameful.”

He said that the workers, mostly hailing from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and a minority of Burmese and Bengalis, were working on daily wages at the ship-breaking compound “and most of them did not leave the vicinity around holidays, as they had nowhere else to go”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295332/10-workers-missing-since-gadani-ship-blast-says-labour-leader>

FATAL SHORT CIRCUIT: THREE WORKERS BURNT ALIVE IN GARMENT FACTORY FIRE

The Express Tribune, November 11th, 2016.

Muhammad Shahzad

Lahore: In yet another case of a fire in Lahore, three workers were burnt alive inside a garment factory in Shafiqabad on Thursday.

The fatal accident once again exposes the authorities’ failure to implement building and safety protocols in the provincial capital.

The blaze erupted due to short-circuit early in the morning when the factory workers had just arrived at Ashraf Garments, a manufacturing unit set up in a double-storey building spread over a three-marla plot in Kareem Park.

At least 20 workers were on duty at the unit, which is situated in a congested residential area. The factory had no proper emergency exit or any attention paid to building bylaws or safety procedures.

The owner had set up his office on the ground floor while the cotton manufacturing units were set up on the second and third floors, police said.

At around 8.30am, Rescue 1122 received the call about the fire. Ten teams of rescuers and fire-fighters arrived at the spot to evacuate the people stranded inside the building. The fire was controlled after at least three hours.

All the workers had managed to flee when the fire broke out except for the three labourers, whose way out was blocked by some fallen cotton bales, according to preliminary investigations. Two of the three victims had already expired while the third man died on the way to hospital. The deceased were identified as Ashraf, 45, Javed, 22, and Shahid 20.

A rescue official said dense smoke, congested area, dangling wires and presence of flammable material inside the factory were the main hurdles in the rescue operation.

This is not the first fire in which labourers have died due to poor working conditions in factories. Recurrent incidents in the provincial capital owing to corporate greed and negligence of government departments have claimed numerous lives.

Two months ago in September, three labourers had died when a boiler exploded in a manufacturing unit of a bakery in Kahna. In June, a worker was burnt to death in a steel factory in Bhaghbanpura.

In November last year, five workers were burnt alive when an oil tanker exploded in Haidri Steel Mill in Batapur.

Four workers had died when a roof of a factory collapsed in Kahna in September last year. At least 45 workers had died when a three-storey factory collapsed in Sunder Industrial Estate last year.

The place where the latest incident took place is not fit for work at all, said Niaz Khan, the general secretary of Powerlooms and Garments Workers Union. The government has no system of checks as people have setup factories in residential areas.

“The industrial units are growing like wild bushes and there is no system of inspection by the labour department,” he said. “There are no emergency exits or clear ways to respond to emergencies.”

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Jam Sajjad Hussain said no regard for building bylaws or safety codes was the main reason behind the unfortunate accidents. He said the building owners must adhere to the bylaws as it would help save their property as well as the lives on the labourers.

City District Government Lahore spokesperson Imran Maqbool said they were moving factories that were manufacturing chemicals outside the city and a crackdown against such factories was underway. Afterwards, the CDGL would take action against such industrial units, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1227184/fatal-short-circuit-three-workers-burnt-alive-garment-factory-fire/>

PHC PETITIONED AGAINST EXEMPTION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS FROM LABOUR LAWS

Dawn November 12th, 2016

Peshawar: A lawyer has filed a petition with the Peshawar High Court challenging the government’s move to end applicability of different labour laws, including the one about the minimum wages, to the private educational institutions in the province.

Petitioner Saleem Shah Hoti requested the court to strike down the relevant amendments to the laws by declaring them illegal and unconstitutional.

Mr. Hoti filed the petition in the larger public interest saying private educational institutions across the province have been subjecting teachers to the worst form of exploitation but they’ve been removed from the purview of the labour department for being owned by several lawmakers.

The petitioner said there was no law in the province to regulate private educational institutions, especially the salary of teachers and working conditions for them.

He said last year, the provincial assembly had passed The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Amendment Laws) Act 2015 through which different amendments were made to different labour laws, including The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Payment of Wages Act 2013, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial and Commercial Employment (Standing Orders) 2013, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minimum Wages Act 2013 and The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial Statistics Act 2013.

The petitioner said after those amendments, the labour laws in question no longer applied to private educational institutions in the province.

The respondents in the petition are the speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, the provincial government through chief secretary, provincial law secretary, provincial advocate general, and chairman of the ruling PTI Imran Khan.

The petitioner said after the enforcement of the Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act 2010, the four labour laws in question were passed in the province in 2013. He added that the provincial legislature had passed those laws for the welfare of the workers associated with private sector institutions and units.

The petitioner said those laws were meant to regulate the minimum wages to certain classes of persons employed in factories, industrial establishment and commercial establishment, regulate the payment of wages, provide for regulation of industrial and commercial employment in the province, and facilitate the collection of statistics of certain kinds relating to factories, and industrial and commercial establishments.

He claimed the minimum monthly salary had been fixed at the rate of Rs13,000 in the province, whereas the private educational institutions had employed highly educated and qualified male and female teachers and ancillary staff members for few thousand rupees, which was both disrespectful and insufficient for them.

The petitioner said in several educational institutions, the staff hadn't been paid salary during summer and other vacations, an act of sheer injustice and exploitation.

He said the labour department had launched a campaign to collect the statistics of private educational institutions in the province and carry out their inspection to address the grievances of the people and staff members.

The petitioner said the campaign panicked influential and powerful managements of private schools and colleges so much that they lobbied at the governmental level to secure exemption from those laws.

He insisted 'that lobby' enjoyed the support of the KP Assembly speaker, who owned an educational institution, and had succeeded to win over the support of MPAs leading to the passage of the impugned law by the assembly to remove private educational institutions from the scope of those labour laws.

The petitioner said the amendment law in question was an attempt to continue with the exploitation of private schools' teachers and supporting staff and that it would ultimately bring negative impacts on the entire education system and thus, spoiling the future of the children.

He added that the impugned amendment intended to protect the pecuniary and business interests of certain people and that it amounted to the exploitation of a number of teachers and supporting staff members of private educational institutions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295871/phc-petitioned-against-exemption-of-private-schools-from-labour-laws>

DEATHS IN FACTORY FIRE: OWNER ARRESTED FOR VIOLATING BUILDING LAWS

Dawn, November 13th, 2016

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: Shafiqabad police arrested on Saturday the owner of Ashraf Garment Factory on Ravi Road for violating building control laws.

Three labourers were burnt to death when a fire erupted in the factory at Goal Bagh on Thursday. As the flames engulfed the double-storey building, workers had no exit point to flee the ablaze.

Jahanzaib, 40, and Javed, 22, were asleep when the fire erupted in the building. Another worker, Shahid, 20, tried to rescue the entrapped colleagues, but also suffered burns. The three later died.

Provincial Minister for Labour and Human Resource Raja Ashfaq Sarwar had taken notice of the incident and directed District Officer Chaudhry Nasrullah to hold an inquiry into the incident and submit its report. He also announced Rs900,000 for the heirs of each worker.

The initial investigation revealed that the fire erupted due to a short circuit. The factory was sealed for fact findings.

Textile Powerlooms and Garment Worker Federation Secretary General Niaz Khan said there have been no labour inspections of the factories to check and ensure safety of the workers.

He said there were more than 5,000 factories in residential areas of the city where fire fighting vehicles could not reach for rescue service due to narrow streets.

He said the labour department had only registered 1,800 factories of the city and without registering all factories, they could not work for the welfare of the workers.

He said most of the factories were working without any fire control system which showed the labour department had no inspection mechanism. The apathy keeps on killing workers.

In September, three labourers died when a boiler exploded in a manufacturing unit of a bakery in Kahna. In June, one worker was burnt in a steel factory in Baghbanpura, while in May, seven people working on the Orange Line Metro Train project died when a wall fell on them in Manawan.

These incidents had a small number of casualties but 45 workers had died when a three-storey factory collapsed in Sunder Industrial Estate last year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296044>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 31ST TO NOVEMBER 6TH 2016

BRICK AND BONDAGE

Dawn November 1st, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

ONE of the many trials and tribulations of workers engaged in brick-making was reflected in the recent news of their children protesting against the closure of three schools, facilitated by an NGO and supported by the Sindh Education Foundation, at the brick kilns in Tando Hyder in Sindh.

The brick kiln labour force, one of the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of our society, works and lives under debt bondage. Deprived of social, health and safety protections, and decent shelter and civic entitlements, brick kiln workers have been trapped in an exploitative cycle for decades.

The law to eliminate debt bondage, the Bonded Labour System Abolition Act of 1992, and civil society's sustained but small-scale efforts to support brick kilns workers have not achieved the desired results. The reasons include lack of implementation of laws, absence of a regulatory framework for the brick industry and abundant supply of unskilled and cheap labour.

It seems the social movement and the framing of the law have both failed to uplift the brick kiln sector's labour force. So, what can be done to initiate change? How can the old social order — oppressive worker-employer relations — be removed to make way for a better bargain for workers? The answer is to introduce alternate technology that would challenge the status quo and compel changes in the production relations of the brick sector.

It is time that Pakistan's outdated, polluting, inefficient and energy-consuming method of making bricks manually and baking them in the bull's trench kiln (BTK) should give way to efficient and cleaner brick technologies, such as the Hoffman kiln or tunnel kiln — as it happened in China, is happening in Bangladesh, and is under serious debate in India. In Latin America — Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Mexico — artisanal brick-making is being modernised under a multi-pronged strategy.

Energy security is the new paradigm in the global discourse on the brick kiln sector. Human and labour rights frameworks are no longer talked about. Fortunately, change in technology has brought in social dividends and led to improved labour standards and work conditions in the brick kilns.

According to an estimate, there are 12,000 brick kilns in Pakistan and 99pc are using the primitive BTK technology, consuming almost 40 per cent of locally produced coal. Besides coal, the sector uses agro waste, rubber tyres, plastics, etc, which produces highly toxic gases. Attempts made by a few kiln owners to introduce alternate technology have not been successful.

Reasons include the high cost of technology and capital investment, resistance to technology transfer, lack of knowledge of modern innovations and lack of motivation for skills enhancement. There is neither a legal framework nor any standardisation of kiln design and quality of bricks produced. The sector is not recognised as an industry; hence kiln owners cannot access credit.

In a 2012 evaluation of energy conservation potential in brick kilns, undertaken by the Saarc Energy Centre in Islamabad, the researcher found tunnel kilns to be the most energy efficient. However, it was recommended that since “the process of technology transfer and adaptation of new techniques is usually not welcomed [...] it is envisaged that low investment proposals with a modular approach on energy conservation measures may present a high probability on acceptance”.

The global happenings in the brick sector provide an opportunity for local civil society groups and NGOs to adopt a similar approach — advocacy and support for the induction of alternate technology — to address human rights issues afflicting the sector. There is a need to motivate, despite all the misgivings of civil society, and to take into confidence the key stakeholder — the Brick Kiln Owners Association which, on its website, cites ‘modernisation of brick kilns’ as part of their agenda.

Experiences from Bangladesh can be shared, where the hybrid Hoffman kiln technology has been introduced in nine kilns after redesigning by the Chinese to suit local conditions. The project is funded by the World Bank Group in partnership with a private financial institution.

Civil society groups in Nepal are also looking toward cleaner technologies in the brick sector. Better Brick Nepal, initiated in 2014 by the BrickClean Network, is aiming to address labour and environmental issues with the support of international donors.

The government also must play its role and adopt policy and legislative frameworks for the brick kiln sector, and extend incentives to the owners for technology transfer and skills development of its workers. In contrast to the tunnel kiln, Hoffman kiln technology is labour intensive.

Even if a portion of the labour force is ejected from the currently ‘cursed’ sector, it would be for the better. In a study conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute a few years ago, 93.5pc of the workers stated that they would leave work at brick kilns if they could.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293472/brick-and-bondage>

11 DEAD IN OIL TANKER BLAST AT GADANI SHIP-BREAKING YARD
Dawn, November 2nd, 2016

Shazia Hasan

GADANI: At least 11 workers lost their lives and over 50 others got trapped, possibly fatally, at an oil tanker on Tuesday after a large fire broke out at the vessel brought for dismantling to the well-known ship-breaking yard here.

According to sources, the vessel had not fully been drained of oil when the dismantling work was undertaken. As a result, an explosion ripped through the oil tanker at about 9am.

Due to the absence of the required facilities in Gadani, rescue work began after 3am. And the fire was burning uncontrollably well into the evening.

Akram Nasir, chief officer of the Gadani Municipal Committee, said that some of the bodies were recovered from the water and some quite far from the vessel, near a village.

He said that because there was only one fire tender in Gadani, they had to call for more from Winder/Sonmiani, the Lasbela Industrial Estate Development Authority, KPT and Hubco.

“At least 24 men were working inside the ship’s tank when it exploded. Many others were working in different portions of the vessel. Some jumped into the water and were rescued. Some 45 were saved in this way,” he said.

“But there are many more trapped inside. Some workers are saying there may be more than 50 who are still trapped. Others are giving us numbers in the hundreds.

“There is no way of knowing exactly how many are still trapped, until the fire is extinguished. And that cannot happen until the oil inside the oil tanker burns out completely,” he said as he asked someone on the phone to provide him with a generator and some pumps.

“There is no electricity in Gadani. How are we to carry out the rescue work?”

Two helicopters — one circling overhead in case someone was to be fetched from the water and the other to sprinkle dry chemical powder, or DCP, from above — were pressed into service.

Describing the difficulties being faced in the rescue effort, Mohammad Qasim, the head fireman from Hubco, said the chemical dropped from the helicopter was not proving to be very effective because the helicopter was flying too high over the burning ship.

“It can’t risk flying any lower as there is too much smoke. Besides, pieces of metal shoot out with each new explosion inside the vessel. We can’t even get near the fire yet. We are only assessing the situation from afar,” he said.

“The fire started at 9am and rescue work began at 3.30pm. This is the state of affairs here. Do you think the workers trapped inside would still be alive after inhaling so much smoke and toxic gases?” Nasir A. Mansoor, deputy general secretary of the National Trade Union Federation, said as he watched the fire burn uncontrollably.

“The army and navy have been volunteering here but the owner of the yard number 54, to which the vessel was brought for dismantling, Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor Kamboh, is yet to show his face. Actually, none of the businessmen who own these yards are here today,” he told Dawn.

“This is not the graveyard of ships; Gadani is the graveyard of workers! Today so many died and so many were injured. That made the media pay attention. One or two men die due to the hopeless working conditions here every other day and no one cares,” said Amanullah, a worker who hails from Swat.

Abdul Khaliq from Haripur said that there was no water, no power, no bathrooms and no place to live for the labourers in Gadani. “We use the broken pieces of wood from the ships to make huts for ourselves. For water we have dug wells. The water is sour but it keeps us alive while we earn a living here,” he said.

“We started working on the ship only two days ago. We had orders to hurry up with the work. There was still six feet of oil in the tanker when the cutting began yesterday. Due to the oil below, hot gases got accumulated inside and a hot burning piece of metal just turned the whole ship into a bomb,” Sanaullah, an injured worker, told Dawn at the Civil Hospital’s Burns Unit in Karachi.

“The explosion broke the hull from the rest of the vessel and the workers engaged in cutting work on the upper side just flew out. Some, like me, were recovered from the sea,” he said.

An attendant with another injured worker said he had arrived in Gadani from Pakpattan in the morning, only to learn that there was a huge fire in the ship-breaking yard and his son, Mumtaz, was engulfed by it.

“They managed to pull him out, thank God. My son became a father only a few days ago. I work as a fruit seller back home but came to work in his place here so that he could go home for a few days.

“He earns Rs800 a day here. I didn’t want him to lose out on that income,” said Mohammad Yasin, the father.

One of the two young nurses standing quietly nearby got teary-eyed and turned away. “We only have one patient with 60 per cent burns here. As for these two men you just spoke to, they have 100pc burns. They are not expected to live,” she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293729/11-dead-in-oil-tanker-blast-at-gadani-ship-breaking-yard>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE: RALLY SEEKS COMPENSATION IN LUMP SUM

Dawn November 2nd, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Heirs of the Baldia Town factory fire victims staged a rally on Tuesday from Regal Chowk to the Karachi Press Club and reiterated their earlier demand about full compensation instead of instalments.

The event was jointly held by the National Trade Union Federation and the Association of the Affectees of Baldia tragedy.

Families present at the rally demanded that they be paid the recently agreed upon compensation in full.

The families were referring to a recent agreement between German retailer, KiK, and labour unions in Geneva in September. According to the agreement, KiK agreed to pay \$5 million in instalments. w

The agreement came after the German government asked the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to mediate between KiK and the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) and to decide how the compensation will be distributed.

The German retailer had earlier paid \$1m as compensation to the heirs of the victims who died in the fire at Baldia Town’s Ali Enterprises on Sept 11, 2012. Eventually, the German retailer was accused by the labour organisations for not respecting other similar agreements.

A legal battle between the labour organisations and the German retailer led to the involvement of the German government wanting to settle the issue amicably and ethically. A decision to include the ILO as mediator was accepted by all parties in April this year.

A fact-finding commission of the ILO recently visited Karachi and presented recommendations to better working conditions for labourers in factories across Karachi.

However, during a meeting on the premises of the Pakistan Medical Association on Sept 25, the victims' families had refused to accept the condition of getting the compensation in instalments.

The demand coincided with the arrival of the ILO commission on Sept 26.

Saeeda Bibi, head of the Association of the Affectees of Baldia Tragedy, said that the demand was due to the "long-drawn process of compensation disbursement".

This was reiterated by the families, who congregated outside the KPC. They added that it would be "better to receive the compensation in one go than to be held back in case the German retailer decides to back off yet again."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293657/baldia-factory-fire-rally-seeks-compensation-in-lump-sum>

DEATH TOLL IN GADANI FIRE RISES TO 19

Dawn November 3rd, 2016

KARACHI: With the fire that broke out a day earlier at an oil tanker in Gadani far from being extinguished, the death toll in the tragedy jumped to 19 on Wednesday.

The toll could rise further because a number of workers were still trapped in the vessel, police and rescue workers said.

Saad Edhi of the Edhi Foundation said his workers had moved 18 bodies to their morgue in Sohrab Goth, Karachi. "We have also shifted parts of a body to the morgue," he said.

The fire was still raging, he said, which meant that rescue workers were facing difficulties.

Police registered a case against the owner of the yard to which the vessel was brought for dismantling, Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor, his manager and the two contractors who had been assigned the task of draining oil from the tanker.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri told the provincial assembly that a high-level committee had been formed to investigate reasons behind the incident.

He said the tragic incident had been discussed in detail at a high-level meeting.

Mr Zehri said he would soon visit Gadani along with members of the investigation committee. The findings of the committee would be shared with members of the legislature, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293998/death-toll-in-gadani-fire-rises-to-19>

27 HINDUS WORKING AS BONDED LABOUR RESCUED

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

GWADAR: The Levies force on Thursday rescued 27 Hindu bonded labourers from the command area of the Mirani Dam in Kech district.

Levies conducted a raid with Kech Deputy Commissioner Mir Yaqoob Marri in the command area of the left canal. The commissioner said 27 Hindu bonded labourers were sent to their native area Mithi in Sindh after they were rescued from the fields.

Mr Marri said the raid was conducted on the basis of a complaint submitted by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). “Women and children were also among the rescued Hindu bonded laborers,” he said, adding that the feudal lord did not provide enough food and other facilities to the labourers.

“Legal action would be taken against the people responsible for bonded labour,” Mr Marri told Dawn, adding that a total of 45 people were working in the Mirani dam area as bonded labourers.

Zamindar Abdul Wahid rejected the allegation that Hindus were working in the fields as bonded labourers. “They were not bonded labourers. They were working with me on a partnership basis,” Mr Wahid said, adding that they were working in the fields of their own volition.

Mr Wahid claimed that he had lent a loan of Rs400,000 to the labourers on their request. “They staged the drama of having been forced into labour to avoid having to repay the loan,” he said, asserting that they [the labourers] were exploiting the situation in the name of religion and the local administration was biased towards them. “I will approach the court on this matter,” Mr Wahid said.

The Makran HRCP coordinator, Professor Ghani Parwaz, said that the labourers had approached the HRCP Karachi chapter for help, adding that before they were released, efforts were made to resolve the issue but both parties failed to reach any settlement.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294184/27-hindus-working-as-bonded-labour-rescued?fromNewsdog=1>

PAKISTAN LAUDED FOR LEGISLATION ON ELIMINATION OF BONDED LABOUR

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A visiting delegation of the European Union’s GSP + Review Mission applauded Pakistan’s efforts in introducing legislation for elimination of child and bonded labour from the country.

At a meeting of the Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC), chaired by Minister of Commerce Khurram Dastgir Khan, the EU delegation was appraised on the achievements made by Pakistan in areas of human development, labour, women and child rights, climate change, anti-corruption, and anti-narcotics, an official statement said.

The four-member delegation is led by Gus Houttuin, Advisor, trade issue and business coordinator, European External Action Service (EEAS), and comprises of Dietmar Krissler, Deputy of Division Asia Pacific 2, EEAS; Andreas Julin, DG Trade Unit D,1 Trade Sustainable Development and GSP, European Commission; and Rudi Delarue, DG Employment, Deputy Head of Division Unit D3, EC.

The mission is currently visiting Pakistan to assess the implementation of 27 UN Conventions covered under the GSP + agreement and the way forward.

The commerce minister informed the delegation that GSP + has helped Pakistan’s exports to EU register an impressive increase.

The delegation was informed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has accordingly set up the TIC to ensure that treaty obligations of Pakistan towards UN Conventions are given top priority.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294066/pakistan-lauded-for-legislation-on-elimination-of-bonded-labour>

SHIP OF SORROWS

Dawn, November 6th, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

FOR millennia, the symbol of the ship epitomised hope and the promise of new horizons. With the discoveries of new lands and the onset of trade, the image of the ship was besmirched with the sufferings of human cargo — the slaves —

transported in and out of continents. Then, more recently, emerged the phenomenon of boats full of refugees and immigrants capsizing on Western shores.

What remains hidden, or not so visible, in our collective consciousness is the story of ships being broken down across South Asia's shores, bringing in their wake death and despair to those who dismantle, bit by bit, the decaying, hazardous, mammoth machines.

Hence, it was barely a surprise when many of this nation's newspapers deemed unfit for front-page publication news of the dead, the trapped and the injured workers of the recent disaster at the Gadani ship-breaking yard.

An image or two on the TV news channels soon vanished, replaced by tickers few could comprehend. Even Labour Watch Pakistan, the news portal on labour rights, placed it third on a list of four stories in its bulletin. The dynamics of this global industry and its impact on workers remain little discussed, except for some efforts among civil society and alternate media groups to highlight the plight of the workers involved.

A ship lasts about 25 years and then it must disintegrate. A dying ship contains large amounts of carcinogens and toxic materials — oil sludge, asbestos, paints laden with heavy metals — besides steel, iron, wood and other recyclable items.

Up until the late 1960s, ships were dismantled in the countries of their origin. As the pressure for environmental regulations and occupational health and safety standards increased in the wake of international laws and treaties, the rich countries played smart — circumventing laws, changing flags — and started selling their old ships to middlemen who would then sell it to scrap metal profiteers in South Asia. Gradually, in the 1980s, the ship-breaking industry came to be moored on the beaches of Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

No doubt the recyclable material — particularly steel — comes in handy and is cheap for Pakistan's economy. Also, the task of dismantling inducts a significant chunk of poor, unskilled or semi-skilled, marginalised, low-paid labour that is unable to find any other means of livelihood. So, the government turns a blind eye to the human, social and environmental costs that this industry entails.

The workers toil without protective gear — helmets, goggles, boots, gloves — at dangerous heights, and live in makeshift huts at Gadani without electricity, safe drinking water or medical facilities. There is no inspection and monitoring of the hoisting and hauling equipment, the dangerous work processes or the work conditions.

Apparently, the only requirement before a ship is beached and broken is for a no-objection certificate to be issued by the Balochistan government's Environmental Protection Agency after the submission of an impact assessment. Although Pakistan is a signatory to the Basel Convention, no compliance legislation is in place. A labour inspection system hardly exists, and violations of the Factories Act, 1934 and relevant environmental laws are rampant.

The global players are reluctant to ratify the International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, adopted by the International Maritime Organisation in Hong Kong in 2009. The convention cannot be enforced until it is ratified by at least 15 ship-owning and ship-scraping nations.

Nonetheless, several countries are preparing to follow the IMO-developed guidelines for early implementation once the convention is finally enforced.

Based on the Hong Kong convention, in 2013 the European Union adopted its own Ship Recycling Regulation to regulate the recycling of EU-flagged ships scrapped in South Asia and announced the establishment of a European list of ship recycling facilities that meet the regulation's requirements by the end of 2016. It is a pity that, given its current state, Pakistan's ship-breaking industry will not meet EU requirements in the foreseeable future, which may jeopardise its GSP-Plus status.

News of the arrest of the ship-breaking company's owner and of the chairperson of the Ship Breakers' Association — flickering for a while on a certain TV channel and mentioned in passing in a news report — augurs well, despite the inadequate coverage of this important accountability measure.

Now is an opportune time for civil society groups to engage in judicial activism and initiate public interest litigation. The case law against prevalent ship-breaking practices has been of help in Bangladesh and India. In 2009, Bangladesh's Supreme Court decision to shut down domestic ship-breaking yards that do not possess environmental clearance has helped further the cause of green methods of ship recycling. Also, the government must pay heed to recommendations put forth by the SDPI in its 2013 report for turning this bleak trade into a green industry.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294501/ship-of-sorrows>

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December 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 26 TH TO JANUARY 1ST 2016

80 FFBL EMPLOYEES GO TO COURT AFTER BEING SACKED

Dawn, December 26th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: After their services were terminated, employees of Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim Ltd (FFBL) have accused the company management of nepotism while making recruitments and of corruption, while the management maintains the contracts of these employees had expired and they were offered new contracts via a third party.

According to its website, FFBL is a public limited company incorporated under the Companies Ordinance 1984 and has a modern Granular Urea and Di-Ammonium Phosphate fertilizer manufacturing complex. The plant was brought to suspension in 2001 due to an accumulated loss of Rs6.5 billion and resumed production in September 2003.

A document signed by 87 employees, which is available with Dawn, accuses the management of the company of nepotism while making recruitments and of corruption.

Applications written to the General Headquarters, the chief of army staff and other offices claim the company management was violating rules, including the recruitment of over age employees and the misuse of guest houses and vehicles. FFBL Admin Manager retired Col Sohail Khairat said these allegations were baseless and wrong.

“It was decided that the employees who could not fit in the organogram will be appointed through a private contractor though the new set up had increased the company's expenses by 17pc. However, 78 employees refused to sign the contract and demanded their services be regularised,” he said.

Mr Khairat said the employees' contracts had also expired and that it is therefore not correct to say they were dismissed from service.

“If they had agreed to the contract they were offered, they would have been paid the same salary, but some of the employees went to court,” he added.

He said the company had faced a similar issue six years ago and that a court had then decided that the employees will continue working as FFBL employees and will be hired via a third party six years later.

“The majority of them did not perform their duties properly because they knew they will not be dismissed for six years. Now, they want their services to be regularised so that they are paid their salaries without doing any work,” he said.

When asked about allegations of corruption made by the employees, Mr Khairat said internal and external audits are carried out every three months and that the allegations were baseless.

FFBL Secretary retired Brig Mohammad Azam Tiwana said that when appointments via a third party were offered, 40 of the 120 employees had agreed and the remaining had gone to court for the regularisation of their services. He said some of the employees are over 60 years of age and want their services to be regularised so that they can get some financial benefit.

“The managing director of the company, retired Gen Haroon Aslam, is leaving soon and the employees are hoping he will regularise their services before leaving,” he said.

One of the employees, 50-year-old Khalid Mehmood said he retired from the army after 23 years of service as a hawaldar in 2008 with a pension of a little over Rs7,000, which has since increased to Rs13,500 per month.

“I retired at the age of 41 and I have six children, two of whom are in college and one goes to school. Then I got a job at Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim Ltd (FFBL) with a salary of Rs32,000 per month and there are four bonuses a year due to which I was able to run my house,” he told Dawn.

“I cannot afford to pay for my children’s education anymore. I have been trying to get someone to listen to what I have to say, but even the media will not take up my case and some said that my employers’ name has the word ‘Fauji’ in it,” he said.

A soldier, Tariq Javed said he retired from the army in 2001 and was paid a pension of Rs8,400 a month.

“I was paid Rs26,000 at the company but now that I have been laid off, I cannot afford to send my three children to school,” he said.

“I have served in some of the hard areas, such as Chakothi and Skardu and I was hoping to live a peaceful life after retirement, but it seems that a soldier who gave the prime years of his life to the Pakistan Army, difficulties will never end,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304512/80-ffbl-employees-go-to-court-after-being-sacked>

WITH FEW RIGHTS, EMBROIDERY WORKERS FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Dawn, December 26th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Rehana, 40, distinctly remembers the day she had moved to Yousuf Goth in Gadap from Lahore around 24 years back. “I walked into a house full of people whom I didn’t know,” she says while working on an adda [embroidery frame] that is used for embroidery in her one-room home. “There used to be an embroidery workshop inside our home with three more quarters. My husband’s five brothers worked alongside him and shared expenses. In order to blend in and be useful, I decided to learn embroidery along with my sister-in-law who knew it really well,” she says while adding silver threads to a collar neck design in front of her.

Six years back, the brothers decided to part ways. Two of her brothers-in-law own a tuck shop and sell beetle leaves, whereas their wives run beauty parlours at their home. Rehana is stuck with embroidery as it earns her “enough to run my home for a week,” whereas her husband, Amjad, is a shoemaker whose work is sold with a brand name.

Knowing how to embroider on bridal outfits, collar neck designs for men, using kora, zardozi and aari, she explains there are 50 collars on one adda. She earns Rs1,200 per week, she says, adding that this is far more than what she earned before. “I get work from a nearby workshop of Shahid Bhai who then sends the complete work to the market,” she shares with Dawn, while adding that she knows very little about the market her embroidered work ends up at, as she hardly ever steps out of her home.

With her two children, aged 16 and 14, standing nearby, she says: “The workshop owner pays me less if my children help me embroider. If I’m the sole person working on the adda, it gets me the full price.”

Rehana has had nine children, three of whom died just days after their birth, she says as a toddler comes up to her. Although she is open to sharing most of the information about her work, her children and life in general, it took her a while to speak about the physical abuse she undergoes on a daily basis. “He [Amjad] doesn’t let me go out and keeps calling me if I’m not around as he gets suspicious,” she adds.

“I enrolled my children in a school. I spent a good time and learned a craft without being educated. For me, I followed my mother’s advice and compromised. My children won’t be able to do that or sustain in this profession,” she adds. A policy to recognise the rights of home-based workers was recently signed by the Sindh chief minister. As the policy document awaits further approval, Zehra Khan of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) plans to amend the definition of employer, worker and establishment (where the handiwork is done).

“The national policy on home-based workers will take a while to properly become an act. Then there is the part about ensuring its efficacy. But in the meantime, we are working on adding a few things which will help further push the cause of workers in general and women workers in particular,” says Zehra.

There are 12 million home-based workers, 80 per cent of whom are women, in the country, she adds.

A lane ahead, Yasmeen Ramzan, 30, has helped her entire family learn embroidery. Living in a home shared by five families, Yasmeen, who hails from Punjab, started going to a neighbour’s home to learn embroidery some time back. “Most of the women you’d find here belong to Punjab. They moved here because of their husbands or the fact that they were not able to earn enough,” she says, while sitting in one of the two rooms in her home. Working on an adda with her niece, she says she studied till Class V and was then taken out because her parents wanted her to learn a craft.

Unlike Rehana, Yasmeen knows where her work goes and how much it should earn her at the end of the day. “The work I produce goes to Lalukhet, Tariq Road and Jama Cloth. Irrespective of what the agent tells me, I know I’m earning less than men in the nearby workshop. They get Rs800 for an embroidery patch for which I get paid Rs500,” she adds.

At a workshop, a few steps from Rehana’s home, Mohammad Kashif, 40, speaks about the overall loss faced by home-based workers. “The rates are continuously getting less. Some people prefer machine work and that’s why most workers convert to those and move to the main city. The real sheen on an embroidered dress comes from needle work that we do here, but we all are easily replaceable,” he adds.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1304473/with-few-rights-embroidery-workers-face-uncertain-future>

GADANI SHIP BLAZE: HEIRS OF VICTIMS TO GET RS2 MILLION EACH
The Express Tribune, December 27th, 2016

Zubair Ashraf

KARACHI: Heirs of the victims of Nov 1 oil tanker tragedy in Gadani will be provided Rs2 million each as compensation within two weeks while authorities and employers will ensure provision of safer workplace environment to the ship-breaking industry before resumption of operation at the yards.

This was decided in a tripartite meeting of the stakeholders – including representatives of the ship breakers, government and labour unions — that took place on December 23 at Gadani to resolve the lingering issues of workers’ compensation, social security, health and safety in the wake of the tragedy.

On Nov 1, a blast that ripped through a decommissioned oil tanker moored at plot No 54 at Gadani ship-breaking yard killed, according to official count, 26 workers while injuring 70 others. Four workers — Imran, Sherdad, Hanif and Shafiq — also went missing after the incident. However, there were conflicting reports, claiming the number of victims was far higher than the official tally.

“A seven-member committee under Hub’s assistant commissioner has been formed to dispose of the matter of compensation within 15 days,” said the Gadani Ship Breaking Workers Union president Bashir Mehmoodani, adding that the panel includes members of the employers and labour associations.

During the meeting chaired by Kalat’s Commissioner Muhammad Hashim, Mehmoodani and the National Trade Union Federation president Rafiq Baloch had represented the workers.

He said the meeting was called after the employers and authorities failed to ensure safety of the workers at their workplaces despite witnessing ‘the worst disaster in the industry’s history.’

Mehmoodani said the meeting decided that the heirs of each of the workers died during the oil tanker tragedy will be given Rs2 million in compensation. Of these, Rs1.5million will be given by the employer while the rest will be contributed by the government through its labour department.

He said case of the four missing workers had become complex because the authorities wanted proof that they were present at the site when the fire started. “First, we are trying to get an FIR registered about their being missing. This will be done with the testimonies of their co-workers,” he said.

The labour leader lamented that the authorities appeared negligent in this matter and were passing buck on one another. “If the police failed to register an FIR, the labour union will move the court seeking orders in this matter,” he added.

He hoped that since Kalat’s commissioner had assured of resolving the matter at the earliest, it would be resolved. However, if that did not happen then the labour representatives also had other options. “Families of the victims are in deep despair. They need immediate assistance,” he added.

The Labour Department’s Deputy Director Fida Ahmed Shahwani, who was present in the meeting, told The Express Tribune that employers were asked again to provide safety equipment to workers and make efforts for their wellbeing at the workplaces. “If they don’t, they will be dealt with according to the law.”

According to the decisions made during the meeting, an ambulance will be stationed at each yard for immediate rescue in case of any mishap. Workers will be given helmets, dungarees, safety shoes, gloves and other gears to ensure their safety during the work, which involves handling metal sheets and fire.

Kalat’s commissioner ordered that special cards should be issued to the workers to make sure their identity and their skill level. These cards will be linked with National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) and the employers will be bound to hire only those workers having them.

The labour department and the labour union, however, are skeptic about the functioning of this system.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1275835/gadani-ship-blaze-heirs-victims-get-rs2-million/>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE VICTIMS’ FAMILIES RALLY AGAINST COMPENSATION ISSUE
The Express Tribune, December 30th, 2016.

KARACHI: Scores of people affected by the Baldia factory fire took to the streets on Thursday against a proposal to disburse financial compensation among them through workers' social security and pension institutions, which they deem 'corrupt'.

Rallying from Regal Chowk to press club, the victims' families demanded that the amount of \$5.15million from the German company KiK should be distributed through the Sindh High Court (SHC) to make the process hassle-free and transparent.

The German company had agreed in September this year to pay long-term compensation to the affectees of the fire at Ali Enterprises from where it procured the largest chunk of its products. Addressing the participants, Saeeda Khatoon, the senior vice-president of the Ali Enterprises Fire Affectees Association, said that they feared that the amount will be embezzled if handed over the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (SESSI) or Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI).

As the agreement was mediated by the International Labour Organisation between the representatives of the workers and the German company in Geneva, it proposed that the amount should go the victims through SESSI or EOBI.

The victims are, however, sceptical of the process and insist that they admire the SHC process and were also familiar with it, as a similar amount from the government was paid to them through the same channel in the past.

The event was organised by the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and representatives of different unions and workers from different industries participated in it in a bid to express solidarity with the fire affectees.

Nasir Mansoor, NTUF deputy general secretary, told The Express Tribune that in light of the proposal it seems that the affectees will undergo more problems than they already have suffered in the struggle for their right.

"When there is one established way to distribute the amount transparently, why would you go the other way which is not so good?" he asked, explaining what he believed was the worsening situation at the two workers' welfare institutions in question due to nepotism and corruption. He added that these institutions had their own set of rules and regulations in which the pension or compensation plan to a parent of a worker who died while on the job was different from the plan to his/her spouse. "It will bring in a complex issue," he said, stressing that first there was a need of bringing reforms in these institutions. "But, let's not make these victims wait longer."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1278808/baldia-factory-fire-victims-families-rally-compensation-issue/>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE CASE: POLICE GRANTED MORE TIME TO FILE CHARGE SHEET
The Express Tribune, December 30th, 2016.

KARACHI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) granted on Thursday more time to the police to submit a supplementary charge sheet in the Baldia factory fire case following the arrest and interrogation of a key suspect, Abdul Rehman alias Bhola.

The ATC-II directed the police to submit the charge sheet against the suspect by January 12, as the investigation officer contended that he needed more time to finalise the prosecution document.

Rehman, a former incharge of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement's (MQM) Baldia sector, was arrested earlier this month in Bangkok by Interpol and the Thai police's Crime Suppression Division, after his red warrants were issued by the Pakistani authorities on court orders.

He was later brought back to the country by the Federal Investigation Agency and handed over to police for further legal proceedings against him.

In the progress report submitted to the ATC, the investigation officer said that the suspect had ‘voluntarily’ confessed to the crime before a District West judicial magistrate.

According to the confessional statement, he admitted that the factory was set on fire over non-payment of extortion to his party’s high command by factory owners Abdul Aziz Bhaila and his sons Arshad and Shahid.

Two-hundred-and-sixty people were burnt to death and dozens were wounded as the fire engulfed the Ali Enterprises garment factory in Baldia Town on September 11, 2012.

The suspect maintained that Hammad Siddiqui, the then chief of MQM’s Karachi Tanzimi Committee (KTC) which supervised all the party’s sectors in the city, had demanded Rs250million in extortion from the Bhailas through him.

The factory owners declined and instead offered Rs10million, which infuriated Siddiqui, he said, adding that the KTC chief then ordered him to set the factory on fire.

He added that after the fire, he and his fellow party workers came to the site and installed a camp outside it for four days on the pretext of providing relief to the victims.

This arson factor surfaced in the case in February, 2015 after the Rangers submitted a report in the Sindh High Court containing the revelations of an under-trial prisoner, Rizwan Qureshi. Earlier, it was only deemed a case of lack of safety measures at the factory which became cause of the death of the workers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1278806/baldia-factory-fire-case-police-granted-time-file-charge-sheet/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19 TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016

KEY SUSPECT CONFESSES TO HIS INVOLVEMENT IN BALDIA FACTORY FIRE

Dawn, December 23rd, 2016

Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: Abdul Rehman, alias Bhola, a former sector in-charge of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, confessed on Thursday before a judicial magistrate to his involvement in the Baldia factory fire case.

The suspect was arrested in Bangkok through Interpol a couple of weeks ago and the Federal Investigation Agency brought him back last week. He was later remanded in police custody for questioning.

Police produced the suspect before the court of a judicial magistrate (West) for his confessional statement.

After completing the legal formalities, magistrate Abid Ali Lakho recorded the confession under Section 164 of the criminal procedure code.

According to judicial sources, the suspect confessed that he with Zubair, alias Charya, set the factory ablaze on the instruction of then chief of the MQM organising committee Hammad Siddiqui as the factory owners had refused to pay the demanded protection money.

After recording the confessional statement, the magistrate sent the suspect to prison on judicial remand till Dec 29 and directed the investigating officer to submit a supplementary investigation report in the antiterrorism court-II.

The prosecution said that over 250 workers were burnt alive when the multi-storey garment factory was set on fire in September 2012.

Initially, owner of the factory Abdul Aziz Bhaila and his two sons Arshad Bhaila and Shahid Bhaila, general manager Mansoor and three gatekeepers were charge-sheeted for their alleged negligence. However, a reinvestigation of the case was ordered in March last year through a joint investigation team after it was revealed in an earlier JIT report of

suspect Rizwan Qureshi, submitted to the Sindh High Court in February 2015, that the factory was set on fire because its owners had failed to pay protection money.

In March this year, the police in a progress report told the court that the factory fire was a planned terrorist activity and the JIT had recommended that a new case be registered under the antiterrorism law and proposed former chief of the MQM Karachi Tanzeemi Committee Hammad Siddiqui, his alleged frontman and then Baldia Town sector in-charge Abdul Rehman, Hyderabad-based businessmen brothers Ali Hasan Qadri and Umer Hasan Qadri, Dr Abdul Sattar, Zubair Charya, and others as accused in it.

After a lengthy reinvestigation, police had come up with a supplementary investigation report in August in which they charge-sheeted Hammad Siddiqui and his alleged frontman Abdul Rehman, alias Bhola, and their three to four unidentified accomplices as absconding accused.

But police did not send for trial 13 suspects, including the owners and some employees of the ill-fated industrial unit, and listed them among the prosecution witnesses.

Police had also not charge-sheeted brothers Ali Hasan Qadri and Umer Hasan Qadri, and some others who were among the proposed accused in the JIT report.

Referring to the JIT report, the supplementary charge sheet said that Hammad through Abdul Rehman had approached the factory owners to demand protection money of Rs250 million and partnership, but the owners only offered Rs10m, which the alleged extortionists did not agree to receive, and they allegedly set the factory on fire “in order to teach the owners a lesson”.

The trial court, however, enlisted all the 13 discharged persons, including the owners and key prosecution witnesses, observing that the owners/manager had ordered closure of the gates while the others abetted the crime.

Police had incorporated sections 302 (premeditated murder), 324 (attempted murder), 337 (shajjah), 384 (punishment for extortion), 385 (putting person in fear of injury in order to commit extortion), 386 (extortion by putting a person in fear of death or grievous hurt), 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage etc), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house etc), 109 (abetment) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code read with sections 6 and 7 of the ATA in the supplementary charge sheet and a list of 58 prosecution witnesses was also attached with it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1303916/key-suspect-confesses-to-his-involvement-in-baldia-factory-fire>

THREE LABOURERS DIE OF ASPHYXIA

Dawn, December 25th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Three labourers died of asphyxia in a paper mill in the Site area of Hyderabad on Saturday.

The mill management and rescuers are said to have retrieved the bodies after cutting the walls of a tank into which they had fallen while cleaning it and where gas had accumulated.

The rescuers moved the bodies to the Liaquat University Hospital. Medico-Legal Officer Dr Baldev confirmed that the labourers were brought dead to the hospital.

They have been identified as Wali Mohammad, Ghulam Mohammad and Allah Rakhio. The mill set up in the early 1970s is presently closed.

According to another paper mill's owner, the production process leads to collection of waste in the tank which causes accumulation of ammonia gas that could be life-threatening if a labourer falls into it.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 12 TH TO DECEMBER 18TH 2016
K-P OFFERS TO PROBE GADANI BLAZE TOLL IF BALOCHISTAN COOPERATES
The Express Tribune, December 12th, 2016.

Qaiser Butt

Islamabad: The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government has offered to investigate last month's Gadani shipyard blaze to ascertain the exact number of fatalities it led to, claiming that more than 200 labourers from the province alone perished in the deadly accident.

A series of explosions on November 1 ignited a massive fire on the 24,000-ton decommissioned vessel MT Aces, which continued to burn for the next four days. Although the commissioner of Kalat division — of which Gadani is a part — initially told the media that only 26 workers were killed in the accident, his assertion was soon contradicted by the Balochistan chief minister's special assistant Jan Achakzai, who claimed that over 70 workers were killed and some 90 others were missing after the incident.

Now, K-P Labour Minister Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli has suggested that the real toll could be much higher. "More than 200 workers from K-P died in the accident at the Gadani shipyard," she told The Express Tribune. Many more were missing, she said.

"I am sure that the authorities in Balochistan are trying to hide the truth," Anisa claimed, accusing the province's authorities of protecting the interest of the ship owner, who is bound to financially compensate the victims' families.

According to the minister, what makes her concerned is that a majority of those killed, wounded or missing in the accident belonged to her province. She said a fresh inquiry into the incident is essential to determine the exact extent of the losses. "My department can consider initiating an investigation with the cooperation of the Balochistan government," she said.

Demanding financial compensation for the heirs of the victim workers, Anisa said it was necessary to have the exact number of the victims whose families should be financially compensated by the government of Balochistan and the ship owners.

In his final report last month, a one-man inquiry commission formed by the Balochistan government endorsed the Kalat commissioners' claim about the deaths. Balochistan Finance Secretary Akbar Hussain, who comprised the commission, refused to give The Express Tribune any details from his report, but claimed only four labourers were missing. He admitted that some others were wounded, but declined requests for an actual figure.

Following the inquiry, the Balochistan government paid Rs 1.3 million to each heir of only the four deceased workers who hailed from Gadani. The provincial minister for Balochistan Development Authority, Hamid Achakzai, distributed the cheques among the heirs on November 25. However, the government did not pay any financial assistance to the heirs of few injured who were invited by the authorities to receive the compensation amount. The K-P minister made her statement after a resolution unanimously passed by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on December 6 urged the federal and Balochistan governments, and the ship owner to arrange financial compensation for deceased workers belonging to K-P.

Fears that the Balochistan government is hiding the true extent of the Gadani tragedy are stoked further by the behaviour of the cell formed to receive claims from victims' families. The cell, headed by an assistant commissioner from Gadani, has not even opened for a day, a local journalist said.

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has also expressed its doubts about the Balochistan government's claimed toll for the incident. Senior NCHR member Fazila Aliyani said her commission is conducting an investigation to ascertain the facts about the human losses in the Gadani fire.

CPEC LIKELY TO CUT NUMBER OF JOBLESS IN LABOUR FORCE BY 2.32 M

Abdul Rasheed Azad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is expecting a cut in unemployment by 2.32 million with the activation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) within the next two years.

Dr Nadeem Javed, Chief Economist Pakistan while taking part in a panel discussion of the 32nd Annual General Meeting of Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) titled 'Socio-Economic Impact of CPEC' said according to projections, the CPEC would reduce the number of unemployed labour force by 2.32 million in 2017-18.

He said that CPEC is primarily an energy-driven connectivity project with an aim to reduce energy constraints and improve fuel mix. Post-July 2017, the gap between demand and supply of energy will end and by July 2018 the generation of power is expected to be in surplus due to CPEC.

Expressing views on the topic, Prof Tariq Amin Khan, Ryerson University, Canada, said that problems in existing social relations require alteration in the structure of the rural society. If the goal is to create less-oppressive social relations then the government needs to intervene in this regard. He said, "It took many decades for the situation to change in Central Punjab, but we cannot wait for long to bring a social change in Southern Punjab."

The situation demands land distribution, learning lessons from the history, imposition of agriculture tax and to utilise the revenues for the rural development, he added.

Executive Director Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Qazi Issa said that to uplift the neglected community, there is a need to create dedicated community connectivity fund. "For human development, we should build social capital and empower the communities," he remarked.

Dr Safdar A Sohail, Executive Director CPEC Center of Excellence, PIDE-Planning Commission, said that the socioeconomic impact of CPEC is wide-ranging and a widely discussed issue in the recent times at all platforms. According to him, the CPEC in its current manifestation would go up till 2030, but it would continue after that as a part of the long-term plan.

Nasir Afghan, Director MBA Programme Institute of Business Administration (IBA) said that spatial framework of China involves national to city and district level planning. He said that existing industrial parks in Pakistan are not performing well. All national sector plans are needed to be aligned with the CPEC, he added.

The session titled 'Challenges in the Agriculture Sector and Role of CPEC' was chaired by Muhammad Abid Javed, Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Commenting on the theme, Shujat Ali, Additional Secretary Finance said that interest in agriculture policy and research has declined rapidly over the years.

Prof Steve Davies of IFPRI said that fertilizers yield has gotten worse for cotton and wheat since 1980s and the fertilizer industry is highly subsidized, adding the best agriculture policy would be to remove subsidies and increase R&D expenditures.

He said it will increase the government revenues as well as increase production. He further said that Diamer-Bhasha Dam initiative is a positive step and the combination of Bhasha Dam and water course line will positively affect water supply in future.

Expressing his views on the topic, Dr Paul Dorosh said that only big farmers, who sell wheat to the government, benefit from the current wheat policy. He said Pakistan faces financial loss of Rs4.5 billion every year due to subsidy and wheat procurement. Dorosh said that per unit subsidy could be reduced by raising the release price and reducing subsidy to flour mills. The amount saved could be used for irrigation and other purposes.

On the occasion, a book titled “Agriculture and Rural Economy in Pakistan: Issues, Outlooks, and Policy Priorities,” edited by David J Spielman, Sohail J Malik, Paul Dorosh, and Nuzhat Ahmad, was launched. The book is published for IFPRI, Washington, DC, USA.

Earlier, some interesting papers were presented in technical sessions. In a paper on the CPEC and Regional Integration, the author said that the analysis of Trans-Asian Pipeline Network shows the importance of CPEC. Afghanistan can be an effective connecting point but it does not have infrastructure and there is also a problem of security.

Analysing the use of renewable energy in China and its possible spillover effects for Pakistan, another paper revealed that in China there has been a shift from hydro energy to wind and solar energy. Since FDI has spillover effects, investment in CPEC-related projects in Pakistan will help it adopt renewable energy. Therefore, policies should facilitate the transfer of tacit know-how of renewable energy generation.

Using transitional analysis, a paper showed that regional integration will increase by 13 per cent per year due to CPEC and related projects. As per statistics given in another paper on infrastructure development and regional integration, nearly 20 per cent of GDP will be invested through FDI by China.

The CPEC will also improve the integral physical infrastructure for the development of the whole region, the paper argued.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/12/16/23-page/828282-news.html>

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