

January 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017

SINDH ASSEMBLY BANS EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 14

Dawn, January 26th, 2017

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Wednesday unanimously passed a bill against employment of children below the age of 14, making child labour an offence punishable with prison term and fine.

The Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Bill, 2017 carries up to six-months' imprisonment and a fine up to Rs50,000 for the offenders. And if a child is employed for a hazardous job, the prison term may be extended up to three years with Rs100,000 fine.

According to the bill, no establishment or factory could employ a child less than 14. They had to meet strict conditions before employing a child between 14 and 18.

Rounding up the discussion on the general principles of the bill, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah informed the house that a law — The Employment of Children Act 1991 — existed at the federal level but it was being repealed in view of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution as the subject “Labour” had been devolved to the provinces.

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“Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces have already replaced the act accordingly and the Sindh government have also devolved many laws, but this legislation is now taken up as we have made a policy of considering the bill in the cabinet before tabling it in the assembly,” he said.

During the discussion, the house adopted two minor amendments suggested by lawmakers Amir Moin Pirzada and Sumeta Afzal of the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement about deleting a clause pertaining to allowing a child not below the age of 14 to engage in light work for maximum two hours for acquiring skills. The other amendment was about increasing the members of the Sindh Coordination Committee on Child Labour from seven to nine.

Earlier, Senior Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Nisar Khuhro, who introduced the bill, highlighted its general principles and said that child labour on petty wages was an old issue. Before 18th Amendment the federal government used to tackle the issue but after devolvement of the labour department it was now the constitutional responsibility of the provinces to deal with this issue.

He said that it was the Sindh government which made such a law so that no one could take advantage of the poverty of innocent children.

Recalling a recent incident in which a child, Tayyaba, who worked in the house of a judicial officer, was tortured, the minister said that the incident took place in Islamabad and the person involved was

not an illiterate person. “Greedy people [take] advantage of children and their families’ economic compulsions, but now we are making efforts so that no one could exploit them.”

The parliamentary party leader of the MQM, Syed Sardar Ahmad, termed the bill very positive and timely.

Nusrat Saher Abbasi of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Functional also supported the bill but said that lawmakers should be given some time to study it before consideration of the bill.

Pakistan Peoples Party’s Ghazala Sial, MQM’s Heer Soho, Dr Seema Zia of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, provincial minister Shamim Mumtaz and others also supported the bill before it was unanimously passed into law.

Speaking on a point of order, PML-N’s Sorath Thebo drew the attention of the house towards death threats to artist Sheema Kirmani by unknown persons.

CM Shah assured the house that the Sindh government had taken certain measures to provide protection to the artist. Besides, he said, he had written to the interior ministry to take action against those institutions which had turned into ‘nurseries’ for training extremists.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310739/sindh-assembly-bans-employment-of-children-under-14>

CHILD LABOUR

Dawn, January 27th, 2017

AT a time when the Supreme Court is hearing the case concerning the torture of a child maid at the hands of her educated employers in Islamabad, another tragic tale of abuse has emerged from Gujranwala. Getting angry over his 12-year-old maid not being prompt enough in fetching his tea, a man threw the hot drink in her face. The child sustained severe burn injuries and had to be admitted to hospital where her parents demanded a full medical examination. As a result, it emerged that the minor had been raped, too.

The police have now registered a case against her employer and his brother, and two suspects have been arrested. But while the case winds its interminable way through the country’s notoriously slow judicial system, one thing is certain: this child has been scarred for reasons that cannot even be comprehended by such a young mind, and her life has been irretrievably damaged. Given this context, the unanimous move by the Sindh Assembly to pass a bill against the employment of children below the age of 14, punishable by a prison term and fine (extended and increased in case the work involved is hazardous), gains greater significance.

Child labour is an issue that is as old as it is endemic, and while there are laws banning the practice, they have proved difficult to fully enforce. The reason for this is simple: it is extreme poverty that leads the guardian of young children to put them to work for whatever pittance they are granted by their employers. And this is the reason the practice is so hard to stamp out. Perhaps a more pragmatic first step towards eradicating child labour would be the establishment of registries under welfare bodies where the names of children employed in households are entered so that their welfare can be monitored on a frequent basis. In the long term, of course, the only thing that can end such exploitation of children is poverty alleviation and family planning.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310956/child-labour>

GOVT DISENGAGED 88,000 CHILDREN FROM LABOUR SINCE 2014

Dawn January 28th, 2017

Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: The Punjab government has disengaged some 88,000 children from brick kilns and rescued 41,000 from the worst form of child labour in other sectors in its endeavour to eliminate all forms of exploitative employments and to ensure a child labour-free economy by the end of 2016.

The Punjab government had launched “Elimination of Child and Bonded Labour project (An integrated project for promotion of decent work)” in 2014 to disengage children from brick-kiln sector and give primary level education and skill training to them. The project, being implemented across the province in three phases till 2021, has a total financial outlay of Rs5.16bn.

The labour department combed the auto-workshops, petrol pumps and hotels/restaurants besides brick kilns to disengage children from labour. It is enrolling these children in schools and offering them stipend as well as financial assistance to their families.

In order to give legal backing to the drive, the government has already enforced the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act 2016 and Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act 2016.

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The Punjab government also rolled out Punjab Labour Policy 2015 and Domestic Workers Policy 2015, approved the Home-Based Workers Policy 2016 and amended the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992.

The department conducted 9,047 inspections at brick kilns and found 790 child labour violations. It sealed 223 brick kilns, lodged 758 FIRs and arrested 791 persons.

Besides the mega project, the government is running two other projects “Combating Worst Form of Child Labour” and “Elimination of Child Labour (Bonded Labour) at Brick Kilns” Rs159m and Rs196m, respectively, in four districts.

Under Annual Development Programme (ADP) scheme for eliminating child labour at brick kilns in Faisalabad, Gujrat, Bahawalpur and Sargodha districts, 200 Non-Formal Education Centres (NFECs) had been established where about 5,821 learners are presently studying. About 527 children have been mainstreamed into formal schools located nearby their residences while 744 adult learners have completed their literacy course.

The government distributed 7,000 health and hygiene kits among the enrolled children and adult learners at brick kilns and provided medical treatment to some 956 brick kiln workers. The government has also processed some 9,046 CNICs in the four target districts.

Under the “Combating Worst Forms of Child Labour”, project in Chakwal, Jehlum, Jhang and Layyah, some 4,200 children (5-14 years), disengaged from the workforce, had been enrolled in 120 NFECs. As many as 120 Literacy-cum-Skills Training Centres (LSTCs) for the imparting of skill development training had been set up for adolescents (14-18 years age).

Under the chief minister’s initiative for “Elimination of Child Labour at Brick Kilns,” some 87,013 children have been enrolled in schools and financial assistance worth Rs221m has been provided to their families through Khidmat Cards.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311175/govt-disengaged-88000-children-from-labour-since-2014>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017
COUPLE CLAIMS MAID TORTURE CASE A CONSPIRACY BY NEIGHBOURS
Dawn January 17th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Though police are still investigating the child maid abuse case, initial statements of the judge and his wife recorded after the compromise with her parents claimed that they had paid Rs42,000 in advance for keeping her at their home.

Additional district and sessions judge (ADSJ) Raja Khurram Ali Khan and his wife in their statements recorded on January 3, the day when ADSJ Raja Asif Mehmood Khan and another ADSJ Atta Rabbani confirmed her pre-arrest bail and handed over the custody of Tayyaba to her parents, also claimed that they had been the girl’s guardians since she was seven-and-a-half years old.

The judge’s wife in her statement also said the girl was living in the servant quarter of the house.

However, before the Supreme Court, Mohammad Azam, the father of Tayyaba, 10, testified that he had received Rs18,000 from a woman who provided his minor daughter as a maid to the ADSJ on August 14, 2014, against Rs3,000 per month.

Denying all the charges of torture, the judge and his wife in their statements said a few neighbours allegedly hatched a conspiracy against them. The couple said they had kept the girl on a humanitarian basis due to poverty of her parents.

The judge and his spouse were booked after the minor girl accused them of keeping her in a wrongful confinement, burning her hand over a missing broom, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in storeroom and threatening her of even worse.

ADSJ Khurram said on Dec 27, a day before Tayyaba’s photograph surfaced in the social media, he returned from his village at around 7pm.

His wife informed him that Tayyaba had gone to the house of a neighbour and was refusing to come back.

Subsequently, he stated, her disappearance was reported to the I-9 police.

Early on Dec 29, the judge said, the girl came back to his house and in the evening was handed over to SHO Khalid Awan who took her for a medical examination and then sent her to Darul Aman.

The judge's spouse in her statement said Tayyaba was kept as a babysitter for her son, Raja Mohammad Ali Khan, and the woman who had brought her was given money for helping the girl's parents.

After the compromise between the judge and the parents of Tayyaba, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Saqib Nisar took suo motu notice of the alleged torture and the subsequent compromise deed materialised by Raja Zahoor Hassan, a lawyer.

Mr Hassan was the counsel for the child's parents who brought them to Islamabad from Faisalabad to make the compromise deed, putting thumb impressions of the minor's parents on affidavits and allegedly keeping them at an isolated place even after the apex court took notice of the matter.

The apex court on January 5 and 6 ordered the police to produce the minor girl. However, the police could not bring the child as her whereabouts were not known.

When CJP Nisar strictly directed the police to produce the girl, the police arrested a number of people, including Mr Hassan. He was released after the recovery of the girl.

Hearing the suo motu notice, CJP Nisar observed that the role of Mr Hassan was of utmost importance in materialising the deal. The CJP also remarked that ADSJ Atta Rabbani handed over Tayyaba to her parents in haste.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308950>

ANOTHER CHILD MAID CASE SURFACES IN LAHORE

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2017.

Islamabad: Just days after case of a tortured child maid surfaced, another case has been reported in Lahore.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar on Tuesday took notice of nine-year-old maid being allegedly tortured in Lahore.

The statement issued states that the lady employer in Lahore burnt the hands of maid until her flesh peeled off.

As per reports, the local police hushed up the case and pressured the family of the minor to forgive the influential accused lady.

Taking cognisance of the matter, chief justice has directed the Inspector General of Punjab Police to submit a detailed report on the matter within three days.

According to details, A*, a resident of Vehari worked as a maid in a house in Defence Phase V.

She was reportedly tortured by the owner of the house when she mistakenly broke a windowpane.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1298848/another-child-maid-case-surfaces-lahore/>

RS 250 IS ALL YOU NEED TO GET AWAY WITH CHILD LABOUR OFFENCE

The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2017.

Rizwan Shehzad

ISLAMABAD: In Pakistan, the maximum penalty for pledging the labour of a child is only Rs250. This was revealed on Wednesday during a hearing of a child maid torture case being adjudicated by a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar.

Ten-year-old Tayyaba — employed at the residence of Additional District & Sessions Judge Raja Khurram Ali Khan — was allegedly tortured and the judge and his wife, Maheen Zafar, were booked for the offence.

Later, the girl's father 'forgave' the judge and his wife. The SC, however, took suo motu notice in the case and overruled the pardon granted to the suspects by exercising parental jurisdiction.

During Wednesday's hearing, the apex court was informed that the purpose of the penalties suggested in the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933, was to discourage people from committing such offences and the amount was considered stupendous in the British-era.

The counsel for the Human Rights Commission revealed before the bench that as per the law parents or the guardian making an agreement to pledge the labour of a child can be punished with a fine of Rs50 while the employer could be fined Rs200.

"The law is too old. There is a dire need for making amendments and revising the existing penalties," he said, adding that the law now did not protect the child against abuses as the penalties are too meagre and do not serve as a deterrent to prevent child labour.

During the hearing, the CJ remarked that the court would not accept the compromise earlier made between the parties in line with the statement of the minor's father recorded before the bench.

In addition, he said, the court was conscious that the proceedings regarding handing over of the child were conducted in a hasty manner and without verification. "And that, too, to the parents who sold her for money in the first place," the HRC counsel added.

The CJ inquired how the judge's wife obtained bail in the case, asking if it was granted on the basis of the compromise. "What kind of a law is this where a child is beaten up and the offence is termed bailable? Why shouldn't bail be cancelled after reviewing the case altogether?" he questioned.

The counsel for the accused, Sardar Aslam, said the bail once granted could not be cancelled in a case registered under bailable sections of the law and there were several decisions available on this point.

“Haven’t new sections been added in the FIR?” the CJ replied. The HRC’s counsel also added that a bill in this regard had been presented in the Senate but to no avail.

A member of the bench, Justice Umar Ata Bandial, said the case involved issues of child labour, child abuse and involvement of parents, adding that the middleman had also played a role in it. He sought assistance of the attorney general of Pakistan to address the issue, which, he said, was a social issue.

AGP Ashtar Ausaf Ali assured the bench of assistance. He said Pakistan is a signatory to the international agreements on children’s rights and will abide by them. “The prime minister wishes to eradicate this menace,” he added.

Meanwhile, the police informed the court that a DNA report as well as an MLR report was awaited and the police needed time to investigate the case. The court once again granted a 10-day deadline to complete the investigation.

The CJ, however, remarked that the second interim investigation report submitted before the bench shows the suspects and others have not properly been investigated. He said it seemed that the suspects and others have not been asked questions and cross-examined during the investigation.

Refraining to comment further until the final report was submitted, the CJ directed the AGP, advocate general Islamabad, the HRC’s counsel and others to assist the court as to where should the trial be conducted and how such events can be prevented in future.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1300028/rs250-need-get-away-child-labour-offence/>

FAMILY OF BURNT MAID ‘WITHDRAWS’ CASE

The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2017

Rana Tanveer

LAHORE: The father of a nine-year-old domestic worker, whose hands were allegedly burnt by her employer, has reportedly compromised with the accused and withdrawn his case, The Express Tribune has learnt.

The uncle of the girl had filed an application against the employer, but failed to get the case registered. Ultimately, the minor’s parents withdrew the application, thus absolving the accused of all charges.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar on Monday had taken suo motu notice of the incident and ordered the Punjab IGP to file a report within three days. |

Ghalib Hussain, the uncle of nine-year-old Abida, filed an application with Defence-B police station. He said Junaid burnt the hands of his niece for breaking a windowpane.

He sought action against him, but the police, instead of registering an FIR, kept delaying the matter, Ghalib told The Express Tribune. He said on the first day, the police refused to conduct a medico-legal examination and asked them to return on the next day.

He said they went again to the police station on the day 2, but the investigation officer claimed the doctor would not be available at that time. Again, the minor was asked to return on the following day and this time the examination was conducted. The uncle said the tests proved she had suffered burn injuries.

Defence B SHO Muhammad Akram told The Express Tribune that the police, after preliminary investigation, understood that the burns were caused by either cooking oil or something related.

He said the accused was taken to the police station for interrogation, but his relatives got him released with the help of a court bailiff. He pointed out that the girl was also brought to the police station on the same day, but her medical examination could not be conducted due to the doctor being unavailable at 2pm. He said the examination was finally conducted on day 3 and it confirmed burn injuries.

Akram said that on the same day, Khalid Hussain, reached the police station and said Ghalib had filed an application due to a misunderstanding. He added Junaid did not cause burn injuries to his daughter. He quoted Khalid's application as saying that the family did not want to pursue legal action on the earlier application. The policeman added that officials had no other option but to close the case.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1299591/charred-hands-family-burnt-maid-withdraws-case/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 9TH TO JANUARY 15TH 2017

'MODEL' CHILD LABOUR POLICY TO BE INTRODUCED SOON

Dawn, January 9th, 2017

Lahore: the punjab social protection authority (pspa) plans to introduce a model child labour policy to eliminate poverty and enhance literacy.

According to this policy, children aged between 13 and 18 years will be allowed to do "soft jobs" during their formal and technical education in alignment with international labour laws.

The pspa will provide opportunities of free education, skill development training, jobs or business to more than 30,000 children working at workshops, petrol pumps and hotels so they did not have to permanently depend on stipends; this aims at enabling them to earn a living, a press release stated without elaborating what the soft jobs were.

Punjab finance minister dr ayesha ghaus pasha congratulated the pspa on framing the first provincial social protection policy.

The authority's chief executive officer, dr sohail anwer, briefed the minister that the pspa was providing education, professional training and interest-free loans to the vulnerable in collaboration with the special education department, technical education & vocational training authority, punjab small industries corporation and lahore businessmen association for rehabilitation of the disabled.

The authority also managed school admissions for children of 1,288 beneficiaries of the khidmat card programme to special education institutes with a monthly stipend of rs800 to each enrolled student, free books and uniform, the release quoted answer as saying.

The authority is also about to distribute rs1,00 to each of the 450,000 schoolgirls from class vi to x in 16 less-developed districts through the khidmat card programme, subject to their attendance in schools. It is also planning to allocate funds for victims of acid attacks.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1307319/model-child-labour-policy-to-be-introduced-soon>

LAWYERS TOLD TO BOYCOTT COURTS AGAINST ARREST OF COLLEAGUE IN CHILD MAID CASE

Dawn, January 10th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing secretary of the District Bar Association Islamabad on Monday gave a call to boycott courts against the arrest of a lawyer in connection with the child maid torture case.

A notice issued by the association secretary, Zafar Khokhar, whose term is expiring by the weekend, asked the lawyers not to appear before any court on January 10 against the arrest of Raja Zahoor Advocate, the lawyer of Tayyaba's parents.

Mr Zahoor played a key role in making a compromise between the parents of Tayyaba, 10, and the additional district and sessions judge (ADSJ), who is accused of torturing her.

Though Mr Zahoor was the lawyer of Tayyaba's parents, he argued the case to secure the bail of the spouse of the ADSJ. The lawyer submitted the compromise deed signed between the ADSJ, the parents and an aunt of the girl to another ADSJ, Raja Asif Mehmood.

In the affidavits, the parents pardoned the family of the ADSJ unconditionally and said they were not willing to pursue the case.

Later, the lawyer filed a petition with ADSJ Atta Rabbani for the custody of the child from the women crisis centre. Within a few minutes, Judge Rabbani passed an order in favour of the parents and handed the child to them.

After the Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar took a suo motu notice of the torture case, Tayyaba went missing.

CJP Nisar ordered the police to recover the child by January 11. Subsequently, the police raided different places and made a number of arrests, including Mr Zahoor, and recovered the minor girl from the suburb of the federal capital.

The association secretary came to rescue the lawyer at a time when the campaign for the annual elections of the bar was at its peak.

The administration of Islamabad High Court (IHC), on the other hand, referred the matter related to the ADSJ to the administration committee of the court.

In a report submitted to the Supreme Court, the IHC administration said the committee may take disciplinary action against the judge.

Sources said the IHC registrar had also conducted an inquiry into the alleged torture on the maid and exonerated the ADSJ from the charges. The sources said the report pointed out that the spouse of the judge was involved in the child's maltreatment. It said since the ADSJ had employed a minor girl, disciplinary action may be taken against him.

But Raja Rizwan Abbasi, who represented the spouse of the judge in the sessions court, claimed that the child was not a domestic servant but had been adopted by the family a couple of years ago. The couple took care of her like their own child, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307524/lawyers-told-to-boycott-courts-against-arrest-of-colleague-in-child-maid-case>

ANOTHER GADANI FIRE

Dawn January 11th, 2017

IT is rapidly becoming clear why shipbreaking is considered one of the most hazardous occupations in the world. During the last nine weeks, there have been three major accidents at the Gadani shipbreaking yard, claiming around 30 lives and leaving scores injured.

On Nov 1, huge explosions on board the 24,000-tonne MT Aces oil tanker killed at least 26 people and injured around 70. On Dec 22, a fire broke out in a tanker, but fortunately caused no casualties. On Monday however, five workers were burnt to death in yet another fire that erupted inside an LPG tanker.

According to reports, the labourers on board were taking a tea break within the bowels of the massive steel hulk they were dismantling when the cork underlayment insulating the gas tanks caught fire. Most managed to escape, but the bodies of five workers were found later, charred beyond recognition.

The apparent concentration of incidents at Gadani over the last few weeks raises alarm, and justifiably so. However, the fact is that the magnitude of the Nov 1 tragedy has managed to focus attention on what is actually a long-standing issue — the shocking lapses in safety protocols and lack of accountability of those who should enforce them.

Gadani, one of the world's largest shipbreaking yards, is no stranger to all manner of accidents that until now have not made it to the news. These include not only fires but other causes such as snapping steel wire ropes which can result in death or ghastly injuries.

Although safety protocols exist, they are outdated and even enforcing these consumes time, and time means money. The sooner a ship is dismantled, the sooner it turns a profit for the yard owners. Most ship owners also ignore the lack of safety precautions at South Asian yards — including India, Bangladesh and Pakistan — where almost the entire global shipbreaking industry is based.

Moreover, they sell their vessels to these yards via companies specialising in the business of end-of-life tonnage, thereby absolving themselves of the responsibility of their vessels being properly demolished. International maritime law should hold them accountable.

Also the fact that bulk vessels, container ships and tankers top the list of demolition sales means that more workers are engaged in dismantling these giants, which puts more people in harm's way. It must be demanded of the Balochistan Development Authority to immediately enforce all applicable safety standards at Gadani.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1307611/another-gadani-fire>

SEVEN WORKERS HIRED FOR ORANGE LINE TRAIN PROJECT PERISH IN FIRE

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: Seven workers hired by the Habib Construction Company to work on the Orange Line Metro Train Project died and 14 others were injured on Wednesday in a fire that erupted on the third storey of a makeshift residence for workers in the Mehmood Booti area, near the Lahore Ring Road.

The fire sparked when an LPG cylinder on the third floor blew up at around 1:40pm. Rescue 1122 officials, however, said they had received a call about it at 2:03pm.

They took 21 workers to Khwaja Saeed Hospital where doctors pronounced seven of them dead. A medical officer at the hospital said five of those injured had been discharged while nine were taken to Mayo Hospital.

More than 250 workers hired by Habib Construction Company to work on the Metro Train Project lived on the residential site in Mehmood Booti, said Sarfaraz, one of the labourers working on the metro train project.

The workers would designate their spaces to sleep in by hanging clothes around their charpoys. Around 25 labourers who worked in the evening shift were asleep on the third floor when the fire broke out on Wednesday.

Sarfaraz was at a nearby tea stall when he heard a loud bang and saw fire engulf the third floor in no time. "I rushed to the spot and saw two labourers covered in flames jump from the third floor to save their lives." Sarfaraz ran to help them and then called up Rescue 1122. He claimed that the emergency service arrived an hour and a half later, by which time the two workers he had helped had died.

Most of the workers had saved themselves by jumping from the third floor, said Waseem, another labourer. When the Rescue 1122 officials arrived, they recovered the charred bodies of labourers who had perished in the fire and took those injured to the hospital for treatment. Sarfaraz said more than 200 workers were on duty or had left for lunch at that time otherwise the death toll could have been higher.

A Rescue 1122 official said they had seized more than 10 LPG cylinders, which the labourers used for cooking and heating purposes, from the building.

Cantonment Division Operations SP Tahir Rehman told Dawn they would register a case against the owner of the Habib Construction Company for not ensuring safety measures in the residential space for workers.

On May 24, 2016, seven workers hired for the Orange Line Metro Train project had died and four others were injured when the wall of an under-construction warehouse fell on them while they were asleep. In July 2016, four workers were killed and as many others injured when a truck carrying material for the project collided with a rickshaw and two motorcycles on GT Road at Daroghawala Chowk. In another incident, four workers associated with the project died from an electric shock when a crane touched high voltage wires near Thokar Niaz Baig.

Sohail Janjua, a spokesperson for the Lahore Development Authority, also stressed that the responsibility for ensuring safety of the workers lay with the Habib Construction Company.

SP Rehman said they were investigating the incident to fix the responsibility of negligence that had led to the deaths of seven workers.

Condemning the lack of support from the government, Progressive Labour Federation general secretary Niaz Khan said workers rights organisations have been demanding safe working conditions for workers hired for the train project for almost a year. He said the workers, hired through a sub-contractor, were denied safety, medical, social security allowance and insurance. "The government announces different packages after every tragedy but never fulfils its promises".

Khalid Mehmood of the Labour Education Foundation said such incidents took place because the government had failed to design a policy to ensure the protection of workers. He said they were further denied the right to unionise and ensure their rights. "Workers' safety is the least of the government's concerns in completing this project."

Three of the seven deceased are identified as Sajjid, 18, Muhammad Dilawar, 19, Dilawar, 26, while the identities of the rest are yet to be ascertained. The injured include Arif, 20, Naeem, 22, Amjad, 18, Younis, 28, Abid, 22, Ramzan, 20, Naveed, 19, Samiul Rehman, 18 and Abbas.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307879>

LABOUR DEPT TOLD TO MAKE DATA TRANSPARENT

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab Information Commission, under direction of the Supreme Court, has notified transparency standards for the provincial labour and human rights department, asking it to immediately follow them in letter and spirit.

The direction is to make public majority of the information enlisted by the commission on the department's website to allow people easily access it. Another direction is to periodically update the information.

If followed, the standards would end secrecy about the functions and powers of the department.

The list includes description and functions of offices, administrative units, training institutions and other establishments, publications, relevant laws, regulations, notifications and circulars, budget of the department as well as its attached institutions, including supplementary grants or re-appropriations, powers and functions of officers and employees, their ranks remuneration, perks and privileges, norms and criteria for the discharge of their functions.

The list also has a description of decision-making processes and any opportunities for the public to provide input into or be consulted about decisions, facilities available, especially for the designated public information officers for providing access to information to citizens, any survey reports about work places and factories, lists of shops employing people and relevant particulars (district-wise) updated list of registered factories and shops and establishments.

The other things on the list are: procedure of registration of industrial and commercial establishment under the Factory Act of 1934 and the Shop and Establishment Ordinance of 1969, updates about complaints related to wages, child labour, work conditions, and facilities for workers welfare, procedure of imposing and collecting fines, registration of trade unions and the procedure of registration and particulars of relevant authorities.

It also includes names of registered trade unions along with relevant details, district and sector wise information about rallies, sit-ins, agitations, strikes and lock-outs, nature of conflicts and how many resolved, performance of the commissioners under the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 and the Payment of Wages Act 1936.

The department is also to display information about funds collected from factories and other establishments about different kinds of grants, benefits, scholarships and other facilities, which are meant for various categories of workers, about management of existing and new labour colonies.

The commission has asked the department to provide maximum information in easy Urdu to allow a cross section of people take benefit from it, avoiding legal or technical terminology or explaining them.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307918/labour-dept-told-to-make-data-transparent>

SC FINDS ANOMALIES IN LOWER COURT'S HANDLING OF TAYYABA CASE

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday found anomalies in the way the sessions courts handled the case of the 10-year-old maid tortured by the family of a serving additional district and sessions judge (ADSJ).

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar ordered the deputy inspector general (DIG) of Islamabad police to investigate all aspects of the case without restrictions of jurisdiction or legal immunity and to submit a detailed report in 10 days.

The child, Tayyaba, was allegedly tortured by the family of ADSJ Raja Khurram Ali Khan on Dec 28 and an FIR was registered against him and his wife on Dec 29.

By Jan 2, the ADSJ had signed a compromise deed with Tayyaba's parents through their lawyer, Raja Zahoor Hassan and obtained pre-arrest bail for his wife from fellow ADSJ Raja Asif Mehmood.

On Jan 3, another colleague of ADSJ Khan, ADSJ Atta Rabbani handed custody of the child to her purported parents after a few minutes of proceedings on a habeas corpus application, whereby which a person can report an unlawful detention of imprisonment before a court.

During Wednesday's proceedings, Advocate General Islamabad Mian Abdul Rauf said that "as per the police record, Raja Zahoor Hassan was a relative of ADSJ Raja Khurram Ali Khan".

Raja Zahoor has represented himself as the child's parents' lawyer before ADSJ Mehmood and ADSJ Rabbani.

Testifying before the SC, the child's father, Mohammad Azam said that a Punjab MPA from the PML-N, Rai Usman Khan Kharal, visited his house and transported him, his wife Nusrat and Tayyaba's paternal aunt and uncle to a house in Burma Town, Islamabad, where Raja Zahoor asked him to put his thumb impression on a stamp paper if he wanted his daughter back.

"I put my thumb impression on the papers but I don't know what they were for as I am illiterate," he said.

Mr Azam said the family went to the sessions court where they were handed Tayyaba and Raja Zahoor then took them back to Burma Town, where they stayed for a few days.

He told the court that an employment agent for children, Nadra, took Tayyaba on Aug 14, 2014 and offered the family Rs18,000 in advance and Rs3,000 per month for her services. He said he had only spoken to Tayyaba once or twice since then and had only seen her after Raja Zahoor brought her to them after the incident.

Raja Zahoor remained in police custody till Tayyaba's recovery.

CJP Nisar directed DIG Operations Kashif Aslam to interrogate Raja Zahoor as he had played "an important role" in the "episode".

The Industrial Area station house officer (SHO) told the court how he received information about the alleged torture of the minor and how she was recovered and taken to the women's crisis centre.

He said ADSJ Mehmood summoned him on Jan 3 along with the case record and when he appeared in court, he was told the judge had already granted interim bail to Maheen Zafar, ADSJ Khan's wife.

The CJP was surprised to learn that ADSJ Rabbani handed over custody of the child to her alleged parents the same day, “in haste” and directed the DIG operations to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

The CJP handed custody of Tayyaba to Pakistan Sweet Homes, saying she needs a congenial atmosphere to stay in before recording a formal statement.

During the proceedings, a lawyer approached the rostrum and said those claiming to be Tayyaba’s parents should be dealt with strictly as they wanted her custody for monetary benefit. When the women who were claiming to be the child’s mothers were summoned, they withdrew their claim.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307927>

LABOUR UNIONS SEEK HEALTH, SAFETY FACILITIES AT GADANI

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Labour unions on Wednesday demanded that the authorities provide facilities for the health and safety of labourers at the Gadani ship-breaking yard but disagreed on its closure, with one union insisting that the closure would worsen the living conditions of daily-wage earners.

Activities at the ship-breaking yard were suspended by Lasbela deputy commissioner under Section 144 of the criminal procedure code after five workers were burnt to death in a fire that erupted in an LPG container, Chaumadra, on Jan 9.

Addressing separate press conferences on Wednesday, representatives of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) as well as the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) said the authorities must ensure provision of facilities for the health and safety of labourers at the ship-breaking yard.

However, they disagreed on one point. Piler demanded that the government keep the ship-breaking yard shut until the facilities are provided, whereas NTUF said shutting it down would worsen the living conditions of daily-wage earners associated with the ship-breaking yard.

Executive director of Piler Karamat Ali demanded that the ship-breaking yard should be closed till the facilities, including ambulance service, a fire brigade and a dispensary, for the workers were provided.

Similar demand for the facilities had been earlier made by NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor, but he said the closure of the Gadani ship-breaking yard would not benefit the daily-wage earners.

At the Karachi Press Club, Mr Mansoor was accompanied by the families of the victims as well as union workers at the ship-breaking yard.

Speaking an hour before the press conference by the Piler executive director about the recent spate of accidents at the yard, the NTUF deputy general secretary said the owners of the ship-breaking yard must be punished for their negligence. He added that letting the owners go free after repeated accidents at the ship-breaking yard would “give them a licence to kill”.

“More than 70 per cent of the workers at the ship-breaking yard hail from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They rely on the daily wages they earn at the yard. Closing it down is the easiest way to absolve owners of all responsibility,” he said.

He said that the businessmen and ship-breaking yard owners have made it a habit to shirk their responsibility by paying off the families of the victims. In this context, the government and the institutions responsible to implement laws had failed miserably, he added.

Mr Mansoor said that 32 labourers lost their lives at the ship-breaking yard in the past three months only.

Investigations into the cases of the previous fires did not bring out any substantial proof and fix responsibility for the repeated incidents, he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Ali told the media that 12,000 labourers currently worked at the ship-breaking yard. “This sector does not come under any ministry or labour department. Balochistan Development Authority is responsible for it and it is unfortunate that it has not provided any facility at the yard. Ship-breaking needs to be regulated and come under the labour department,” he added.

He demanded that a separate board on the pattern of Karachi Dock Labour Board be formed for the workers.

All the previous meetings with the authorities, specifically the commissioner of Kalat and district commissioner of Hub, seemed a pack of hollow promises, said Mr Mansoor. “It was decided that a ship-breaking code would be formed. At the same time, the ship-breaking yard will be registered with the labourers getting special permit cards,” he added.

Twenty-six workers were killed on Nov 1 when a decommissioned oil tanker, Aces, docked at yard number 54, exploded during gas welding. Four persons are still considered ‘missing’ since the incident in which many onboard the fateful ship were injured.

On Jan 8, 24-year-old Dilshaad fell from the emergency lifeboat of the ship named Snowdon, at yard number 69. According to eyewitnesses, the emergency lock on the boat broke. Just a day later on Jan 9, five workers were burnt to death by a fire that erupted at an LPG container on a ship named Chaumadra, at yard number 60. A similar incident had been reported from the same yard on Dec 22 though workers had managed to quickly disembark the ship at that time.

Trade unions reiterated their demand that all the owners be arrested and punished for their negligence.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307804>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017
SIX WORKERS INJURED IN FACTORY ROOF COLLAPSE
Dawn January 3rd, 2017

LAHORE: Six labourers were injured when the roof of a factory collapsed in Shadbagh on Monday.

Rescue officials said they received a call at around 8:50am that the roof of Nimko Food Factory located near China Scheme Road, Bhagatpura, had collapsed due to an “explosion”.

The caller said it was feared that workers were also trapped under debris.

Rescue 1122 dispatched five vehicles to the spot.

Rescue workers searched the site and shifted two victims to the Mayo Hospital and four others were administered first aid.

The building was cleared after a search operation. The two taken to hospital, identified as Aqeel and Shafique, were said to be stable.

Police and rescue officials said the building was in a dilapidated condition.

Initial investigations suggested the accident occurred due to a cylinder blast. However, further investigation will help ascertain facts.

Rasheed, a witness, said he was going to his shop when he heard an explosion followed by screams. He said all of a sudden the roof of the factory caved in, adding that people nearby rushed to the spot and started a rescue operation after alerting Rescue 1122.

Police said they were investigating the incident and were yet to ascertain the cause of explosion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306071/six-workers-injured-in-factory-roof-collapse>

PRE-ARREST BAIL SOUGHT FOR JUDGE, WIFE IN MAID CASE
Dawn January 3rd, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The wife of Additional District and Sessions Judge (ADSJ) Raja Khurram Ali Khan on Monday moved an application with a local court, seeking pre-arrest bail in the case of the abused child maid, whose father seems reluctant in pursuing the case.

After an application was filed by ADSJ Khan’s wife Maheen, ADSJ Raja Mehmood issued a notice to the Industrial Area police to submit reply by Jan 3.

Raja Khurram Ali Khan and his wife are facing charges of keeping a juvenile housemaid in the wrongful confinement, burning her hand for a missing broom, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in a storeroom and threatening her.

A physician at the Women Crisis Centre where the child is being kept has found other scars on her body as well and recommended a detailed checkup. However, since the additional deputy commissioner general was on leave on Monday, the checkup was put off to Tuesday, sources in the National Child Protection Centre said.

According to sources in the district courts, Mohammad Azam, the father of the child maid, has already informed the court via a written statement that he was not interested in pursuing the case.

The sources said Mr Azam's reluctance was due to financial constraints. The victim's father lives in a remote village in Tehsil Jaranwala in Faisalabad and says he does not have money to hire a lawyer for fighting a case in Islamabad.

The Child Protection and Welfare Bureau of Punjab has offered Mr Azam legal aid. When Dawn contacted him and reminded him that he could avail free legal assistance, he said he was not ready to contest the case at the moment.

The police have registered a case against ADSJ Khan and his wife under various sections of the Pakistan Penal Code including section 337 for injuring, 342 for illegal confinement and 506 for intimidation. All of these offences are bailable and compoundable. According to section 345 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), the "persons to whom offence is caused" may pardon the accused for the above mentioned offences without the permission of the court. In case of housemaid, who is not 10 yet, her father may forgive the accused persons, according to a senior judicial officer in the district courts.

The case of the alleged torture of the child maid by the ADSJ's family was reported on the social media on Dec 28 and it took 24 hours to register a case at the Industrial Area police station with the FIR registered in the evening of Dec 29.

Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Mohammad Anwar Khan Kasi ordered an inquiry into the matter and the IHC registrar submitted a report to the CJ after conducting a probe.

ADSJ Khan was also suspended in 2013 over the misuse of authority and faced an inquiry but resumed office after eight months. The accused and his elder brother, civil judge Raja Farrukh Ali Khan, have been working in the sessions' court east for the last few years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306103>

CALL FOR ENDING 'CHILD SLAVERY'

Dawn, January 7th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Civil society and labour representatives held a joint press conference on the issue of child labour in Pakistan at the Karachi Press Club on Friday.

Speaking about the unfortunate case of a child maid, who was reportedly beaten, burned and locked up in a store in the home of a sessions judge in Islamabad, secretary of the National Labour Council Karamat Ali said that it concerned them that no one seemed to know the girl's whereabouts, and that now her father had also disappeared.

About the sessions judge's wife, who had allegedly beaten the girl, he said that it was surprising that she got out on bail.

“When a country makes a law, it should also make sure that it is followed by the protectors of the law,” he said.

He said it was sad that poor parents made their children work to supplement their income when, according to Article 25-A of the Constitution, all children 16 and under should be in school.

He also quoted from the Employment of Children Act 1991 that it was against the law to make children aged 14 and under do manual labour.

“There is also the National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour, which is not being followed. The government had come up with a policy to combat child labour when child labour in Pakistan became an international issue. Big orders from abroad to any manufacturer here used to get cancelled if it was discovered that they hired children,” said Karamat Ali, adding that the policy also included plans to bring out-of-school children back to school, support poor families so that they don’t force their children to work, and also create a social security system.

Other things that were part of the plan were apprenticeship programmes and vocational training. “And all these things were time-bound,” said Karamat Ali. “The targets were to be met by 2005, but today in 2017 we have 25 million children who are out of school. The figure is four times what it was in 2000,” he said.

“We seem to have this national hobby to plan and come up with such programmes, which are not implemented,” he said. “We have nine million children [involved] in child labour. The National Plan of Action for Elimination of Child Labour is still valid today,” he said.

“We urge Justice Mian Saqib Nisar and Justice Maqbool Baqar to not just take the girl servant’s case as an isolated incident because this is happening everywhere. Children are being treated as slaves. Please end this slavery. Please punish the guilty,” he said.

Convener of the Sindh Labour Solidarity Committee Habibullah Junaidi said that the girl’s case was not the first of its kind. “And, sadly, it won’t be the last either,” he said. “Child labour is related to poverty. Therefore, we need to work to eradicate poverty,” he added.

Mir Zulfiqar Ali of the Workers Education and Research Organisation questioned why all the laws were just for the poor and not for the affluent.

Shafiq Ghori and Farhat Parveen also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306848>

MISTREATMENT OF CHILD MAID

Dawn, January 6th, 2017

LITTLE Tayyaba’s story illustrates some of the worst aspects of Pakistani society. In fact, the grim tale ticks all the boxes: the grinding poverty among swathes of the population, the smug sense of entitlement among the elite, and a system that perpetuates the status quo through incompetence or complicity. The 10-year-old had been working as a domestic for a serving additional judge and his

wife in Islamabad when she was recovered by police 24 hours after a neighbour complained that Tayyaba was being severely mistreated by the couple.

Pictures that emerged of her in the media showed a battered, bruised and bloodied little girl, pathetic in her helplessness. Although Tayyaba told the assistant commissioner she had been tortured by her employers, the law, instead of protecting the minor, has so far worked to the advantage of the alleged perpetrators. Pre-arrest bail was granted to the judge's wife on charges filed by the police; Tayyaba's parents came forward to claim that their daughter's allegations were "baseless" and they were "forgiving [the couple] unconditionally" — a curious contradiction — after reaching a "settlement" with them.

Society fails Tayyaba, and millions like her, on multiple fronts every single day. Firstly, there is the casual acceptance of child labour, at least in a 'non-hazardous' capacity. There is simply no moral justification for employing minors, not even as a 'favour' to their indigent families. Secondly, while there are a number of laws pertaining to child labour in different sectors, many of them have loopholes that can be exploited. Moreover, there is no law specific to domestic workers in the country.

Third, the child protection laws in their present form also often end up putting abused children once again in harm's way by returning them to their parents. For, difficult as this may be to accept, given it goes against our cultural ethos, parents do not always act in the best interests of their child. Sometimes dire circumstances compel them to put them in harm's way in return for monetary gain. The state must create mechanisms empowered to intervene and rescue children from negligent or abusive legal guardians.

Fortunately, the Supreme Court has taken suo motu notice of the case, given the egregious injustice manifest in it — even more so with the alleged perpetrator being an individual responsible for dispensing justice. A medical board has also been constituted to re-examine the child, who the police have yet to locate after she was handed over to her parents. One hopes that justice will be done, despite the influential status of the suspects and their connections within law enforcement. Otherwise, Tayyaba will be just another little girl who has learnt a valuable life lesson that, not having been born among the privileged classes, her voice will never be heard in a system that serves the powerful and not the weak.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306669>

PUNJAB GOVT MULLING SENDING 100,000 WORKERS TO QATAR
Business Recorder, 6 January 2017

FAZAL SHER

ISLAMABAD: The government of Punjab is planning to export the entire 100,000 additional skilled and unskilled workers to Qatar, completely ignoring other three provinces in a bid to strengthen its vote bank in the next general election.

The Emir of Qatar had announced to recruit 100,000 additional workers from Pakistan during Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Qatar in February last year, and the ruling government is bent upon making it controversial by making the labour export Punjab-specific.

Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), Pir Syed Sadaruddin Shah Rashidi told the National Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistani and Human Resources Development on Thursday that the government of Punjab may export the entire 100,000 additional skilled and unskilled workers to Qatar as Chief Minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif was personally overseeing the entire process.

When MNA Suraiya Jatoi asked the minister if there was no share of other provinces in export of 100,000 labourers to Qatar, he said the government was trying to increase the export of labour to Qatar up to 200,000 to share its benefit with other provinces too.

Joint Secretary Emigration and OP&HRD Manzoor Ahmad Kayani, while briefing the committee about his visit to Qatar along with Director General Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BE&OE), said the delegation visited Qatar on August 31 to September 1, 2016 and took part in the joint committee meeting formed under Article-XVI of agreement concerning the organisation of Pakistani Manpower Employment in Qatar signed on March 28, 1987.

He said that during the visit, both sides convened a joint committee meeting on August 31, 2016 and discussed modalities to implement the announcement of the Emir of Qatar to recruit an additional 100,000 skilled and unskilled Pakistani workers. Kayani further said Pakistani delegation met with Dr Issa Bin Saad Al-Jafali Al Nuaimi, Qatari Minister for Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.

The minister recalled the visit of the Prime Minister to Doha, Qatar, where the Emir of Qatar announced additional 100,000 visas for employment of Pakistani manpower in the state of Qatar. He said that during the meeting Qatari side discussed some fundamental points including: a) studying the mechanism of expediting the recruitment process as well as discussing and resolving the obstacles; b) exchanging the list of the accredited recruitment offices and agencies in the both the countries; c) a briefing by the concerned departments; d) and a brief orientation of the E-link programme to facilitate the employers in the Qatar to check the list of job seekers in Pakistan. The Pakistani side agreed to all points proposed by the Qatari side.

He said E-link was a programme to maintain data of the job seekers. Qatari side requested Pakistan to regulate the database of the Pakistani job seekers and consider implementing E-link at the earliest by providing Pakistani links of the job seekers to Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, Qatar.

The Joint Secretary said Qatari side requested Pakistan to provide a list of 100 short-listed overseas employment promoters (OEPs) to ensure the smooth process of emigration from Pakistan to Qatar. "Pakistani side agreed to provide the requisite list urgently in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders," he added.

He said that upon receipt of the formal minutes of the joint committee meeting from the Ministry of Administrative Development Labour and Social Affairs of Qatar, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development might convene a meeting of all stakeholders including Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association (POEPA), Overseas Employment Cooperation (OEC), National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), provincial TEVTAS, Ministry of Information Technology and

Telecommunication to assign responsibility for preparing an E-link for Pakistani job seekers' database for onward communication to the concerned Qatari ministry.

Kayani said the ministry had prepared the list of 100 overseas employment promoters and submitted it to the Prime Minister Secretariat. Following directives of the Prime Minister, the list of 100 promoters was forwarded to Qatar.

About opportunities for the overseas employment in Turkey, the officials said that as per data of OEC and BE&OE, Turkey was not a labour receiving country. Only 417 persons went to Turkey for employment from 1971 to 2016.

He informed the meeting that Korea imported manpower from 15 countries including Pakistan and fixed quota for each country annually. A total of 6,149 people had gone to Korea for employment since 2008, he said.

The official said that under the Employment Permit System (ESP) of Korea, the workers were first required to pass a Korean language test.

MNA Rana Muhammad Afzal Khan said that according to his information, Afghanistan had exported more labour to Korea as compared to Pakistan.

On this, an official said the main reason of export of larger number of people to Korea from Afghanistan was that they accepted the minimum wage of all kinds which people from Pakistan did not accept.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/06/8-page/836660-news.html>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017

TWO LABOURERS DIE IN BUNER HOUSE COLLAPSE

Dawn, February 20th, 2017

BUNER: Two labourers were killed when the roof of a hujra collapsed after a geyser exploded in Totalai area of Buner district on Friday night.

Locals said that the victims, Aftab of Kass Korona and Gul Said of Totalai, who worked in the marble mines, were sleeping in a room in the hujra of village naib nazim Arshad Khan when the roof collapsed, burying them alive. They said the roof collapsed after a geyser exploded in the hujra.

The locals rushed to the spot soon after the incident and retrieved the two bodies from the debris. They were shifted to the civil hospital, Totalai, for carrying out legal formalities. The bodies were later handed over to the relatives.

The Totalai police said the roof collapsed due to a geyser explosion in the hujra.

Law enforcement agencies and security forces also reached the spot and collected the evidence to determine the nature of the blast.

Meanwhile, the Gagra police recovered body of a young Afghan and his motorcycle during a rescue operation after fire erupted in a tent in the gypsies' temporary settlement in Swari area on Friday night.

According to witnesses, the locals and the police rushed to the tents of gypsies after fire broke out in a tent there. While extinguishing the fire, the police found human body parts in the ashes. On further search, the police recovered a body and a motorcycle from the burnt tent. Later, the body was identified as Ghazi Mohammad, an Afghan cloth dealer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315652>

US LABOUR, HOUSING MARKETS DATA UNDERSCORE ECONOMY'S STAMINA
Business Recorder, Feb 24th, 2017

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits rose slightly last week but the four-week average of such claims, considered a better gauge, fell to a 43-1/2-year low in a sign of a strengthening labour market. Other data on Thursday showed house prices increasing solidly in December amid strong demand for housing even as mortgage rates rose. The reports highlighted strength in the economy that could allow the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates in the near-term.

“All indications are that job creation remains solid, underscoring the resiliency of the nearly eight-year economic recovery,” said Jim Baird, chief investment officer at Plante Moran Financial Advisors in Kalamazoo, Michigan. “A March (rate) hike cannot be ruled out.”

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits increased 6,000 to a seasonally adjusted 244,000 for the week ended Feb. 18, the Labour Department said. It was the 103th straight week that claims remained below 300,000, a threshold associated with a healthy labour market. That is the longest stretch since 1970, when the labour market was much smaller. The labour market is at or close to full employment, with the unemployment rate at 4.8 percent.

Economists had forecast new claims for unemployment benefits rising to 241,000 in the latest week. The four-week moving average of claims, considered a better measure of labour market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, fell 4,000 to 241,000 last week, the lowest reading since July 1973.

Last week's claims report covered the survey period for the Labour Department's nonfarm payrolls data for February. The four-week average of claims fell 6,500 between the January and February payrolls survey weeks. This suggests another month of strong job gains after payrolls increased 227,000 in January. The tightening labour market is helping to underpin demand for housing. In a report on Thursday, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) said its house price index rose a seasonally adjusted 6.2 percent in December from a year ago.

That followed a 6.1 percent gain in November. The FHFA's index is calculated by using purchase prices of houses financed with mortgages sold to or guaranteed by mortgage finance companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The higher home prices largely reflect tight housing inventories against the backdrop of strong demand.

This is despite the 30-year fixed mortgage rate rising more than 50 basis points since November to above 4.0 percent. But with the home price increases outpacing wage growth, economists expect demand for housing to slow this year.

<http://fp.brecorder.com/2017/02/20170224144666/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017
EXPLOSIVE SITUATION: ONE DEAD, A DOZEN CRITICAL AFTER CYLINDER BLAST
The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2017.

LAHORE: At least one person was killed and 20 others suffered burn injuries in a cylinder explosion at a factory on Sheikhpura Road on Wednesday. Of those wounded, at least a dozen lie in critical condition.

The injured were moved to Lahore due to the lack of treatment facilities for patients with burn injuries at public sector hospitals of Sheikhpura district. Talking to The Express Tribune, one of the wounded said workers were busy at the main plant of the automotive department of the factory when the blast occurred.

“Suddenly my clothes caught fire and I fell unconscious,” said an injured at the Mayo hospital “Later, they shifted me to the intensive care unit.”

“Of the total injured brought to the hospital, 12 are in critical condition and are less likely to survive,” Dr Maroof Venice of Mayo Hospital told The Express Tribune. He added another five patients with less severe injuries were moved to the hospital’s plastic surgery department.

Dr Venice added the burns unit of the Mayo Hospital was functioning at full capacity and doctors were trying their best to save the lives of people.

Sheikhpura DHQ Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Shehnaz Naseem told The Express Tribune said the incident occurred at the Al-Badar factory on Sheikhpura Road.

She stated the blast took place at around 11:30am and all those in serious condition were rushed to the Mayo Hospital by Rescue 1122. Dr Naseem stated that the injured needed specialised healthcare.

According to a senior rescue official, there were many reasons behind this tragedy, including a violation of building by-laws, irresponsible behaviour by locals and the poor capacity of emergency services to tackle fire incidents.

Sources said the factory was a local vendor of a multinational company. They added that the plant had not established medical facilities nor implemented important laborer safety by-laws despite repeated requests. Factory officials were not available for comments even after several attempts to contact them.

A health department spokesman said qualified professors and surgeons in Lahore were treating the patients and trying their level best to save as many as lives as possible.

Trade union activist Adeel Hassan Zaidi said workers have long urged the government to ensure strict compliance with occupational health and safety regulations at factories and other establishments.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1328230/explosive-situation-one-dead-dozen-critical-cylinder-blast/>

WORKING CONDITION: ENSURING GLOBAL STANDARDS TO IMPROVE LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2017.

Imran Rana

Faisalabad: The implementation of social and labour standards could bring economic benefits over the medium term through increased motivation and productivity of workers, emphasised an expert who was working on sustainable development.

Speaking at an informative session at the Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA) office on Wednesday, GIZ technical expert Noor Khan underscored the importance of ratifying and implementing international labour standards for the business community.

GIZ, which works on international cooperation for sustainable development worldwide, is promoting social and labour standards by supporting private and state institutions through its project “Social and labour standards in the textile and garment sector”.

Khan highlighted the interventions made by federal and provincial governments to improve working condition in Pakistan. “Visible progress is being made in complying with social and labour standards, however, the industry still faces some major challenges,” he said.

He cited a number of avenues where Pakistan’s textile manufacturers in collaboration with GIZ could bring improvement in work practices, leading to an increase in exports to Europe.

He asked industrialists to implement the international labour standards in their industrial units to enhance Pakistan’s ranking in Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI).

PTEA Vice Chairman Muhammad Naeem briefly highlighted core functions of the textile exporters’ body and praised GIZ Pakistan for its role in enhancing compliance with global standards.

He said foreign trade had a lot of attached responsibilities as international buyers were increasingly getting sensitive about ethical sourcing and international compliance.

“The textile industry is keen to collaborate with GIZ for improving working conditions and implementing the international labour standards,” he said, adding the move would lead to an increase in Pakistan’s foreign trade volume and upgrade the country’s WGI ranking.

He assured GIZ of full support and cooperation in the application of labour laws and standards in the textile industry.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1328218/working-condition-ensuring-global-standards-improve-labour-productivity/>

FINANCIAL WOES: UNPAID WAGES FORCE WASA WORKER TO COMMIT SUICIDE

The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2017.

Hyderabad: A contractual staff member of the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) took his life on Wednesday after failing to address the financial needs of his family.

The 41-year-old was working for Wasa on daily wages and was recently transferred to a pumping station in Latifabad Unit 10.

Distressed by his worsening financial situation, he reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his residence, according to police officials investigating the case.

The deceased worker is survived by a wife, two sons and a daughter.

The Employees Union of Hyderabad Development Authority, the parent organisation of Wasa, claimed that around 1,300 permanent and 900 contractual workers of Wasa had not been paid for months.

It said that the union officials had also staged protests earlier this month and set up hunger camps in a bid to register their protest for unpaid wages.

The federal government, in the budget 2016-17, had set the minimum wage as Rs14,000 per month. However, not all government departments implemented it at the centre and provincial levels, leaving many poverty-stricken employees to work in long shifts while struggling with financial issues.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1328103/financial-woes-unpaid-wages-force-wasa-worker-commit-suicide/>

TWO LABOURERS DIE IN BUNER HOUSE COLLAPSE

Dawn, February 19th, 2017

BUNER: Two labourers were killed when the roof of a hujra collapsed after a geyser exploded in Totalai area of Buner district on Friday night.

Locals said that the victims, Aftab of Kass Korona and Gul Said of Totalai, who worked in the marble mines, were sleeping in a room in the hujra of village naib nazim Arshad Khan when the roof collapsed, burying them alive. They said the roof collapsed after a geyser exploded in the hujra.

The locals rushed to the spot soon after the incident and retrieved the two bodies from the debris. They were shifted to the civil hospital, Totalai, for carrying out legal formalities. The bodies were later handed over to the relatives.

The Totalai police said the roof collapsed due to a geyser explosion in the hujra.

Law enforcement agencies and security forces also reached the spot and collected the evidence to determine the nature of the blast.

Meanwhile, the Gagra police recovered body of a young Afghan and his motorcycle during a rescue operation after fire erupted in a tent in the gypsies' temporary settlement in Swari area on Friday night.

According to witnesses, the locals and the police rushed to the tents of gypsies after fire broke out in a tent there. While extinguishing the fire, the police found human body parts in the ashes. On further search, the police recovered a body and a motorcycle from the burnt tent. Later, the body was identified as Ghazi Mohammad, an Afghan cloth dealer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315652>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017
HANDICRAFT-MAKERS: MULTAN CHAMBER SEEKS SUPPORT FOR ARTISANS
The Express Tribune, February 7th, 2017.

MULTAN: The government should fulfil its commitment and establish a cottage industry village in Multan to provide jobs for thousands of skilled men and women and to enhance exports, asked Khawaja Jalaluddin Roomi, President of the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

In a statement, Roomi emphasised that the cottage industry would promote the skills and art of local artisans, particularly women, as there was a great demand for locally made handicrafts in the global market.

The artisans produce products like camel skin lamps, camel bone jewellery and decorative pieces, leather Multani Khussa, wood crafts and blue pottery.

Though the Pakistan Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) has established a network of handicraft display and sale shops, which provide a marketing and promotional platform for the artisans and attract local and foreign visitors, they are still required to make inroads into the international market.

Roomi pointed out that handicrafts were once a major source of livelihood for millions of people, but low prices, lack of proper marketing, insignificant number of exhibition centres and rising costs of business were some of the reasons behind the decline.

“The promotion of handicrafts will not only improve the standard of living of millions, but will also lessen the pace of migration from rural areas to cities,” he said.

According to Roomi, the main hub of handicrafts in Pakistan is south Punjab where around 60% of such goods are manufactured. “This sector can get a boost if Chinese are invited to join hands with them as the industry in China is facing a rising cost of doing business.”

He believed that revival of the sector depended on the development of infrastructure, financial support, direct links between buyers and artisans, elimination of middlemen and improved marketing facilities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1318785/handicraft-makers-multan-chamber-seeks-support-artisans/>

CALL FOR AMENDMENTS TO SINDH TENANCY ACT

Dawn, February 11th, 2017

KARACHI: Trade unions, civil society and labour rights activists on Friday urged the provincial legislature to initiate a debate on workers' rights and suggested some amendments to the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950 and other laws to protect the right of social security of all workers.

They expressed these views during a meeting with members of the provincial assembly, organised by Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler).

MPAs Nusrat Saher Abbasi, Naheed Begum, Mahesh Kumar Malani, Naila Munir, Sorath Thebo, Kulsoom Chandio and Sikandar Shoro, belonging to both treasury and opposition benches, were briefed at the meeting about non-implementation of the existing labour laws in Sindh.

They were informed that in 2009, the peasants' rights activists had organised a 'long march' from Hyderabad to Karachi. They presented a draft of amendments to the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950 to Deputy Speaker Shehla Raza at the Sindh Assembly building.

A parliamentary committee, which was later formed, discussed the Sindh Tenancy Act during the last tenure (2008-13) of the government and recommended some amendments, but they were not presented before the house. In March 2013, the Sindh Assembly passed minor amendments to the act that turned out to be counterproductive for workers, the lawmakers were told.

The lawmakers attending the meeting assured the civil society representatives that they would raise the issues of workers in the house. They asked the rights activists to provide specific information to them about lacunae in the existing labour laws.

Karamat Ali, executive director of Piler, said that majority of labourers were deprived of right to association and right to collective bargaining, which had been ensured under the Constitution and ILO conventions.

He asked the lawmakers to make a separate law for the registration of trade unions on the pattern of India Trade Union Act, 1926 for which Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had played a key role in the Indian legislative assembly. The law had been adopted by Pakistan after independence, but military dictator Gen Ayub Khan scrapped it. Since then it has not be restored, according to Piler.

He also mentioned lacunae in the recently passed Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Bill, 2017 in which minimum age for working of a child had been fixed at 14, which, he claimed, contradicted Article 25-A of the Constitution, which ensured the state would provide compulsory education to every child up to age 16. Under the Child Rights Convention (CRC) the age was fixed at 18 years for work, he added.

Habibuddin Junaidi, Sadiqa Salahuddin, Zulfiqar Shah, Raheema Panhwar, Nagma Shaikh, and Zeenia Shaukat from Sindh Human Rights Commission also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1314047>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 30TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH 2017
HUGE BAMBOO STRUCTURE AT MAKLI NECROPOLIS COLLAPSES
Dawn January 30th, 2017

THATTA: Four labourers were injured when a huge bamboo structure being erected close to the mausoleum of Abdullah Shah Ashabi within the boundaries of the world heritage site of Makli necropolis collapsed on Sunday.

The injured labourers were rushed to the Makli Civil Hospital for treatment.

The 40 to 50-foot-high structure was being erected to facilitate imparting of technical know-how to artisans and apprise them of the merits of Kashi art on glazed tiles.

The venue is intended to be used as a centre for studies, including surveys and interviews with selected artisan communities, on heritage sites in Makli, Hala, Nasarpur — mentioned in history as great centres of glazed ceramic tiles studies and production — as well as a display centre for the art.

Commenting on the mishap, former archaeology director general Qasim Ali Qasim said while he was in office, he had advised the federal government not to erect such [bamboo] structures anywhere at the Makli necropolis. He recalled that he being the archaeology DG had even dismantled such a structure from near the Sultan Ibrahim mausoleum.

Historian Dr Mohammed Ali Manjhi, Sindh Culture Forum chairman Sadiq Faqir Lakho, Doolha Dariya Khan Adabi Forum leader Allah Juriyo Burfat, Rasheed Jakhro and others have also expressed their concern over certain activists which were causing defacing of the world heritage site.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311561/huge-bamboo-structure-at-makli-necropolis-collapses>

PROJECTS TO FIGHT CHILD LABOUR FOUND WANTING

The Express Tribune, January 30th, 2017.

Qadeer Tanoli

Islamabad: A total of seven projects in the public sector have been functioning in the four provinces to fight against child labour, four of which are in Punjab alone for which over Rs911 million have already been released, but the designed outcome of these projects is yet to see the light of day.

Some projects for the protection of child rights in Punjab are doing a bit good job, but countless children are still out of the radar of the provincial government. Cases like that of Tayyaba and a lot more continue to surface on the media to get the attention of the authorities concerned to eliminate child labour from the country.

In response to oral question of a member of the National Assembly, the minister of overseas Pakistanis and human resource development stated that: “Four public sector projects against child labour are underway in Punjab alone for which over Rs870 million have already been released against the approved cost of Rs5,675 million for these projects.”

The elimination of child and bonded labour project, integrated project for the promotion of decent work for vulnerable works in Punjab has been allocated Rs5,159 million against which Rs530 million have been released by the provincial authorities.

Under this project the Punjab government had disengaged some 88,000 children from brick kilns, and has claimed and rescued around 41,000 from the worst form of child labour in other sectors.

The Punjab government had launched the project in 2014 to disengage children from the brick kiln sector and give primary level education and skills training to them.

Another such project is 'combating worst forms of child labour in four districts of Punjab'. The government has released Rs139 million against the approved allocation of Rs180 million for the project while for the 'elimination of bonded labour in four districts of Punjab' it has released Rs111 million against the approved cost of Rs196 million.

"The provincial child labour survey in Punjab has been released Rs90 million against the allocation of Rs140 million."

As per the response, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government has released Rs7.048 million for establishing a child and bonded labour unit in the labour department. A total of Rs16.099 million is the approved allocation for this project.

For the 'child labour survey in Sindh', a total of Rs54 million has been approved as the cost of the project, but funds in this regard have yet to be released. Ironically and sadly, there is no mention of any such projects on behalf of the government of Balochistan.

Initiative Human Development Foundation president Rana Asif Habib told The Express Tribune that: "Most of the times funds released for the protection of children's rights are wasted on organising seminars while concrete measures are not taken to eliminate the factor of child labour."

He said no data was available on how many children were involved in child labour.

"Three million to 3.5 million children are doing child labour in Karachi alone in the informal sector and the Sindh government can do nothing to abolish this practice."

He said some six years ago when Qaim Ali Shah was the chief minister an effort was made to make Sukkur child labour free, but this effort badly failed.

According to Habib, legislation on the Employment of Children Act-2017 by the Sindh Assembly is a good measure under which Rs50,000 fine would be imposed on the employer who hires children below the age of 14 years.

"Things are slightly better in Punjab regarding child labour as the Child Protection Bureaus are effectively working in 15 districts of the province. However, the situation in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan is the worst and no data of any sort is available in this connection."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1311017/blot-society-projects-fight-child-labour-found-wanting/>

LABOUR BODIES DEMAND UNION RIGHTS FOR WORKERS

Dawn February 2nd, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: “Currently only one to three per cent of the 60 million workers in Pakistan are organised under trade unions. There aren’t any proper unions in banks, colleges and universities. Leave alone the workers, they don’t even have student unions in educational institutions anymore,” said Karamat Ali, secretary of the National Labour Council (NLC).

He was addressing a press conference on Wednesday called by NLC at the press club to demand union and collective bargaining rights for all workers one day ahead of the national-level referendum in Wapda.

“The Trade Unions Act of 1926 even allowed the people not in uniform within the armed forces to form unions. The state is to give people their rights, which both the public and private sectors should follow,” he said.

“Since the All Pakistan Wapda Hydroelectric Workers Union under the collective bargaining agreement [CBA] is the biggest union around today, we appeal that all workers of Wapda vote for CBA on Thursday,” he urged.

“CBA’s success will be against privatisation. National companies should not be privatised,” he pointed out, adding that at least there was a referendum in Wapda while referendums were still pending at organisations such as the Karachi Port Trust, Port Qasim Authority, Sui Southern Gas Company, Pakistan Railways, etc.

The convener of Sindh Labour Solidarity Committee, Habibuddin Junaidi, also said that there are a lot of hindrances preventing labour from joining trade unions. While announcing his support to the All Pakistan Wapda Hydroelectric Workers Union, led by Khursheed Ahmed and Abdul Latif Nizamani, he said Pakistan is obliged to take measures to remove all hindrances in provision of the right to join trade unions and collective bargaining under eight core labour conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

“Pakistan is obliged to implement 27 international conventions including the key eight core labour conventions under Generalised System of Preferences [GSP],” he said.

Mahboobur Rahman of All Pakistan Wapda Hydroelectric Workers Union said that there were certain elements which do not want the workers to unite. “And still we have won the referendum five times already. We are also confident of victory for a sixth time tomorrow,” he said.

Liaquat Sahi, secretary general of the Democratic Worker Federation of the State Bank of Pakistan, meanwhile, said that trade unions needed to be national-level unions instead of provincial or local-level unions. He demanded the abolishment of third-party contract system, which, he said, was also against the Constitution.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312110/labour-bodies-demand-union-rights-for-workers>

\$5.15M TO BE DISBURSED TO BALDIA FACTORY FIRE VICTIMS' FAMILIES

Dawn, February 3rd, 2017

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: German company KiK Textilien has signed an agreement with the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) to disburse \$5.15 million to the families of victims of the Baldia Town factory fire.

Under the agreement, a specific compensation amount will be given to the families of the victims every month.

It is described as a lifelong compensation “which will look after the financial needs of the families”.

The agreement was signed during a ceremony on Thursday which was attended by the German consul general, the country director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and members of the business community.

Country director of ILO Ingrid Christensen confirmed that her organisation had received the amount of \$5.15m in December 2016 and a mechanism to disburse the amount was being designed.

She said that the ILO was working on implementation modality, oversight mechanism and establishment of a trust fund.

She added that the ILO “would be able to disburse the funds within three months”.

The agreement brings to an end a two-year-old feud between the German textile company and Piler.

Soon after the fire at the garment manufacturing company (Ali Enterprises) in which 259 workers were killed in Sept 2012, Piler and German textile company KiK — that bought garments from Ali Enterprises — deliberated on a compensation process for the families of victims.

In a memorandum of understanding signed between the two parties in Dec 2012 three points were decided: payment of one million dollars as an immediate relief would be given, which was later distributed through the judicial commission set up by the Sindh High Court.

Retired Justice Rahmat Hussain Jafery was the head of the commission ensuring that the disbursement reached the rightful heirs of the victims.

Second point was that lifelong compensation would be given to the families as pension for the rest of their lives.

And third point was that an assistance of \$250,000 would be given to Piler to enforce and inspect labour laws in Pakistan.

The German company backed off from the second point of the agreement, counsel for the Baldia factory fire victims advocate Faisal Siddiqi had announced at a press conference.

Through the subsequent cases filed in Dortmund, Germany, by the heirs of the victims and the counsel himself, the textile company was once again brought to discuss the compensation.

Also, timely intervention by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development led to the decision to choose the ILO as mediator between KiK and Piler which was accepted by both parties.

In the latter half of 2016, the ILO officials came to Karachi to meet rights activists and review the incident which some ILO officials believed was “falling prey to over-compensation”.

At present, some 30 factories are providing their products to KiK and 20 of them are located in Karachi.

Chief executive officer of KiK Patrick Zahn said his company fulfilled its commitments.

“No amount of money can bring back the family members or can [undo] this incident. But, money can help to better deal with the consequences of the accident,” he said.

He added that the responsibility for the safety of the factory remained with the owner and not with KiK.

Executive director of Piler Karamat Ali said: “KiK approached us soon after the incident and offered to compensate.”

Soon after his speech, the agreement was signed between them.

Meanwhile, representatives of the National Trade Union Federation along with families of the Baldia factory fire victims held a protest at the Karachi Press Club.

They protested against the disbursement of amount in instalments and demanded that the amount should be given in a lump sum.

Deputy secretary general of the NTUF Nasir Mansoor said the CEO of KiK should have met and consoled the families of the victims.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312329/515m-to-be-disbursed-to-baldia-factory-fire-victims-families>

‘DOMESTIC TRAFFICKING OF MINORS FUELS CHILD LABOUR’

Dawn, February 5th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Tayyaba torture case has not only exposed loopholes in Pakistan’s judicial system, but also showed that there is no law to counter or keep a check on internal migration of minors that encourages child labour.

On Jan 4, the Supreme Court took suo motu notice of the maltreatment of the 10-year-old housemaid by a serving judge and his spouse, and the compromise on the basis of which two additional district and sessions judges provided relief to the judge and his spouse in haste.

During the hearing of the case, internal trafficking of minors was also highlighted.

It was stated that there was no law in Pakistan that could protect a child from torture, nor was there a forum that could be approached by the parents of such children for a compromise, in case their child was tortured by an influential person.

Though there is a law to curtail human trafficking to other countries, Pakistan is yet to legislate on the matter of domestic trafficking.

The recent incident provided an indication of how minor children were brought to Islamabad and other cities from remote areas to serve well-off people.

An agent, Nadira, brought Tayyaba to serve the family of the additional district and sessions judge Raja Khurram Ali Khan when the girl was only seven and a half years old.

The agent first contacted the girl's family and offered them a job for Tayyaba at a monthly salary of Rs3,000.

As per the court record, Nadira brought the girl to the ADSJ's residence in August 2014 and took Rs40,000, of which she gave Rs18,000 to the child's parents. Between Aug 2014 to Jan 2017, the girl only spoke to her parents twice, and that too over the phone.

During the suo motu proceedings, Valerie Khan Yousafzai, a representative of Group Development Pakistan, a non-governmental organisation, submitted a report to the apex court stating that hundreds of thousands of children were the victims of internal trafficking.

The report said that popular destinations for internally trafficked minor children were Murree, Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

According to the report, of 1,504 children interviewed by the NGO on the streets of Murree, 42.2pc were from Punjab, 36.1pc from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 1pc from Azad Kashmir, 8pc from unspecified areas and 12.4pc from Afghanistan.

These children were associated with begging, garbage collection, vending, selling bubble gums, boiled eggs, cakes and pastries, toys, green tea, fancy caps, female purses, plastic flowers, berries, shoe polishing, pushing or pulling carts and working in hotels and restaurants.

The report said children were brought to Murree by contractors, which could be termed internal trafficking. It said there were two categories of children: those who lived with their so-called relatives and independent.

It, however, said some children who reported that they were living with their relatives were counter-checked and found that they had no biological ties with their hosts.

“The reality of the matter in most of the cases was that the child and the adult might have been from the same village but did not have any blood relation.” The children were brought “after some financial management e.g. monthly income and one-time payment to parents for the services of the child for a few months in Murree,” it said.

The report claimed that it was a modern form of slavery and that to make it socially acceptable, the child was asked to call their host uncle or elder brother. The person who paid a certain amount to their parents can further sell or rent the child to another person against a specific amount and for a specified period.

A senior police officer told Dawn that they cannot stop internal trafficking and in case they receive any information about the abuse of a child, police can register a case under the Pakistan Penal Code.

Advocate General Islamabad Mian Abdul Rauf recently told the Supreme Court that the federal government could not legislate to prohibit or counter domestic violence on children.

While the apex court has referred the case against the judge and his spouse to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for referring it to the trial court, it has kept the matter related to internal trafficking and the abuse of minors.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar has sought proposals from NGOs and rights activists to discourage such practices. The apex court would discuss the recommendations next week after which it would pass directions to the federal government for making legislation on child trafficking and abuse of minors and domestic workers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312772/domestic-trafficking-of-minors-fuels-child-labour>

WORK ETHICS

Dawn February 5th, 2017

Zeenat Hisam

THE discourse on labour in Pakistan is dominated by the terms and conditions of employment and other indicators such as the labour participation rate and the status of employment. Labour productivity, a crucial measure of economic performance and one of the key indicators of the labour market, receives scant attention and is yet to be reported by the Federal Bureau of Statistics in its yearly Labour Force Survey being published since 1963.

The factors that determine labour productivity include physical capital and technology, human development (health, education and skills of the labour force) and labour relations. Underpinning productivity is work ethics which is considered the key force behind economic growth and prosperity in any country. Though work ethics, or the lack of it, in our society is constantly commented on in the private sphere, the issue is seldom debated or researched by social scientists, economists and policymakers.

Work ethics refer to a basic set of moral values associated with the way work is done whatever its nature or status. Honesty, responsibility, discipline and diligence are values we inculcate in children from an early stage linking these up with performance in school and early childhood tasks. We ask

children to perform in school 'to the best of your ability'. In adult life these values should translate into hard work, efficiency, discipline and integrity at the workplace.

Societies that displayed strong work ethics have prospered. Max Weber linked work ethics with the Protestant faith to explain the development of Western Europe. Later in the 20th century, the rise of Southeast Asian countries was attributed to the values espoused by Confucian philosophy. Weber's work, though seminal, has been refuted by many. Values associated with work ethics are intrinsic and espoused by all major religions. In Islam the concepts of making an 'honestly earned living' or rizq-i-halal, and contractual obligations between the contracting parties are of utmost importance.

Pakistan has one of the lowest labour productivity rates in the region and suffers from poor work ethics. Anecdotal evidence abounds regarding the violation of ethical values at the workplace by all and sundry, from top to bottom in the organisational hierarchy and in all sectors, be it manufacturing or services, public or private.

Even our parliamentarians and legislators demonstrate poor work ethics. The average attendance rate at the National Assembly hovers around 20 per cent, below the minimum quorum of 25pc.

In the manufacturing sector, industrialists recount stories of workers' negative attitudes, inefficiency, irresponsibility, absenteeism and low productivity. The workers have their own tales to tell of employers' harsh attitude and violation of labour rights. Flagrant disregard for ethical standards (unaccountability, nepotism, corruption, etc) by all tiers of workers and management in the services and public sectors are an open secret. Workers display little respect or sense of responsibility towards equipment and machinery at the workplace.

The tendency to get away with minimum effort and not abide by the rules is pervasive. The late Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, renowned development practitioner, had described this trait very aptly as 'chori aur kaam chori'.

The picture is grim but there is light at the end of the tunnel: mechanisms for inculcating work ethics can be designed and sustained. Foremost is the need to improve substantially our human development indicators which have a significant bearing on labour productivity. It is time to increase public spending on education and health from the currently dismal allocations of 2pc and 0.8pc respectively to at least 4pc for each.

In addition, work ethics need to be nurtured through curriculum development advocating the value of work. Inculcating in schoolchildren a perspective that work is a creative, self-fulfilling and socially productive activity lays the foundation of strong work ethics. Schools should stress on performance-orientation, and help students adopt good work habits based on discipline, punctuality and team work, besides facilitating development of a balanced relationship between the individual, work and society. At the secondary level, children should be educated about the contemporary world of work and their own future contribution.

While talking about the general trend of poor work ethics, we must not lose sight of the fact that there always remains a segment of the workforce that displays a good sense of work ethics. They do not just believe in but also demonstrate their honesty, integrity

and accountability at the workplace. Hardworking and committed, these people contribute to the country's progress to the best of their ability. What we need is for a critical mass to be turned into an expanded labour force with strong work ethics.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312749/work-ethics>

March 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 27TH TO APRIL 2 ND 2017

CHILD MAID SEXUALLY ASSAULTED, SUSPECT ARRESTED

The Express Tribune, March 31st, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: The vulnerability of child maids in the capital was in the spotlight again after a 12-year old girl escaped an alleged sexual assault attempt.

Police, though, have arrested a 22-year old suspect for trying to sexually abuse the child maid in Sector I-11.

The alleged victim*, who works as a housemaid with a family in the PHA flats in Sector I-11/1, told the Sabzi Mandi police that on Wednesday afternoon, she went to the roof to fill the water tank. There, when a 22-year-old man allegedly grabbed her and molested her.

The victim said that undeterred by the alleged threats of her assaulter to kill her, she screamed. The commotion alerted people nearby who rushed to her rescue.

The area residents apprehended the man and thrashed him. Later they handed him over to the police. Police have booked him for sexually abusing a child.

Meanwhile, as part of an on-going search operation in Islamabad, police and Rangers conducted combed various areas of Bani Gala on Thursday including Mohrian and Kuri Village.

During the door-to-door search, police arrested 14 suspects and recovered weapons from them, a police spokesman said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1370186/child-maid-sexually-assaulted-suspect-arrested/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

MEDICAL BOARD CONFIRMS CHILD MAID WAS TORTURED

Dawn, March 21st, 2017

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: A six-member medical board constituted by the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on Monday confirmed that the 11-year-old maid was tortured by her employers in the E-11 sector of Islamabad.

“The board found around a dozen wounds of different types, which were not of the same age, on the body of the girl. This showed the girl faced torture for a long time,” Pims Vice Chancellor Dr Javed Akram said, adding a report would be handed over to the police within 48 hours.

Moreover, the girl, a native of Rahim Yar Khan, was also produced in the court of an assistant commissioner (AC) where she recorded her statement saying the family used to torture her.

According to initial reports, the inmates of the house, including a woman and her son, not only tortured the girl but also cut her hair.

On the complaint of a neighbour, the police took the girl into custody 17 and shifted her to Pims for medical treatment on March 17.

The police at that time decided to bring the child to Pims again for a medico-legal report on March 18.

However, they did not bring her back and started requesting the hospital administration to prepare a report based on the observations of the casualty medical officer (CMO) who had treated her in the emergency on March 17.

However, as the matter was highlighted in the media, the Pims administration formed the medical board to examine the girl and prepare the report.

The board was headed by surgeon Dr Tanvir Khaliq with psychiatrist Dr Rizwan Taj, burn expert Dr Tariq Iqbal, gynaecologist Dr Nasira, medico-legal officers Dr Farrukh Kamal and Dr Nasreen Butt as its members. As Dr Nasira was on leave, Dr Kausar Bangash participated in the board.

The girl was brought to Pims from the crisis centre in H-8 at 11am on Monday. After her examination by the board, Dr Akram confirmed to the media that the girl was tortured, adding her hair were also found cut.

“There were marks of torture but wounds of any sharp tool such as knife or blade were not found on the body. The child was severely upset because of what she had been facing during the last a few weeks or months,” he said.

“The girl had also continuously received punches and slaps from the family. The marks were of different ages which showed she had continuously been facing torture,” he said.

In reply to a question, Dr Akram said though the medical board confirmed that the girl was tortured it was the job of the police to investigate and find other aspects and angles to the case.

He said after being examined by the board the girl was taken back to the crisis centre.

A member of the medical board, Dr Farrukh Kamal, told Dawn that there were also two burn marks, one on the arm and the other on the rear of the girl’s neck.

“There were around a dozen marks on the body of the girl,” he confirmed.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Abdul Sattar Isani told Dawn that while recording her statement in front of the AC the girl stated that the woman and her son used to torture her.

“She said even they used to throw hot water on her body and many times locked her in a room. The girl also alleged that the woman used to keep her hungry. Moreover, there was another maid from Lahore but she left the work because of the attitude of the family,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321885/medical-board-confirms-child-maid-was-tortured>

PROTESTING WORKERS DEMAND REINSTATEMENT

Dawn, March 21st, 2017

PESHAWAR: Hundreds of sacked workers of various industrial units on Monday held a demonstration outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to demand their reinstatement.

The protest was organised by Mazdoor Kisan Party. The protesters marched from the Peshawar Press Club to the assembly building where they organised a sit-in. The demonstration caused suspension of vehicular traffic on different roads.

The rally was led by Mazdoor Kisan Party secretary information Shakeel Waheedullah Khan, Mehnat Kash Labour Federation president Abrarullah, Pakistan Railways Workers Union president Ashfaq Bacha, Mazdoor Alliance chairman Engr Mir Alam Khan and National Labour Federation president Tila Mohammad Khan.

Condemning the sacking of workers, the speakers said 325 registered employees of various industrial units had been terminated at different times without any reason.

On the occasion, several resolutions were adopted pertaining to demands for reinstatement of the sacked workers, award of promotions to workers, incentives, appointment of siblings of employees and protection to their constitutional rights.

The participants of the protest shouted slogans for acceptance of their demands and condemned the officials of provincial labour department for failure to fulfill their responsibilities.

“We had decided to continue the sit-in for an indefinite period until the workers were reinstated, but the protesters dispersed peacefully on assurance of the provincial government that their demands would be resolved at the earliest,” said Waheedullah Khan said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321908/protesting-workers-demand-reinstatement>

CLIMBING SEASON 2017: WAGE RATES FOR PORTERS SET AT RS930 PER DAY

The Express Tribune, March 24th, 2017.

Shabbir Mir

Gilgit: With the summer mountain climbing season just around the corner, the Islamabad Secretariat of the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) council has notified wages for high altitude porters in the region for 2017.

According to the announcement, wages for porters crossing passes over 4000 meters has been fixed at Rs930 per day, Moreover, the government has set Rs355 as wages for porters on their rest days as well.

“That’s good news,” said a tour operator Hidayat Khan about the new wages set for the upcoming climbing season.

“The financial support is a must to attract more people towards this job,” he said

The notification has also set other allowances such as a kit, high-pass crossing, daily wages, empty return, ration, and rest allowances.

Furthermore, it said that those hiring services of porters shall pay daily wages to them from the day of their engagement, rather than when the journey commences. Moreover, the government has bound clients to pay for porters’ insurance before the start of the expedition.

Moreover, porters have been restricted from carrying loads weighing more than 25 kilogrammes, the notification read. Porters often carry loads much heavier than the government allowed limit for a little extra cash.

G-B is home to five of the “eight-thousanders” including K-2 (second highest peak in the world), Broad Peak, Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum I and Gasherbrum II. It also plays host to around 50 peaks over 7,000 metres (23,000 ft.).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1364256/climbing-season-2017-wage-rates-porters-set-rs930-per-day/>

MEDICAL REPORT OF ‘ABUSED’ MAID HANDED OVER TO AUTHORITIES

Dawn, March 25th, 2017

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on Friday handed over the medical report of a 12-year-old employed as a maid who was allegedly physically assaulted at a house in E-11 to the district administration.

The report, available with Dawn, not only confirmed that the child was physically assaulted, but added that the victim informed the examiners she was regularly beaten and tortured by members of the household.

According to initial reports, the child, who is from Rahim Yar Khan, was abused by residents of the house who also cut her hair. A neighbour informed the police, who took the child into custody. She was taken to Pims for medical treatment on March 17.

After the matter was highlighted in the media, a medical board was established that included a surgeon, psychiatrist, burns expert, gynaecologist and two medico-legal officers who examined the victim on March 20.

According to the report, the case is with the Golra police and the victim was brought in by Assistant Superintendent of Police Arsala Saleem along with other police officials.

The child was also psychologically examined and found well-oriented. The report noted that her hair was cut irregularly to the length of 5 to 10cm, and she also had a healing wound, most likely a contact burn, on the back of the right side of her neck.

The report also said the examination revealed bite and scratch marks on the victim, a wound on the cheek, arm, legs and redness in her left eye. The report said the examination did not reveal any evidence of sexual abuse.

The report concluded that the child was subjected to trauma repeatedly on separate occasions, and said there were no bone or teeth injuries.

Pims Vice Chancellor Dr Javed Akram told Dawn the report has been handed over to the district administration, which may hand it over to the police for further action. Mr Akram added that such incidents would not stop happening unless legislation is passed to end domestic child labour in the country.

Additional deputy commissioner Abdul Sattar Isani confirmed that the medical report has been received. He said it will be handed over to the police and, based on the findings of the report, new sections will be incorporated into the FIR. "After that, further action can be taken," he said.

The CEO of United Global Organisation of Development, an NGO, Syed Ishtiaq Gilani told Dawn legislation is required to address such issues.

"It is unfortunate that children, especially girls, have been working as house maids across the country and they face torture because they are not aware of their basic rights," he said.

"However, there is hope because the National Commission on the Rights of the Child Bill 2015 has been passed by the National Assembly, and now efforts are being made to have it passed by the upper house. I believe 80pc of the problems will be addressed if the NCRC is established," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322570/medical-report-of-abused-maid-handed-over-to-authorities>

MAN GRANTED BAIL IN CHILD SERVANT TORTURE, DETENTION CASE

The Express Tribune, March 25, 2017

Naeem Sahoutara

KARACHI: A judicial magistrate granted on Friday bail to a suspect in a case pertaining to torture and detention of his 11-year-old child servant.

Police had booked Muhammad Rizwan Shaikh and his wife, Nadia, for allegedly torturing and wrongfully detaining their underage servant, Ali Asghar, at their house in city's upscale Defence Housing Authority neighbourhood.

On Friday, the investigation officer (IO) produced the suspect, Shaikh, before the South judicial magistrate for remand while his wife was shown as an absconder in the case.

The IO said the police raided the house of the suspect and recovered the captive after his father complained that his son was not being allowed to meet him.

On the other hand, the defence lawyer sought bail for the suspect, arguing the offences were bailable.

The complainant alleged that the suspect's wife had subjected his son to torture. Therefore, the judicial magistrate, Nazish Naz, granted bail to the suspect against a surety bond of Rs200,000.

Later, the child, Ali Asghar, told reporters that Nadia had tortured him, adding that he has been working there for one-and-a-half years and has not been paid for the last three months.

The child said his employers had not allowed him to meet his parents, who were residing in Badin.

The IO said he will produce the victim before the court on Saturday for his statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code. He added that raids were being carried out for the arrest of the absconding suspect.

A case was registered under Sections 337-A, 337-F (i), 342 and 34 of the Pakistan Penal Code at the Darakshan police station.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1364863/man-granted-bail-child-servant-torture-detention-case/>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017

TWO LABOURERS BURIED ALIVE AS BAKERY BUILDING COLLAPSES

Dawn, April 27th, 2017

LARKANA: Two labourers working at a bakery on Bakrani Road were buried alive when the structure caved in here on Wednesday.

The ill-fated workers hailing from Muzaffargarh were identified as Rajib Ali and Mehboob Ali.

Rescue workers, Edhi ambulances, Larkana Municipal Corporation Mayor Mohammed Aslam Shaikh, Deputy Commissioner Kashif Tepu and others rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue work.

The bodies, after an autopsy, were handed over to their relatives, but the Dari police station, in whose remit the incident had taken place, did not register FIR till filing of this report.

The deputy commissioner had taken in custody the record of the building while personnel of the Sindh Building Control Authority were asked to ensure issuance of authenticated permissions for new constructions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329459>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

WAGE LAWS

Dawn, April 18th, 2017

Parvez Rahim

WHAT is the difference between ‘wages’ and ‘salary’? Since the former term is used under various labour statutes, the compensation paid to the lower levels of management hierarchy covered by the law, is referred to as ‘wages’. The terms of employment for those doing jobs that entail greater responsibility refer to such compensation as ‘salary’. However both can be considered synonymous.

There is much literature on the subject of fixing salaries in accordance with the kind of work performed or an individual’s contribution to an organisation’s goals. Initially, each level of the ladder in an organisation is determined by a scientific system of job evaluation, which is followed by fixing a salary based on the input of each employee.

The latter exercise provides a figure for a monthly salary, which is divided into various components including basic salary, house rent allowance, conveyance allowance etc. These components of an individual’s salary are based on certain factors. Around two decades back, some of the allowances such as the two named above and the annual payment of leave fare assistance (vacation bonus), were exempted from tax.

In order to provide full benefit to their employees, organisations would fix a substantial amount of their monthly salary as house rent allowance, which was commonly 45 per cent of the basic salary. This relief to employed persons was withdrawn by the government a long time back and since then the tax is levied on the whole salary.

The salary structure of progressive companies usually comprised the basic salary and a maximum of two or three allowances. This system fitted into the requirement of employees who were interested only in the gross salary and not as to how it was arrived at.

This system was operating smoothly until the government intervened through the promulgation of the Employees’ Cost of Living (Relief) Act, 1973. Primarily introduced to provide relief to low-paid workers, it was subsequently extended to all categories of employees in an organisation, regardless of the amount they drew. The increases allowed by the respective governments under this act from time to time are referred to as the cost of living allowance or COLA.

There was no need to induct COLA as the original purpose could have been effectively achieved by increasing the minimum wages with the same amounts through the Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance, 1969, which was already in existence.

But since a beginning had been made, successive governments were tempted to add to the COLAs. This unnecessary interference by the government in the domain of employers to fix salaries of employees not only kept the former under strain all the time but also spoiled the salary structure.

In the case of unionised staff some of these COLAs could be offset under the law against the increases given by employers through collective labour agreements. Trivial amounts of COLAs given regardless of salary made the compensation package of management employees appear absurd. These COLAs were not burdensome for employers in general but were irritating.

The period August 1973 to December 2000 saw a total of 12 COLAs ranging from Rs25 to Rs300 per month. Eight were linked with a prescribed wage ceiling, which has now become redundant while four amounting to Rs475 per month were given regardless of the wages drawn. Some of the companies have merged these COLAs with the basic salaries of their employees through collective labour agreements, while the rest continue to pay them as such.

As if this were not enough, the respective provincial governments also legislated the Employees' Special Allowance (Payment) Acts, allowing special allowances ranging from Rs50 to Rs200 per month from 1986 to 1995.

While the special allowances linked with the wage ceiling have now become superfluous, those given irrespective of the wages drawn are: Sindh Rs300; Punjab Rs200; Balochistan Rs200; dearness allowance of Rs200 given by the then NWFP government effective December 1990, is no longer operative as it was subject to the wage ceiling of Rs4,200 per month.

In addition there are two major wage laws named the Payment of Wages Act, 1936 and the Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961, which have now been devolved to the provincial governments. Since both the COLA and special allowance acts have become meaningless, they should be repealed after merging the existing nominal amounts of allowances with the basic salary of employees.

The two statutes of 1961 and 1969 relating to fixation of the minimum wage, should be merged with the Payment of Wages Act. These steps will remove the irritants in fixing an employee's salary and make the process simple for employers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327632>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16TH 2017

SAUDI ARABIA DEPORTS 130 PAKISTANI WORKERS

Owais Qarni

The Express Tribune Pakistan, April 13, 2017

At least 130 Pakistanis were deported by the Saudi Arabian government for overstaying their visas or working without a valid work permit.

The deportees arrived at Multan International Airport via Saudi Arabian airlines on Thursday. The workers claim Saudi Binladin Group and Redico Real Estate Development and Investment failed to pay them their dues for over a year.

The workers told The Express Tribune that their situation was dire as they had not been paid for over a year by their employers and the situation was compounded by the expiry of their work permit. The companies had not renewed their two-year work permits.

The destitute employees were residing in Jubail RC camps as they found it hard to make both ends meet without any income. Without valid work permits, it was impossible for them to seek employment with any other firm under the kingdom's labour laws.

Rab Nawaz, one of the deportees, claimed to have faced the worst kind of exploitation at the hands of these companies. He added that the Pakistani embassy did not provide any assistance to them despite many requests.

Zahid Abbas, another deportee, said he contacted the Pakistani embassy six months back for assistance and was told that their computer system had been hacked and they could only help citizens after it was restored. Abbas lamented that six months had now passed without any assistance from the embassy.

The foreign office claimed to have paid Rs50,000 to each worker under a government assistance programme. But a labourer claimed that only Rs10,000 had been given to his family.

The FO spokesperson released a statement saying that these Pakistanis registered a case in a local labour court. Moreover, the FO is in contact with Saudi Arabia's ministry of labour as well as the companies involved to resolve the longstanding wage issue.

<https://Tribune.Com.Pk/Story/1382748/Saudi-Arabia-Deports-130-Pakistani-Workers/>

17,000 CHRISTIAN WORKERS TO CELEBRATE EASTER WITHOUT SALARY, PENSION
Dawn, April 15th, 2017

KARACHI: Over 17,000 Christian workers and pensioners of the civic agencies had not been paid advance salary, therefore they would not be able to celebrate their religious festival Easter (to be observed on Sunday) properly, said the workers' union on Friday.

The court would be moved against the government inattention, it said.

Condemning the non-payment of salary and pension to Christian workers, All Pakistan Local Government Workers Federation leader and KMC Sajjan (CBA) Union chief Zulfiqar Shah said the government had not only hurt the feelings of the workers, but also failed to follow the agreements signed with the union. It also violated court orders, he pointed out.

Mr Shah said the union and KMC etc, had agreements and the Sindh High Court had also directed that workers be paid salaries/pensions in time so that they could celebrate their religious festivals.

He said that two festivals each — Eidul Fitr and Eidul Azha of the Muslims, Diwali and Holi of the Hindus, and Christmas and Easter of the Christians — had been identified for early payments.

He said that some time ago at the time of Holi, the Hindu workers were paid their salaries/pensions on the last day, which was of no use as they did not get enough time for festival-related shopping.

Mr Shah said that next week the union would file a contempt of court application in the high court against the government's anti-worker attitude of not making the agreed payments to the workers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327000/17000-christian-workers-to-celebrate-easter-without-salary-pension>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

WORKERS' WELFARE

Dawn, April 5th, 2017

THE Industrial Relations Ordinance, 1969 is the last of the labour laws enacted to oversee the running of industrial and commercial enterprises. The process of labour welfare legislation began with the first PPP government in 1971 led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Bhutto followed through with his promise to make Pakistan a welfare state, which was the reason millions among the downtrodden masses voted for his party. A total of five labour welfare laws were passed by his government, out of which the

Employees Old-Age Benefits Act, 1976 was the most significant. After Bhutto, Gen Ziaul Haq promulgated the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981.

Since then, four more pieces of legislation dealing with workers' welfare orientation have followed. Some of the laws were promulgated either due to political expediency or to pressure from international bodies. Laws such as the Employees' Cost of Living (Relief) Act, 1973 and the Employees' Special Allowance (Payment) Act, promulgated by all the four provinces from 1986 to 1992, pertain to the former category.

The Employment of Children Act, 1991 and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992 fall within the latter classification. Due to haphazard induction of various acts and ordinances, respective governments have had to constitute labour commissions to simplify and consolidate the labour laws for the benefit of local employers and in order to attract foreign investment. Those commissions formulated a number of pragmatic recommendations but, for unknown reasons, they were shelved by the governments in power.

Over a period of four decades, labour laws have become unwieldy, confusing and contradictory, a state of affairs that has become particularly serious after the 18th Amendment. The existing labour laws are based on 36 ILO conventions that have been ratified by Pakistan. As the responsibility to ensure compliance with these rests with the federal government, labour should not have been devolved to the provinces, for they are not accountable to the ILO.

This lacuna in the devolution process becomes more even more glaring in the case of laws relating to social protection schemes such as old age pensions, workers' profit participation and administration of social security medical benefits. Over the last few years, labour federations have been strongly advocating and demanding that the federal government continue the management of these schemes.

When the 18th Amendment was passed, the central government was led by the PPP. However, it was only much later, in mid-2013 when the party was no longer at the centre, that the PPP-led Sindh government devolved the Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, Workers Welfare Funds Ordinance, 1972 and the Employees' Old-Age Benefits (EOB) Act, 1976 — all of which were, incidentally, money-generating laws. Moreover, it was the only province to take such an action. Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have not devolved them so far, anticipating that it may be counterproductive to the interests of their workforce.

Nevertheless, so many anomalies and discrepancies have crept into existing labour laws formulated by the provincial governments that trans-provincial companies are baffled as to the terms and conditions of employment they should follow in respect of their workers. Even their legal advisers are hard-pressed to come up with workable solutions.

In a recent judgement, the Supreme Court has held that amendments effected in labour laws through the finance acts of 2006, 2007 and 2008 were unlawful because the levies they imposed were fees and not taxes. The amendments should therefore have been effected through the relevant legislative procedure prescribed under the Constitution. In the light of this judgement, immediate action is required by the provincial governments to restore those benefits to workers by following the correct legislative procedure.

The Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) is currently in serious trouble, entangled in issues generated primarily because of the 18th Amendment. It is unable to increase monthly contributions by employers' based on the current minimum wage, nor is it in a position to increase retired employees' monthly pension of Rs5,250, in effect since April 2015. Employers are making monthly contributions at different rates and the EOBI cannot enforce a uniform rate.

The federal government should therefore immediately come to the EOBI's rescue and undo the EOB Act's devolution through a constitutional amendment so that the scheme is put on the road to recovery. Despite having been roiled by some big scams, the EOBI was managed smoothly before devolution in 2010, but it has now reached a stage where its very existence appears to be in jeopardy. It is unfortunate that this is the treatment being meted out to the most beneficial labour welfare legislation ever enacted in Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324929/workers-welfare>

FOUR LABOURERS WORKING ON ROAD PROJECT KILLED IN KHARAN

Dawn, April 6th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Four labourers, engaged in the construction of a road to connect Kharan, a remote area of Balochistan, with the Quetta-Taftan highway, were shot dead on Wednesday.

Official sources said that the attack took place in Shiktaak, 5km away from Kharan town, where armed men opened fire on the labourers, who died on the spot.

The victims were identified as Ghulam Mustafa, Niazi, Sohrab Khan and Sajan — who belonged to the Ghotki area of Sindh.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

Talking to Dawn over the phone from Kharan, a senior administration official said that the attack was apparently carried out by militants.

The National Highway Authority is constructing the dual carriageway at a cost of Rs12 billion to link Kharan and Washuk, two remote districts of Balochistan, with the RCD Highway via the Dalbandin area.

Personnel of law enforcement agencies shifted the bodies to the district hospital in Kharan. “The workers had received multiple bullet wounds causing their instant death,” said Dr Mehboob, the medical superintendent of the hospital.

Levies Force officials said that automatic weapons were used in the attack.

Security forces launched an operation in the area to trace the attackers and took some suspects into custody for interrogation.

The bodies of the victims were handed over to the local administration for sending them to their native areas after completing medico-legal formalities.

Sources said that security personnel were not present at the place when the gun attack took place. “No security arrangement had been made in the area,” they said.

Earlier, many such incidents had taken place in different areas of Makran in which labourers working on road and other development projects had been attacked by militants.

Levies Force officials are conducting an investigation into the incident.

Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri condemned the killings and described them as a conspiracy mounted by anti-state elements averse to the development and prosperity of the province. He instructed the provincial home department and police to provide maximum security to labourers and other people engaged in carrying out development work.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1325212>

May 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017

IHC JUDGE RECUSES HIMSELF FROM MINOR MAID TORTURE CASE

Malik Asad

Dawn, May 30, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday recused himself from the trial proceeding against an additional district and sessions judge (ADSJ) in the minor maid torture case.

The judge remarked that since he had conducted and concluded the inquiry against the ADSJ and found him guilty and already suggested punishment, he can't conduct the trial proceedings any further.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Raja Khurram Ali Khan, now officer on special duty (OSD), and his wife were booked after the minor maid accused them of keeping her in wrongful confinement,

burning her hand over a missing broom, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in storeroom and threatening her with dire consequences.

During the hearing, counsel for the suspects, Raja Mohammad Farooq, Raja Rizwan Abbasi and Sohail Akhtar, said they did not have any objection over the IHC judge but since he had concluded the inquiry he should not conduct the trial.

Advocate General Mian Abdul Rauf said the court was empowered to simultaneously conduct criminal and civil proceedings.

Justice Kayani, however, recused himself from the proceedings and sent the case to the chief justice IHC requesting him to place the matter before any other bench.

While ruling that the application for compounding the offence with the parents of the minor was not maintainable, Justice Kayani had earlier indicted the suspects and directed the prosecution to produce witnesses and evidence.

The suspects pleaded `not guilty` and are currently standing trial.

Turning down the request to accept the compromise between the parties, Justice Kayani had noted that the provisions of law imposed a duty upon the court to consider the details of the case, nature of the offence and the benefit of a compromise and even the style of crime and the manner in which the offence had been committed.

`If the court is of the view that the incident causes terror and sensation in the society or is cruel from its appearance, the court may not agree to compounding of the offence,` the judge had observed. `The alleged incident gives a brutal, cruel picture as well as causes terror and sensation in the society,` he had stated in the order dismissing the compromise between the parties.

In her statement recorded before Justice Kayani on May 23, the 10-year-old girl alleged the spouse of the judge burned her hand, back and hit her with a ladle resulting in injuries to her hand, eye and back.

On May 24, the minor girl was cross-examined during which she could not answer several questions.

The child was also confronted with a video statement of her recorded by the police soon after she was recovered from the judge`s house.

In the video statement, the child was heard saying she was injured after falling from the stairs.

She had told the video maker that she was not beaten and tied, adding medical treatment was provided to her and the family kept her like their own children.

The ADSJ through his counsel had filed a review petition with a division bench of the IHC requesting it to suspend the May 10 decision wherein the suspects were indicted.

The division bench, however, dismissed the petition declaring it not maintainable.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=30_05_2017_006_004

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017
FACTORS THAT CONSTRAIN LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH
Naveed Iftikhar

The Express Tribune, May 22, 2017

DELAWARE: “Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. A country’s ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker.” (Paul Krugman)

On May 4, 2017, the Bureau of Labour Statistics of the United States Department of Labour released estimates of labour productivity and costs for the first quarter of 2017.

The bureau has reported a decrease in non-farm business sector labour productivity at an annual rate of 0.6% in the first quarter of 2017 compared to the prior quarter.

Furthermore, it records a sluggish increase of 1.1% in productivity from the first quarter of 2016 to the first quarter of 2017. The US has been witnessing a decline in productivity growth for quite some time which has severe implications for long-term growth and prosperity.

Labour productivity is gauged by dividing real output with work-hours of all workers including unpaid family workers. Another way is to measure the Total Factor Productivity (TFP), which shows improvement in the real output beyond contributions of labour and capital.

Simply put, productivity trends show the efficiency of resource allocation and value creation by the labour force and other productive assets of the economy.

The US witnessed enormous growth in productivity from the 1930s to the 1970s. Major contributors to productivity growth were: (a) improvement in the quality of human capital; (b) increase in stock of knowledge; (c) exploitation of spillovers of the World War II; (d) massive investment in research and application of modern machinery and tools in business; (e) development of country-wide infrastructure; and (f) provision of level playing field for aspiring entrepreneurs.

This brought improvements in the standard of living in the US. However, since 1980, the productivity growth has been declining except for a brief period in the 1990s, which was facilitated by widespread application of information technology in business and society.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal, titled “US productivity fell in the first quarter”, mentioned the weak trend of productivity growth. “The five-year average for the quarterly measure has scuffled near the lowest level since 1982, when the US was mired in a double-dip recession,” it said.

Economist Robert Gordon has eloquently discussed this decline in labour productivity and TFP since the 1980s. He has also projected a pessimistic scenario of productivity growth in coming decades.

However, the opposite camp highlights the deficiencies in the measurement of real output and living standards. Many modern technologies have reduced the price of information and luxuries which are not being taken into account at the moment.

Regardless of these opposing arguments, there are considerable signs of secular stagnation in the US economy. As often put forward by economist Lawrence Summers, this situation is more of “secular stagnation” in the US and other developed countries.

Secular stagnation refers to a long-term decline in economic growth which cannot be explained by routine business cycle fluctuations.

The question arises why is there such a decline in productivity? As the dust of the global financial crisis is settling, the dialogue is now moving beyond text book-based fiscal and monetary policy analysis.

In addition to demography-driven constraints, business dynamism is now gaining traction in policy dialogues. New firm formation and business churning – reallocation of resources to more productive and growing firms – have been the key to productivity growth.

The Brookings Institutions and National Bureau of Economic Research have published many studies which report declining business dynamism in the US. Young and small firms are not expanding employment generation and value creation in the way they used to.

President’s Economic Report 2016 reported: “Productivity-enhancing channels may be weakening as the rate of new firm formation has been on persistent decline since the 1970s as have various measures of worker mobility and job turnover. The share of patenting by new firms has also been on the decline.”

Evidence is still inconclusive regarding reasons of slowdown in firm formation and their subsequent growth. However, potential candidates of research point to technology-driven outsourcing and automation, inefficiencies in the patenting process, high cost of regulations, decrease in public sector funding for research, distortions in competition (which favour large firms), shortage of skilled blue-collar workers and rising inequalities.

There are nascent signs of recovery in the US economy. The Economist reported in March “the American economy has added jobs for 77 months in a row”.

There is also speculation about the return of offshore reserves of American companies worth \$1 trillion, which may further boost investment. However, it is still too early to conclude whether these developments will improve or worsen the business dynamism which can accordingly influence the productivity growth.

In Pakistan, labour productivity has been slow for many years, estimated at around 1%. Implementation of social and labour standards could bring economic benefits over the medium term through increased motivation and worker productivity.

There have also been calls for labour law reforms in a bid to enhance worker welfare and productivity.

According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde, living standards around the world could fall unless governments invest more in research and education that can help revive weak productivity growth.

Economists have long viewed productivity gains as essential for sustaining higher wages and living standards, but have struggled to explain a protracted slowdown in productivity growth since the early 2000s.

Lagarde said the post-crisis recession has left a “permanent scar” on output per worker and TFP, a broad measure of innovation that includes both labour and capital inputs.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1415763/factors-constrain-labour-productivity-growth/>

PPP CALLS FOR MINIMUM WAGE OF RS18,000

Dawn, May 24th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The PPP has called for a 25 per cent increase in pay and pension, a minimum wage of Rs18,000 per month, and a separate fund to protect vulnerable groups, including transgender people, under Benazir Income Support Programme.

Presenting a shadow budget for fiscal year 2017-18 on Tuesday, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla also stressed for reorganising and revamping the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

“We believe that the budget must be welfare-oriented and additional revenues can be collected by expanding the tax net with the help of Nadra [National Database and Registration Authority],” said Senator Mandviwalla, a former finance minister and now the chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance.

He said the power rates are high despite low oil prices, and circular debt was still hovering above Rs400 billion. “If the current government recognises Rs400bn circular debt and Rs200bn refund payments of taxpayers, the budget deficit will rise to 6pc from the declared 5pc,” he added.

He was accompanied by Senator Osman Saifullah, Chaudhry Manzoor, former Punjab finance minister Tanvir Kaira and PPPP Secretary General Senator Farhatullah Babar.

The PPP shadow budget stands at Rs5.8 trillion, envisaging Rs825bn in revenue and eyeing four million new tax filers.

Apart from restructuring the FBR and diverting resources to enhance social and food security, the PPP shadow budget calls for close cooperation with provinces to implement labour laws, including minimum wages.

An additional allocation of Rs47bn per year to health is envisaged to bridge the yawning gap in this sector.

Provinces will be persuaded to raise education spending to achieve the target of 5pc of GDP in the next five years.

Sales tax on goods and services and provincial excise will be collected by provincial revenue-collective authorities. Federal excise will also be collected by provinces and then transferred to the federal government on agreed terms, Senator Mandviwalla said.

On revenue generation, he said the PPP believed in promoting public-private partnership mode for infrastructure development and introducing conducive policies to boost exports.

“We need an industrial policy and improve manufacturing. But unfortunately, the National Industrial Policy 2011 aimed at turning Pakistan into a factory instead of a shop was not implemented by this government,” he said.

Responding to a question, Chaudhary Manzoor denied that the high number of employees were the cause of declining state of public sector enterprises. “Nawaz Sharif is a businessman, but it is clear that they are interested in buying the state-owned enterprises. Otherwise, the employees are not responsible for the state of steel mills or PIA,” he said.

He said the current government did not carry forward the energy policy of the previous governments which led to the present electricity shortfall.

The PPP leaders said the overall debt had increased from Rs9.5tr in 2013 to Rs12.7tr in 2016 while external debt rose from \$61bn dollars to \$73bn during the same period.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334963>

TORTURED CHILD MAID TO SIT AN EXAM Rizwan Shehzad

The Express Tribune, May 24, 2017

ISLAMABAD:

The juvenile housemaid, who had to be rescued after being tortured at the home of a judge earlier this year, has had a change of fortunes and is now expected to sit for an academic examination on May 24 (today) – seemingly for the first time.

Having worked as a housemaid till a few months ago, 10-year-old T* now goes to school every morning and has learnt how to spell her name in English among a host of other things.

At this Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked, “she is competent to understand everything.”

While her life is on the path to transformation, she has not yet forgotten what happened to her. On Tuesday, she once again recorded her statement before the Islamabad High Court against the judge and his wife at whose house she suffered injuries.

The Additional District and Sessions Judge Raja Khurram Ali Khan and his wife Maheen Zafar had been indicted after the girl had accused them of keeping her in wrongful confinement, burning her hand over a missing broom, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in the storeroom and threatening her of even worse.

In her statement on Tuesday, the 10-year-old told the court that it was Maheen who had allegedly burnt her hand, her back and struck her with a ladle resulting in injuries to her hand, eye and back. All this happened, she said, while she was working in “Maheen Baji’s house” a few months ago.

The victim said she lived with uncle (the judge), Maheen Baji and their three daughters in their house located in Sector I-8.

When Islamabad Advocate General Mian Abdul Rauf asked the girl how she had suffered the burn marks on her hand, the girl said that the judge’s wife had allegedly lit the stove and pushed her hand onto it burning the hand. Subsequently, she said, she went into a room upstairs and then “they hid me”.

The minor said she met a neighbouring girl who provided her with a meal and a comforter on her last day at judge’s residence. Additionally, the maid said “Bhai” (apparently referring to the judge), took her to his mother’s house and a “police uncle” took her back from there.

Responding to a question, the girl said that she told the police first about her injuries and narrated her ordeal to Assistant Commissioner Nisha Ishtiaq, adding that first the police took her for medical treatment and then ‘Nisha Baji’ and another lady provided her with medical treatment.

The neighbouring girl, her mother and another woman also recorded their statements before the court as witnesses in the case on Tuesday.

All three witnesses testified before the court that they saw the child in an injured condition, provided her with medical aid, food, tea and comforter.

The neighbouring girl M* told the court that she first saw the minor from her terrace on December 26 while continuously watching her and her mother N* from the terrace of the judge’s house.

When asked where the others were at the time, the girl said that the child and others had gone to attend a wedding. In the evening, she said, when asked why she was sitting on the terrace, the child replied that the house was locked and she could only use stairs to come down to the gate. “She was shivering,” the girl described the minor’s condition, adding that later she and her mother asked the girl to come to their house where they provided her with food, and tried to make contact with the judge through the land line and mobile phone but in vain.

On December 28, the M*said she saw T* again in an injured condition. When asked, T* told M* that she had been beaten.

While reiterating M*s statement, her mother N* said that she could identify the judge since she had handed over the child maid to him when they returned from the wedding.

H*, the third witness, said that the neighbours had informed her about the “ordeal” of the child maid, adding that she took the child’s photos from her mobile phone which was still with the police as evidence since January 9.

When shown her the photographs, H* confirmed to the court that they were the same which she had taken from her phone.

After recording the statements, the court directed the defence's counsel to cross-examine the witnesses on May 24 (today). The prosecution can then would produce additional witnesses in the case.

Meanwhile, a division bench led by Justice Aamer Farooq reserved its verdict on a review petition filed by the judge (who is on special duty – OSD) and his wife challenging framing of charges against them by a single bench of the IHC.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1417455/child-maid-sit-exam/>

GPCCI, SLD SIGN MOU TO END CHILD LABOUR
Business Recorder, May 25, 2017

Karachi: German Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & industry (GPCCI) has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Sindh Law Department (SLD) for promoting small domestic enterprises leading towards elimination of child labor and capacity building of women.

Addressing the ceremony at local hotel on Wednesday, chief guest, Sindh Minister for Law and Prisons Zia ul Islam Lanjar said MoU would help in promoting and developing economics of underprivileged people of Sindh.

Consul General of Germany in Karachi Mr. Rainer Schmiedchen witnessed the MoU ceremony. Members of corporate sector, civil society and government officials were present at the occasion.

Rainer Schmiedchen said MoU aims for joint collaboration between GPCCI and the Law Department to form a base to enhance awareness amongst the people in general and the less privileged groups in Sindh in particular.

He hoped that this MoU would enable to share the commonalities and specialties between Germany and Pakistan and promote mutual cooperation between two countries.

Projects related to promoting small domestic enterprises leading towards elimination of child labor, capacity building of women in public and private sector and mainstreaming initiatives to include minorities and ethnic groups below poverty line are the main highlights of this MoU.

Under the MoU, training sessions have also been planned to educate groups, enabling them to learn from mutual best practices. It is also envisaged to enhance awareness in the people by holding seminars and workshops with regard to legal framework including rights and duties of laws, rules and regulations.

GPCCI is the first European Bilateral Chamber in Pakistan, it shares the mission to promote, develop and further the economic well-being through advocacy and sharing best practices of Germany with the stakeholders in Pakistan.

Speaking at the occasion, Qazi Sajid Ali President GPCCI said, "We, at GPCCI believe in continuous enhancement to change the status quo for that the bold initiatives to be taken through various projects under this MoU.

He said GPCCI would share the know-how and latest developments of Germany with the Pakistani counterparts and confident of the success to come for mutual benefit.

Ms. Ines Chabbi of GPCCI and Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, Secretary Law, Government of Sindh signed the MoU.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/05/25/9-page/877487-news.html>

DHA RESIDENTS PROTEST WATER SHORTAGE

Dawn, May 26th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Holding placards inscribed with different messages along with a picture of a big black tap and just one drop of water falling from it, the residents of various phases of Defence Housing Authority gathered outside the heavily guarded offices of the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) at Khayaban-i-Rahat on Thursday to protest severe water shortage.

Mohammad Najeeb Wali, a resident of DHA Phase Four, and himself a former CBC vice president, said that he came with the other residents to raise his voice on the issue of water scarcity in DHA and demand its equal distribution through the pipelines. "Sale of water is not on. We want it from the pipelines in our water tanks, the way it is supposed to reach us," he said.

"The president of Pakistan, the chairman of Senate and the chief minister of Sindh are all DHA residents yet this is where we face the severest water shortage. If they can't intervene and fix the water problem here, please tell us how they can solve the country and the province's problems?" he asked. "I request the corps commander of Karachi to kindly intervene in this matter, because all else seems to have failed," he said.

Agitated further by CBC's response to the protesters by calling in additional security in the form of three police mobile vans and the chained gates with cement blockades placed at the front while the private guards kept an eye on the protesters from the inside, the DHA resident got hold of a megaphone and said that they were all peaceful citizens and not a rowdy crowd that would hurl stones at them.

"Kindly solve our issue of water shortage and we will place garlands around your neck and send you letters of thanks. But if you don't care, we give you a 15-day ultimatum after which we will hold a press conference where all your misdeeds will be shared with the public," he warned, while adding that he expected the CBC to make public how much tax they collected and share with the residents the minutes of their board meetings.

"We also want a private auditor to be brought into the picture to look at where all the money is going," he said.

Another protester, Anwar Haider, resident of Phase Five, said that they paid their property taxes, which included water charges, yet they were charged money for CBC tankers. "I want to know on

what basis do we, the taxpayers, have to also pay Rs500 for each tanker that the CBC or DHA sends,” he said.

Mohammad Sohail from Phase Two extension said that the CBC had announced around four months back the setting up of at least four reverse osmosis (RO) plants near their hydrants. “What happened to those RO plants? They could have solved many of our water woes but there has been no mention of them recently,” he asked.

Gul Jafri, a resident of Phase Six, said: “I often wonder where all the water goes. They get so much water from the Water Board. But once it enters DHA, it just evaporates or what? How come none of us gets water? How come we all have to buy water?” she asked.

No one from the CBC was available to speak to the media.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335393>

WAPDA WORKERS’ UNION DEMANDS 150PC RAISE IN SALARY

Dawn, May 26th, 2017

HYDERABAD: Members of the All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers’ Union (CBA) took out rallies and held demonstrations in several Sindh towns on Thursday, demanding 150 per cent rise in salaries, pensions and other privileges in the upcoming budget.

In Hyderabad, members of the union including workers of the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company, various wings of Wapda, powerhouses, water wings and the National Transmission Dispatch Company took out a rally from labour hall to the press club.

CBA central president Abdul Latif Nizamani who led the rally along with other office-bearers of the union appealed to the federal government to grant 150pc rise in salaries and pensions in accordance with increase in inflation.

The government should treat workers under the same policy which it had applied to members of National Assembly and Senate by raising their salaries and other perks and privileges. The facilities were being showered on the officers and parliamentarians who did nothing but sit in air-conditioned rooms, he said.

He said that workers should never suffer injustices silently. Today, countrywide protest was being held and workers were expressing solidarity with the Wapda CBA.

He presented a charter of demands, calling for significant raise in salaries and pensions, increase in house rent, death and dowry grant, relief allowances, job security, implementation of son quota, Eid rewards, revamping of metering units of Latifabad division instead of privatising them, end to issuance of unfair detection bills and unannounced loadshedding etc.

MIRPURKHAS: Hundreds of workers and office-bearers of Wapda workers’ union took out a rally from Hesco division office to the press club, demanding substantial increase in workers’ salary and pension.

The union leaders Yousuf Soomro and Abdul Kareem who led the rally said that lower-ranked staff and labourers' salaries were dismally low as compared to other staff members. They were hence facing serious financial problems.

He demanded the higher authorities significantly raise salaries of labourers in the upcoming budget to provide them relief.

SUKKUR: Hundreds of workers of Sukkur Electric Power Company held a sit-in on the premises of Sepco head office, demanding 100pc hike in salaries of labourers in the next annual budget.

The Wapda workers' union leaders Riaz Ahmed Lashari, Wali Mohammad Leghari and others said the government had raised salaries of members of assemblies and Senate by more than 100pc but it was reluctant to raise labourers' emoluments.

They said that inflation had shot up due to imposition of various taxes, making it difficult for low-ranked employees to feed their families in the meagre salaries they received.

In Ghotki, Wapda union workers held a protest and demanded the federal and provincial governments raise workers' salary by 100pc in next annual budget.

Similar protests were staged in other towns of the district.

KHAIRPUR: Workers of the Wapda union staged a demonstration outside the Sepco office in protest against feared privatisation of distribution companies (Discos) of Wapda.

The protesters wore black armbands and said that they would never accept privatisation of Discos at any cost.

They demanded the authorities concerned withdraw the decision on privatisation, otherwise, they would expand their protest.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335377/wapda-workers-union-demands-150pc-raise-in-salary>

BALDIA FACTORY FIRE: FAMILIES REJECT PENSION PAYMENT MECHANISM
Dawn, May 27th, 2017

KARACHI: Heirs of the victims of the Baldia factory fire on Friday demanded a lump-sum pension payment instead of disbursing it in instalments.

The demand was made at a press conference jointly organised by the National Trade Union Federation and the Association of the Affectees of Baldia tragedy at the Karachi Press Club.

The chairperson of the Affectees Association, Syeda Khatoon, said that they did not trust social security institutions, such as Sessi and Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution, and "would rather prefer getting payment in lump sum than waiting it out."

When asked whether their association reached out to the International Labour Organisation to inform it of their decision, she said they had informed all institutions concerned of their stance through rallies and protests.

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Abdul Aziz Khan, the general secretary of the association, said: “The EOBI would suspend our pensions from September of this year and we’d be dependent on the instalments which we don’t want.”

The families were referring to a recent agreement between German retailer, KiK, and labour unions in September last year in Geneva. According to the agreement, KiK agreed to pay \$5 million in instalments.

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 of not respecting other similar agreements.

However after the agreement was reached, the heirs disagreed with the arrangement of receiving the payment in instalments. “Our demand remains the same as we don’t consider Sessi to be an honourable institution,” concluded Syeda Khatoon.

Outside the press club, members of the association sat with placards denouncing the agreement and the payment method.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335589/baldia-factory-fire-families-reject-pension-payment-mechanism>

INDUSTRIAL NATIONS SET TO FACE PENSION CRISIS BY 2050: WEF WHITEPAPER Dawn, May 28th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The world’s six largest pension systems will have a joint shortfall of \$224 trillion by 2050, imperiling the incomes of future generations and setting the industrialised world up for the biggest pension crisis in history, a whitepaper published by the World Economic Forum notes.

To alleviate the looming crisis, governments must address the gaps in access to the pensions system and ageing populations as they are the key sources of the widening pension gap.

These are the main findings of the new report ‘We’ll Live to 100 – How Can We Afford It?’ which provides country-specific insights into the challenges being faced at a global level and potential solutions.

The report is the latest study to calculate the impact of ageing populations on the pension gap in the world’s largest pension markets, which include the United States, United Kingdom, Japan,

Netherlands, Canada and Australia. The gap in those markets is the largest in the US, where a current shortfall of \$28 trillion is projected to rise to \$137tr in 2050.

Over the past ten years, long-term investment returns have been significantly lower than historic averages. Equities have performed 3 to 5 per cent below historic averages and bond returns have typically been 1pc to 3pc lower. Low rates have grown future liabilities, and at the same time investment returns have been lower than expected and unable to make up the growing pension shortfall.

To support a reasonable level of income in retirement, 10pc to 15pc of an average annual salary needs to be saved.

Today, individual savings rates in most countries are far lower. This is already presenting challenges where traditionally defined benefit structures would have provided a guaranteed pension benefit.

Now, as workers look at their defined contribution retirement balances, with no guaranteed benefits, they are realising that the retirement income their savings will provide will be much lower than expected. This will continue to be a challenge unless the importance of higher savings rates is better understood and communicated.

The key driver of the challenges facing retirement systems is increasing life expectancy and a falling birth rate. This leads to a smaller workforce supporting an ever growing population of retirees. If increases in life expectancy were matched by corresponding increases in the retirement age, the challenge would be less acute, but so far we have seen only gradual steps to increase retirement age. In some countries, the retirement age is falling.

Looking at the US specifically, the gap is growing at a rate of \$3tr each year. This increase is the equivalent of five times the annual US defence budget (or 60pc of 'BlackRock', the world's largest asset manager) assets under management, which in 2016 stood at \$5 trillion.

Of the \$70 trillion gap for 2015, over 75pc is associated with un-funded government-provided pillar one pensions and pensions promised to public employees.

According to the whitepaper, many workers in developed and developing markets still lack easy access to pension plans and saving products. In many cases there are options available, but take-up is low. The lack of opportunity to begin saving, and encouragement to make putting money aside a habit, is severely limiting many people's ability to accumulate savings.

The self-employed and informal sector workers are least likely to have access to a workplace savings plan. Those working at smaller companies, where regulation may make providing a plan overly burdensome for employers, are also at a disadvantage.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335776/industrial-nations-set-to-face-pension-crisis-by-2050-wef-whitepaper>

KILLING OF LABOURERS IN GWADAR SEEN AS ATTEMPT TO SPLIT SINDHI-BALOCH UNITY

Dawn, May 28th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Showing grave concern over the killing of Sindhi labourers in Gwadar earlier this month, leaders and intellectuals from Sindh and Balochistan gathered at Haider Manzil on Saturday to condemn the act of terrorism and demonstrate solidarity with the aim of unmasking the elements behind the attack together.

They also announced formation of the Sindhi-Baloch Yakjehti Committee.

Syed Jalal Mehmood Shah, the president of the Sindh United Party, said that the people of Sindh and Balochistan faced similar issues, which had brought them closer over the years.

“We Sindhis and Balochs are friends. Maybe it was our unity that was seen as a threat by certain elements who want to split us up,” he said, adding that trying split their alliance by pointing to nationalists as the attackers was not going to work as it was not easy to divide the people of the two provinces.

“It is sad that Sindhis, despite having so much industry in Sindh, have to go to Balochistan to earn a livelihood. Balochistan these days is a battlefield. It is a dangerous territory,” he added.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the president of his own faction of the Balochistan National Party, said that the indigenous people of both provinces shared similar history and they found solace in sharing each other’s pain.

They care about each other and after this they will join hands to unearth the real culprits behind the act of cowardice, he said.

“For this, we are announcing, today, the formation of the Sindhi-Baloch Yakjehti Committee. We will join hands to confront the enemy together, and together we will also put out any flames of hatred that may have started due to the sad incident,” he said.

“We may be unable to fight those with guns and canons but we can stop the things they are making use of to fan the fire,” the BNP-M chief added.

Asked if they approached the Balochistan government about the matter, Mengal laughed. “The Blochistan government may be a government in your eyes but not in mine,” he said.

Coming to the subject of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said it will turn the people of Balochistan into a minority. “We Balochs are few in number anyway and there are the other workers there being brought from everywhere, not to mention when the Chinese too would flock here in huge numbers. It will just make the indigenous people of Balochistan become invisible,” he said.

“You should know that CPEC is impossible without Balochistan and its city of Gwadar but see how the people of this city are struggling for basic necessities such as drinking water,” said Mengal.

He questioned, “I ask what has the government given to Balochistan from the initial investment for CPEC?”

“Take my word for it, CPEC will turn out to be no different than the East India Company. The Chinese, with their huge population and all, will make Pakistan look not like a country, but China Town,” he concluded.

Yousuf Mastikhan of the Awami Workers Party and former parliamentarian Shafi Mohammad Jamote were also present on the occasion along with other nationalists and writers and intellectuals of both provinces.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335795/killing-of-labourers-in-gwadar-seen-as-attempt-to-split-sindhi-baloch-unity>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 15 TH TO MAY 21ST 2017
ACTIVISTS TAKE TO THE STREETS IN REMEMBRANCE OF SLAIN GWADAR
LABOURERS

The Express Tribune, 16, May 2017

Ten labourers working on a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) linked road project were killed by armed assailants on Saturday at two separate sites in Pishukan and Ganz areas, some 20 kilometres away from Gwadar.

Nine of the 10 labourers belonged to Haji Muhammad Siddiq Lakho village in Sindh’s Naushero Feroz, while one was a local.

To pay tribute to the deceased labourers, the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) organised a protest on Monday outside the Karachi Press Club.

Participants of the protest were armed with placards that read ‘Qaaiton Jawab Do, Khoon Ka Hisab do [Murderers answer us, account for the blood]’, while slogans were also chanted against the government for not providing adequate security to the labourers.

Addressing the protest, NTUF President Rafiq Baloch termed the act an ‘attack on all oppressed communities in the country’. He said it was based on the labourers’ ethnicity and called it an ‘inhumane act by terrorists’.

Besides the perpetrators of the attack, the authorities and employers were equally responsible for the incident, as they failed to ensure the labourers’ security, he accused.

“A local contractor, Dur Muhammad, should also be held accountable, as he had hired the construction labourers on contract. The workers were earning daily wages from the work,” he explained.

Lamenting over the incident, the NTUF president said that the killing of poor laborers was beyond his comprehension, as they were not employed by a state-owned enterprise nor were they working on a disputed project.

Criticising political and religious parties for their silence on the issue, NTUF Balochistan President Bashir Mehmoodani said that it is clear that all these parties have their own interests, which is why they have closed their eyes to the issue, where ultimately the poor are suffering.

“It is highly alarming that workers have been exploited in the name of prosperity-promising projects like CPEC and others,” he said. The rally ended with a consensus on a set of demands. NTUF Deputy General Secretary Nasir Mansoor said the government should ensure adequate security for labourers and pointed out that of the slain labourers four were children, which is against the law. He demanded that the government not involve child labour in any future projects.

Workplace safety should be provided to workers at any cost, participants of the rally said, adding that the workers should be registered with social security institutions, be given pension funds and all labour laws should be implemented.

CPEC and other development projects should be linked to the prosperity of Balochistan along with the rest of the country and labourers associated with the projects should be considered primary stakeholders, they demanded.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1410547/activists-take-streets-remembrance-slain-gwadar-labourers/>

UCG PLANT WORKERS PROTEST TERMINATION OF JOBS

Dawn, May 21st, 2017

MITHI: A large number of workers took out a rally and staged a demonstration at Kashmir Chowk here on Saturday in protest against termination of services of over 120 contractual employees and issuance of final notices to more than 400 others by the management of the underground coal gasification (UCG) project.

Dr Manik, Asadullah, Ahmed Ali Khaskheli and others who led the protest told journalists that the federal government should either release much-needed funds to the power generation plant installed under the UCG project in block 5 of Thar coalfield or adjust all the sacked workers in other coal projects.

The protesters later staged a sit-in outside the Thar Press Club where leaders of various political parties including Arbab Lutfullah, Syed Fida Hussain Shah and others came to express their sympathies with them.

Mr Lutfullah said that his group would fully support the workers' protest and demanded that the federal government should immediately release funds to the UCG project to save the plant and jobs of hundreds of people.

Prominent nuclear scientist Dr Samar Mubarkmand who headed the UCG project told journalists on phone that the plant which was engaged in power generation from coal was forced to terminate services of its employees due to serious financial crunch.

He said the project had been launched in 2008 at a cost of Rs10 billion to produce at least 100 megawatts of electricity. It was generating eight megawatts power now but both the federal and

provincial governments were neither purchasing the power from it nor releasing funds to run the plant since the beginning of this year, he said.

He regretted the project had no more funds to carry on work and was forced to shut down the plant due to which over 500 workers would lose their jobs in June. After having failed to persuade the government to run the plant they decided to terminate services of all employees, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334335>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017 KIDNAPPED PAKISTANI WORKERS OF POLISH FIRM PLEAD FOR HELP

Dawn, May 10th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Six Pakistanis working for a Polish oil company, who have been in the custody of the Taliban since November 2016, are shown requesting the authorities to make efforts for their release in a video footage released on Tuesday.

The hostages, who appeared in the video released by a Taliban group, were working with Polish oil company Geofizyka Krakow. They had been kidnapped from the Drazinda area of Dera Ismail Khan earlier in November 2016.

The video shows the six hostages sitting on the floor under a white banner fixed to a wall, while two masked gunmen stand beside them. One of the hostages, who identifies himself as Abdul Khaliq, reads a statement saying they are alive and well, so far. He also identifies other hostages as Sher Bahadar, Amjad Shahzad, Muhammad Riaz, Mohammad Hasan and Mohammad Amin.

“We plead [with the] authorities, our company and families to make efforts for our immediate release,” he said, adding that otherwise, they would meet the same fate of a Polish engineer working for the company, whom Pakistani Taliban had beheaded after kidnapping him in 2008. The video ends with the footage of the Polish engineer being beheaded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332220>

CHILD SERVANT FROM KANDHKOT RAPED IN KARACHI

Dawn, May 10, 2017

Mudaser Kazi

KARACHI: Incidents of inflicting torture on child servants seem to be on a rise. In a case that was reported in Sindh, it was a 12-year-old girl belonging to Kandhkot this time who was allegedly raped by her employers in Karachi’s Malir Cantt.

According to Kashmore SP Dr Samiullah Soomro, an FIR No 74/2017 was registered on the complaint of the rape survivor’s father at the A Section police station in Kandhkot on Monday. Due to extreme poverty, the child had been working as a maid for a few months at the Karachi residence of Rahib Sorhiani, who belongs to Kandhkot and does business in the provincial capital.

According to Soomro, seven people have been nominated in the FIR, which include Sorhiani, his two sons and nephews. Sections 337 and 376 of the Pakistan Penal Code have been included in the FIR for rape and injuries.

The officer explained that the employer, Sorhiani, called the grandmother of the rape survivor on Sunday, asking her to take the child with them as she has not been feeling well. As the child was falling unconscious repeatedly, the family took her for a medical examination. A lady doctor in Kandhkot said the girl has been sexually assaulted.

“They have ruined the life of our little daughter as well as ours,” the father of the child told The Express Tribune. He added that his daughter was raped after being drugged.

“The domestic worker, which in majority of cases is a child labourer, is against the law as Pakistan is also a signatory of UN Childs Rights Conventions,” said Mehnaz Rehman of Aurat Foundation, adding that a law for the protection of domestic workers needs to be introduced.

Meanwhile, a police team from Kandhkot, headed by Inspector Hafeez Chacharl, reached Karachi Tuesday night and, with the collaboration of Malir police, arrested two of the nominated suspects identified as Shan and Saqib.

On the other hand, Malir Cantt SHO Rao Dilshad said he was unaware of the incident and arrests. “We also heard about the news through media but so far neither Kandhkot police nor the family of the survivor approached us,” said SHO Dilshad. “The case should be registered in Karachi if the gang rape took place in Karachi. How is it possible that the Kandhkot police registered a case when the incident occurred in Karachi?” He said the FIR would be cancelled with the consultancy of senior officials if it is confirmed that the gang rape had occurred in Karachi and a new case would be registered in the port city.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1405531/child-servant-kandhkot-raped-karachi/>

10 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS GUNNED DOWN NEAR GWADAR
Dawn, May 14th, 2017

Behram Baloch

GWADAR: At least 10 men were killed and another was injured on Saturday when unidentified motorcyclists opened fire on labourers working on a road meant to connect remote towns with the port city of Gwadar, the gateway to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

The attack came a day after Deputy Senate Chairman Abdul Ghafoor Haideri’s convoy was targeted in Mastung. The bombing, claimed by the militant Islamic State (IS) group, claimed 27 lives.

Officials said that the gunmen attacked labourers in two places on a road connecting the Pishikan and Ganz areas of Gwadar district. The proscribed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

All 10 labourers belonged to Goth Haji Siddiq Lakha in the Kandiaro taluka of Naushahro Feroze district in Sindh. Gwadar Deputy Commissioner Naeem Bazai said the labourers had come to Balochistan to work on a month-long contract.

“The victims include three brothers,” he said.

Lt Gen Aamir Riaz, commander of the Southern Command, went to Gwadar along with other senior officials to attend the funeral of the victims and their bodies were flown to their native village on a C-130 aircraft.

Qadir Bakhsh, an eyewitness, told Dawn the two armed men on a motorbike lined up all the labourers working on the road construction site and shot them. He said he was some distance from the construction site when the attack happened.

Eight labourers were killed on the spot, since they were shot at from close range. The two assailants then made for another under construction building near Pishikan, a small coastal town 25km from Gwadar.

There, they killed another labourer and injured two others, said Hazoor Bakhsh, one of the men injured in the second attack. The injured were taken to hospitals in Pishikan and Gwadar, where one of the injured also died.

Gwadar Additional Deputy Commissioner Jamil Ahmed said the road was being constructed by the provincial Buildings and Roads Department (B&R) from Pishikan to Ganz. “The incident took place when the labourers were working on the road,” Mohammad Zareef, a senior levies official, told Dawn.

Hospital sources said all the victims received multiple bullet wounds. One labourer, who was shot in the leg, is currently being treated at hospital and is said to be in a stable condition.

The injured man claimed there were no security arrangements at the road construction site, despite threats from the banned organisation. “The contractor did not take any security measures to protect labourers at the construction site,” he complained.

Dur Mohammad, the contractor who has been working on the 15km road between Pishikan and Ganz for over three years, was not available for comment.

Nine out of victims have been identified so far. They are: Mohammad Khan, Ali Dost, Shahband, Abdul Hakeem, Rasool Bakhsh, Abdul Waheed, Zaheer Ahmed, Mohammad Saddam and Mohammad Asif. One of the deceased men has yet to be identified.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri, who is currently in China along with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, condemned the killing of the innocent labourers, saying that those involved in this barbarous act would not be pardoned. He sought a report on the incident from the authorities concerned and directed that they be arrested as soon as possible.

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti also condemned the tragic incident, saying: “We will not surrender before terrorists and will bring to justice all those involved in this brutal act”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333038>

A MIXED BAG FOR INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

Dawn, May 14th, 2017

Aamir Shafaat Khan

ALL three possible patterns of employment and unemployment are available across the Industrial sector. There are jobs, say, in the auto sector, while others dealing with denim and apparel have just about sustained jobs, and this followed by unemployment in leather and textiles.

The Korangi Industrial Area in Karachi comprises 4,000 units. There has been no significant improvement on the employment front in the last three to four years. Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) Chairman Masood Naqi claimed that out of 1.5 million people in employment, around two-thirds are on a permanent basis, while others have contracts or are daily-wagers. The future in his eyes looks no better.

Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) Chairman Mashood Ali Khan said that with almost 3,000 manufacturers in the arena, jobs have increased from 3m to 3.4m. With the new entrants expected in the auto sector, and existing players going for new models, employment prospects would be that much more, he said.

The car sector alone achieved 14pc compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the last three years, from 120,332 in 2013-14 to 180,000 in 2015-16. As a result, pundits are looking at 15pc higher job creation in the coming years. The growth in the market of two and three wheelers has been to the tune of 18pc, which only means more job opportunities.

In contrast, Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) Chairman Dr Kaiser Waheed said around 50 units had closed down in the last two years. Currently active units are 720 in which a million people are directly employed, while another million are indirect vendors. Besides, the biotech segment in the pharma sector had also seen a downfall that resulted in job losses over the last about four years. Alternative medicines, he said, was an area with decent prospects, but due to regulatory requirements, the manufacturers would face closures and people would lose jobs.

The cement sector has witnessed decent growth in the last 5-6 years and together with capacity enhancement has led to more jobs, but a sharp decline in exports, according to an official, has all but neutralised the element of job-creation. He said a continuous downward trend in exports with almost 50pc decline over the last few years has threatened the industry, but increase in domestic consumption saved the sector from drastic job cuts. In the short term, he said, there would be jobs in the southern region where two plants are due to start production soon, while in the northern region there would be many more jobs in the long run as the industry is planning to add around 15-20 million tonnes in production capacity.

Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD) Chairman Mohsin Sheikhan had no specific numbers to share as, according to him, construction activity depends on a range of segments starting from architectural work upwards. He estimated, however, that the industry was providing jobs to 2.6 to 3m skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled people.

Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) chief Ilyas Fazil said jobs in the downstream oil sector — refining, marketing, and transportation — were always available. And with expansion on the cards in terms of new refineries, upgrades in existing refineries, ports, retail outlets, storage, and pipelines, things will obviously improve further for job-seekers, he said.

As things stand today, over 100,000 individuals are directly or indirectly employed by the downstream sector, he said, adding that the specific sector had seen no job losses in recent years.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332982>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 1ST TO MAY 7TH 2017

PRESIDENT, PM VOW TO PROTECT WORKERS' RIGHTS

Dawn, May 1st, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The government is fully committed to solving the problems faced by labourers, strengthening labour laws and upgrading the living standards of labourers and their families said President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in their Labour Day messages on Sunday.

All efforts are being made to protect their rights and Pakistani labourers are distinguished for their progressive approach and productivity, said the president.

“The economic progress and development our country has gone through would not have been possible without the relentless efforts of our vital labour force,” he added.

Discussing the significance of the Labour Day, the president said that it was an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of working men and women who were an indispensable pillar of the country.

The president explained that May 1 symbolised the strength and character of the Pakistani workforce, its devotion and commitment towards making the country prosperous and progressive.

Remembering the Chicago martyrs and their valiant struggle against oppression, exploitation and injustice, President Hussain also paid tribute to the labour community for its valuable contribution in nation building.

He emphasised that through cooperation and support of all stakeholders, a better standard of living for the working class and an environment of equal opportunity and rights for all could be achieved.

“The world has become highly globalised, competitive and strongly interconnected, in which economic progress of any country requires a well-equipped workforce with necessary skills to compete with international counterparts,” he said.

He added that he was aware that a lot more needed to be done for the betterment of the working community and providing due rights to all workers.

Prime Minister Sharif said that the contributions of Pakistan's workforce must be recognised.

“I truly believe that our workforce is an extremely important pillar of society, playing a pivotal role in its socio-economic development,” he said.

He said that Labour Day was observed to honour the workers for their long and arduous struggle. He added that it provided an opportunity to recognise and pay tribute to the contributions the workers had made to progress, prosperity and well-being of their respective countries.

The prime minister said that the government’s goals of fast and inclusive growth leading to a modern and industrialised economy could only be achieved through a committed, hardworking and skilled workforce.

PM Sharif congratulated members of the country’s workforce, in both the private and public sectors, for their contribution and untiring struggle.

“Our belief in the dignity of labour is stronger than ever and we are cognisant that only a prosperous and happy workforce can enable Pakistan in realising its full potential and competing in today’s highly competitive globalised market economy,” the prime minister said.

“Workers and employers are our social partners. On this day, I reaffirm the government’s commitment to protecting the dignity of labour and pay special tribute to them for their concerted struggle and the indispensable role they have played in the nation’s socio-economic progress,” he added.

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that nation’s economic strength and vigour is determined by the status and standard of living of its labour class and protection of their rights.

In his message on the Labour Day, the speaker said the labour class played a vital role in the development and progress of a country and, therefore, it was essential to ensure their welfare and payment of proper and timely remuneration for their services.

He said Islam laid great emphasis on the welfare and proper reward of labour. All civilised societies in the world had legislated to ensure the rights and welfare of their labour force, he added. “We are observing the Labour Day with a resolve to reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of labour and to pay tribute to the valiant and heroic struggle of the workers of Chicago, who sacrificed their lives for the fundamental rights of their fellow workers.”

The speaker said the Pakistani labour force was rendering valuable services and contribution in the economies of other countries and was a great source of foreign exchange earnings. He said the present democratic government was pursuing labour-friendly policies and had legislated for ensuring welfare of the labour class in the country.

Mr Sadiq said rights and duties went side by side and urged the labour class to work hard with devotion to harness the country’s immense resources for the prosperity and development of the country and its people.

Acting National Assembly Speaker Murtaza Javed Abbasi, in his message, said workforce was extremely significant for the socio-economic development of any country.

He said the government was taking various steps for the welfare of labourers and their families. He reiterated the government's commitment to safeguarding the dignity and status of the workforce.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330310>

NO LABOUR REFORM

Dawn, May 1st, 2017

Zeenat Hisam

THE world of labour has gone through great turbulence. Globalisation, restructuring, deregulation of economies and technological changes have reshaped labour relations. Precarious, informal employment and diverse contractual forms of work have replaced traditional permanent employment.

The supply chain production system has left the workforce dispersed in various unconnected spaces, shrinking the power of labour unions. Legal frameworks based on old employment relations models no longer protect workers. This has led to a global debate on labour law reforms to address adverse impacts of change.

Many countries have enacted laws seeking to protect workers from vulnerability. Examples include the Dutch Flexibility and Security Act 1999, the Austrian Severance Act 2002, Indonesian National Social Security System Act 2004, Indian National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 and Unorganised Workers Social Security Act 2008, Myanmar Social Security Law 2012, Brazilian domestic workers' legislation 2014 and the Turkish law governing temporary employment contracts 2016.

Pakistan's story is different. Labour entered the new millennium with the Industrial Relations Ordinance (IRO) 2002 imposed by the military regime, which was more restrictive than IRO 1969. The Finance Act 2006 imposed further curbs on workers' rights, and when the Industrial Relations Act 2008 was enacted by the democratic government it too did not conform to the spirit of the Constitution. The passage of the 18th Amendment in 2010, which devolved labour to the provinces, brought a ray of hope to workers who expected greater provincial autonomy to deliver improved labour legislation, better enforcement and thus decent work conditions.

The hope for modernising and reforming the labour code (based on the colonial era legal framework) soon faded as constraints surfaced, including lack of political will, low priority to labour, poor capacity of provincial labour departments and the absence of a tripartite mechanism. The reviewing, modernising and provincialising of the pre-devolution labour code required strong national commitment, prioritising, provincial coordination, federal guidance and oversight.

In the absence of these, the provinces have gone their own way, sluggishly, to adopt the once federal — once colonial — laws. The process has so far yielded the adoption of 19 labour laws in Punjab, 12 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 11 in Balochistan and 10 in Sindh.

The provinces opted not to reform the key legislation, the industrial relations law, and instead based it on IRO 1969. None of the provinces did away with repressive and exclusionary clauses. Only the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2010 granted the rights to organise and collective bargaining to

agricultural workers, but the rules have yet to be formulated. Hence, the clause is as good as dead. Many of the provinces' laws do not adhere to international standards.

The crucial issue of ensuring uniformity of laws in the provinces remains to be addressed. An overarching, broader national framework embodying fundamental principles as enshrined in the Constitution and the ILO standards is needed. Seven years have passed since the 18th Amendment and the federal government has neither come up with such a framework nor placed a statutory mechanism to ensure that provincial laws adhere to this blueprint.

Far from responding to the emerging needs of social protection to workers, reforming labour laws and formulating inclusive legislation, the country has failed to strengthen even the couple of laws dealing with social security of a minuscule section of the workforce, ie Employees Old-age Benefits Institution Act 1976 and the Workers Welfare Funds Ordinance 1971. The status of the two state-run labour welfare institutions based on these laws remains contested vis-à-vis the 18th Amendment.

Amidst the ongoing conflict over ownership between the provinces and the federation, the constitutional petitions filed in the Supreme Court (by Punjab for devolution, by KP and Balochistan against devolution) and the adoption of the two laws by Sindh, the institutional decline of the EOBI and WWF continues to the detriment of workers in the four provinces. The EOBI, WWF and Provincial Social Security Ordinance 1971 need to be made inclusive of temporary workers and other categories of vulnerable workers.

The federal Law and Justice Division should partner with the provinces on reform and scrutiny of labour laws under a well-defined system. Provincial governments should put in place tripartite consultation mechanisms and ensure transparency. Draft bills should be shared with all stakeholders and enough time given for adequate review and feedback.

Labour laws must have three attributes: a grounding in fundamental principles (constitutionally mandated rights and international standards); coherent building of the labour code upon these principles; and fair and efficient implementation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330285>

WORKERS REJECT RS1,000 HIKE IN WAGES

Dawn, May 2nd, 2017

LAHORE: All Pakistan Workers Confederation rejected Rs1,000 increase in the minimum wages (from Rs14,000 to Rs15,000) announced by the minister concerned at a Labour Day event at Aiwan-i-Iqbal here on Monday, and demanded minimum Rs30,000 per month for eight-hour a day work.

At its main rally, the PWC also condemned the banning of May Day rallies by the Punjab government for "security reasons".

On the occasion, All Pakistan Workers Confederation Secretary General Khurshid Ahmad said the workers demanded respectable wages and better health and safety measures at the workplace.

"We have not forgotten the martyrs of Chicago who laid down their lives for an 8-hour a day work," he said and added that labourers would remember them despite the ban imposed on workers' rallies.

Awami Workers Party spokesperson Farooq Tariq condemned the ban across Punjab and said: “It’s an irony that the PML-N, PTI and PPP are free to hold public meetings, but workers have been asked to desist (from holding such events).”

He demanded minimum wages of Rs30,000 for workers and lifting the ban on trade unions in public sector institutions, including hospitals and educational institutions.

All Pakistan Trade Union Federation Secretary General Rubina Jamil regretted the government had failed to implement labour laws. She rejected the Rs1,000 raise in the minimum wages and vowed to launch a “mass movement” for better wages.

Those who spoke on the occasion included Yousaf Baloch, Niaz Khan, Mahmood Butt, Baba Najmi, Rana Saleem, Mohammed Akbar, Sakhalin Khan, Saeed Gujjar, Riffet Maqsood and Shazia Butt.

A large number of workers from different industries attended the main rally. They chanted slogans against the government and the labour department for “failing to protect the workers’ rights”.

Earlier, Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union, Labour Education Foundation, Progressive Labour Federation and Ittehad Carpet Workers Union staged a rally from Garhi Shahu that joined the main rally at Shimla Pehari. Hundreds of women workers from informal sector also joined in the rally.

Participants in the rally vent their anger at CM Shahbaz Sharif for not attending the Labour Day event at Aiwan-i-Iqbal. Many labour leaders who were invited to the event left the venue as soon as they came to know that the chief minister was not attending it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330477>

LABOUR UNIONS DEMAND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, PAY FOR WORKERS
Dawn, May 2nd, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The working conditions of labourers and mine workers in Balochistan are going from bad to worse as mine owners and other institutions are denying them their rights, said leaders of labour organisations on Monday.

A majority of labourers work for daily wages and are not being provided with any of the facilities they should be able to avail as per the labour laws, they said.

Many of them are not even registered with the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), they added.

Various labour organisations, including the All Pakistan Labour Federation (APLF), Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation (PCMLF), Pakistan Workers Confederation Balochistan (PWC), PWD Employees Union, Qesco Labour Union and PMDC Employees Union, organised rallies around the provincial capital to pay tribute to the Chicago martyrs.

The participants of the rallies marched through the main roads of the city carrying banners and placards with their demands printed on them.

They gathered on the lawn of the Quetta Metropolitan Corporation where labour leaders, including APLF president Sultan Muhammad Khan, PCMLF chairman Muhammad Zameen, PWC's provincial chairman Ramzan Achakzai, Ali Bakhsh Jamali and Agha Sultan Shah, addressed the workers.

“Parliament does not represent the labour class and has no time to discuss our issues or problems being faced by the working class,” they said.

They also strongly criticised the government for ignoring the problems of the working class.

They demanded that salaries and wages of labourers be increased and job security be ensured in the Quetta Electricity Supply Company and other government institutions.

“The Workers Welfare Fund, social security and EOBI should be extended to mine workers as well,” they said, adding that the age limit of mine workers for the EOBI pension should be decreased to 50 from the current 55.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330503>

MC WORKERS CONTINUE PROTEST AGAINST NON-PAYMENT OF SALARIES

Dawn, May 2nd, 2017

GUJRAT: Scores of workers of the Gujrat Municipal Corporation continued their sit-in at Nawab Sahib Chowk on the Labour Day against non-payment of their salaries for the last four months.

Thirty workers of the municipal corporation (MC) were not paid the salaries by the department while the officials concerned in the local government department referred to some technical issues in the workers' recruitment due to which they could not be paid.

They have been holding the sit-in for almost a week now.

Some 400 daily-wage employees of the municipal corporation have also been terminated by the local government department due to a policy change which held that the previously recruited daily-wage workers could not be retained. However, the department relaxed the condition for workers of sanitation branch in January but such workers in rest of the branches were sacked.

According to a fresh notification issued few days ago by the Punjab Local Government department, the daily-wage workers of all categories have been sacked and local bodies have been asked to make the fresh recruitments on a regular basis instead of daily wage in all the branches of municipality services.

Municipal Corporation Chief Officer Afzal Butt told Dawn the protesting workers had been the daily-wage employees of the then Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) which had become dysfunctional following the bifurcation of the TMA into different municipalities. They were sacked in December after the LG department verified the list of such workers. He said more than 400 daily-wage workers, including the sanitary workers, tube well operators, firemen, spray men, clerics, peons

and computer operators, had been terminated from the municipal corporation in the wake of the fresh notification.

Mr Butt said the corporation had sought approval from the local government department for recruitment of at least 600 workers and officials on a regular basis, including 452 sanitary workers, 65 tube well operators and drivers.

Meanwhile, Gujrat Mayor Haji Nasir Mehmood has also sought permission from the government to continue with the daily-wage workers until the completion of regular staff.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330468/mc-workers-continue-protest-against-non-payment-of-salaries>

FOR COUNTRY'S TOILERS, EVERY DAY IS LABOUR DAY

Dawn, May 2nd, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: As the world observed Labour Day, also known as May Day, the workforce here on Monday did not have a moment to rest or think about this day commemorating their hard work and sacrifices.

On the roads swept clean by sweepers, there was a joint rally taken out from Mazar-i-Quaid to the Karachi Press Club by various labour organisations to mark the day. There were politicians, lawyers, civil society activists and non-governmental organisations' workers walking mostly with a handful of labourers and farmers who were also brought in for good measure.

Yet it seemed that in paying tribute to the workers of Chicago who offered their lives to get basic rights for labourers in 1886, the labourers and workers of the country were pretty much forgotten.

Nazeer Ahmed, a loader who lifts and carries heavy sacks full of flour the entire day on Tara Chand Road in Keamari, said that he was aware of such a day for labourers but didn't know when it occurred. When informed that he could have information and awareness about it from television or radio, he said that he didn't have time for that sort of thing. "I work from morning till evening. After that I go straight home, I eat and go to sleep," he said.

He also did not know that Labour Day was a holiday. "Oh no, I wouldn't miss work for such a day. It would mean going without my daily earnings of around Rs800. Not a chance," he said, while taking a short breather on the steps of a shop he was unloading the flour for from a pickup truck.

"I was a poor labourer making bricks in my village. My search for better prospects brought me to Karachi. After finding work here I also brought over my wife and children. My wife used to clean houses and wash dishes until one year ago when she became unwell. Now my sons have also found work. One does denting and painting work on cars and the other is learning motorcycle repair work," said the loader.

Workers carry cutouts of images of political parties' leaders as they shout slogans during a rally held on Monday to mark International Workers' Day. Workers from various sectors attended rallies across the country, calling for better working conditions and hike in their wages.—AFP

In a dark and dingy workshop in Shershah, there are a group of men working with hot metal and mud. "It is casting," said the one filling cool mud around a hot mould before stepping on top of it to aid the casting process by his weight.

"We manufacture various things here such as parts for factory machines or engines," said Shahid Ali, cleaning the moulds for casting.

On one side there is the hot chamber for melting the metal. What happens if anyone gets hurt or burns themselves during the work? "You take one or two days off and then you come back after you recover," said Shahid.

All the men there had heard about Labour Day. "I don't know what kind of labourers take off to celebrate May 1. We earn Rs600 daily. We certainly can't afford to miss work like that," Shahid added.

Twelve-year-old Maqbool assists his father with masonry work. Each day the father and son walk to Burnes Road from Hijrat Colony hoping to find work. "If we find work, we make around Rs1,200 a day," said the boy. "And when my father is in a good mood, he also gives me about Rs500," he added.

As a contractor in a car stopped by to gather a few manual labourers, Maqbool, too, quickly stood up hoping to be selected as his father negotiated about his work and rate with the man.

Asked if he went to a school, Maqbool shook his head. "But I go to a madressah," he said.

Asked if he had heard about Labour Day, he shook his head and asked if it was just one day? "I work every day. Every day is Labour Day for me," he said.

"If we took it off to celebrate our day, do you think our contractor will understand? Do you think that trains will stop coming? The work has to go on and we have to do it," said Din Mohammad, a porter, or coolie as they are called, at the Cantonment Railway Station.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330448>

June 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 19TH TO JUNE 25 TH 2017

PEASANTS` BODY PLANS `LONG MARCH` FOR RIGHTS

Dawn, 19 June 2017

MIRPURKHAS: The Sindh Had Mazdoor Jiddojahad will launch a `long march` on June 28 from Khipro to Hyderabad to draw government`s attention to the problems of labourers and peasants. The Hari organisation`s head advocate Kanji Rano Bheel told media persons at the local press club on Sunday that the long march would remain on roads for six days till it culminated in Hyderabad.

He said that his organisation was struggling for land reforms aimed at giving state land to the landless peasants, paniculady women so that they could earn their own livelihood.

He said that recently a standing committee of Senate had sought comments from Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments till July 15 asking them whether land reforms should be made in their provinces like Balochistan or not.

He demanded the Sindh government should immediately convey its comments to the Senate committee as peasants and labourers were deprived of their rights and rightful share in land in past when feudal lords with the help of bureaucrats had given government land to their favorites instead of peasants.

Mr Bheel stressed the need for a fair and transparent policy to award state land to genuine peasants and urged the government to force big landlords to distribute land among peasants under the land reforms.

He called for the establishment of Haridouds on district level to serve justice to poor peasants and urged the government to ensure entry of peasants' names in Khasra book (revenue record) as no peasant had been registered in the book which was a violation of revenue rules. It should be made binding on all landlords and growers to maintain account of crops after each harvest, he said.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=19_06_2017_117_001

25 KILLED SINCE LAUNCH OF TRAIN PROJECT: FOUR ORANGE LINE WORKERS INJURED

Dawn, June 21st, 2017

LAHORE: Four labourers working with Orange Line Metro Train project were injured after falling from a crane at Yateem Khana Chowk station on Tuesday.

The labourers were being shifted to an under-construction pillar through a crane when its trolley broke down. The labourers fell on the road from a height of some 50 feet and suffered critical injuries.

Rescue 1122 shifted the injured to the Mayo Hospital where three of them were said to be critical. The injured were identified as Rizwan, Shahid, Ijaz and Shahzad. Three of the victims, who are under 18 years of age, were not wearing safety gear.

An eyewitness said the labourers working on the train project were not being provided with any safety gadget. It was not the first incident in which the workers become victim to poor working conditions at train project. So far more than 25 workers were killed in separate incidents.

On Jan 11 this year, seven workers hired by the Habib Construction Company for the Orange Line project died and 14 others injured in a fire that erupted on the third storey of a makeshift residence for workers in Mehmood Booti area near Lahore Ring Road.

In May 2016, seven workers were killed and several others injured when a wall of a godown collapsed on their makeshift residence in Manawan. In January 2016, two labourers died when they suffered electric shocks while working on the project in Chuhng area.

On Oct 19, 2015, a motorcyclist died trying to overtake a vehicle-mounted mixer. Another man died in an accident on Nov 26, 2015. A safety worker at Habib Construction Services died when he slipped and was run over by a vehicle.

Muhammad Sharif, a labourer hired by a sub-contractor, was walking past an excavator when he was hit by a motorcyclist. He lost his balance and fell to the ground and was run over by the excavator.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1340798/25-killed-since-launch-of-train-project-four-orange-line-workers-injured>

LABOURER DIES AT QUARRYING SITE

Dawn, June 21, 2017

TAXILA: A labourer died at a quarrying site in the Pathargarh area, in the limits of the Hassanabdal police, on Tuesday.

Police and hospital sources said Mohammad Rafaqar, a father of three who resided in Dhoke Tamman near Sangjani, was near a stone crushing plant when he was hit on the head by a stone, killing him on the spot.

Hassanabdal police have registered a case and begun investigating the incident. This is the third incident in the last year in which lives have been lost due to a lack of safety measures or the enforcement of labour laws by mines and the labour department, respectively.

Separately, Hazro police on Tuesday arrested 14 people for bathing in the Ghazi Barotha water channel.

According to the SDPO Fayyazul Haq, bathing and swimming in the water channel is banned. Mr Haq said many people have died in the water channel, and the police have taken action against those violating the ban.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1340827>

FOUR WOUNDED OLMT WORKERS FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES

The Express Tribune, June 21st, 2017.

LAHORE: Four laborers were severely injured in an accident which occurred at the construction site of the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) project. The incident occurred near the Mandi Stop on Multan Road on Tuesday and was allegedly caused by a violation of safety protocols during.

The victims were being taken to the track with a puller lifted by a crane. Suddenly, the puller broke down and the victims fell to the ground. They suffered critical injuries and were admitted to a nearby hospital.

They were identified as Rizwan, Shahid, Ijaz and Shahzad. Three of them were under 18 years of age.

Eyewitness accounts, photos of the victims and video footage showed that none of them were wearing safety gear.

This is not the first time workers have had been exposed to poor working conditions during OLMT construction.

This project has claimed over 25 lives of workers to date.

On January 11, 2017, seven people working on the OLMT project died and 14 others were injured in a fire incident on the third storey of a makeshift residence near Mehmood Booti. On May 24, 2016, seven workers died and several others injured when the wall of a warehouse had collapsed on their make-shift residence near Manwan. The deceased were identified as Rashid, Muhammad Nadeem, Muhammad Usman, Zulfikar, Nadar, Muhammad Irfan, and Muhammad Maqbool.

In January 2016, two labourers died of an electric shock while working on the Orange Line Metro Train project in Chung area.

In another incident, Muhammad Ashfaq died on October 19, 2015, when he lost control of a motorcycle he was riding as he tried to overtake a truck-mounted concrete mixer which was headed for construction work on OLMT.

Azeem Ishaque also died in an accident involving a mixer vehicle on November 26, 2015. He lost balance of a motorcycle he was riding past the mixer when a sack of clothes he was carrying got stuck in the vehicle.

He fell to the ground and was run over by the truck's rear wheel. Amanullah, a safety worker at Habib Construction Services, was guiding an excavator before slipping and being run over by a vehicle. He died on the spot.

Muhammad Sharif, a labourer hired by a subcontractor, was walking past an excavator when he was hit by a motorcyclist. He lost balance and fell to the ground before being run over by the excavator.

OLMT Steering Committee Chairperson Khawaja Ahmad Hassan, during the project's weekly progress review meeting on December 15, 2016, had directed metro train contractors and utility companies to immediately provide the required safety gear for workers to avoid any untoward incident.

Hassan also ordered city traffic police officials to ensure all precast material was properly escorted by the traffic officials so that no accident occurs during transportation from the manufacturing yard to the project site.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1440650/without-safety-net-four-wounded-olmt-workers-fight-lives/>

CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARES CHILD LABOUR AS WORST FORM OF SLAVERY

The Express Tribune, 21 June 2017

KARACHI: Child rights activists urged the federal and provincial governments to take meaningful steps to abolish child labour in Pakistan, classifying child labour as one of the worst forms of modern-day slavery.

This consensus emerged at a consultative meeting organised on Tuesday by various civil society organisations at a local hotel to discuss strategies to highlight key issues related to child labour and slavery.

During the event, the participants reviewed a five-year 'strategic plan', which contained special intervention plans and aimed at curbing the menace of child labour. Salient features of the plan, based on a comprehensive strategy, were shared with the participants; with a call for collective action and mutual cooperation for achieving meaningful results for the elimination of child labour in the country.

"The Global Slavery Index, 2016 ranked Pakistan at number six with an estimated 2.13 million people living in conditions of slavery. This makes up for 1.13% of the country's population, with a ratio of 62.47:100 for vulnerability to modern slavery," shared Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child Executive Director Sadia Hussain.

"Despite the eagerness of provincial governments to enact child protection laws in recent years, the state of child labour seems to be worsening overtime. Cases of children facing abuse, torture and accidents due to hazardous working conditions have become alarmingly common," Hussain said. This is partly due to weak implementation of laws and a lack of coordination between the national and provincial child protection bodies, she added.

Speaking at the consultation, Kashif Bajeer from Child Rights Movement said that according to a 2015 study by the International Labour Organisation, it is estimated that 5.7 million children aged between 10 and 17 years are engaged in extreme and hazardous child labour, excluding children working within the informal economy.

Bajeer shared that Pakistan is signatory to C182- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, C029 -Forced Labour Convention, 1930 and C105- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957.

Under these obligations, Pakistan is liable to take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, forced labour and slavery, Bajeer said.

"However, not only is there a visible hindrance in the implementation of anti-child labour laws but there seems to be a chasm between different key departments in tackling the issue," he commented.

[/https://tribune.com.pk/story/1440562/civil-society-declares-child-labour-worst-form-slavery/](https://tribune.com.pk/story/1440562/civil-society-declares-child-labour-worst-form-slavery/)

WORKERS PROTEST AGAINST DELAY IN WAGES

Business Recorder, 25 June 2017

LAHORE: The orange line train project workers protested against delay in wages and burnt tyres at Multan Road to lodge their protest on Saturday.

They raised slogans against the construction company they are employed for and said they have no clue about payment of wages a day before Eid. The Company had promised to pay wages on 22nd of Ramazan but it failed to honour its commitment till date, they added. The workers obstructed traffic flow after blocking the road and urged the Chief Minister Punjab to take notice of their plight.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/25/5-page/884959-news.html>

LABOURER 'HANGS HIMSELF' WHILE IN POLICE CUSTODY

The Express Tribune, June 25, 2017

LAHORE: A 22-year-old labourer has died under mysterious circumstances in the custody of the CIA Civil Lines Police.

The deceased, identified as Faisal worked, at a warehouse called MI Centre in Ichra. On Wednesday night, he was at work when a police team reportedly picked him from his workplace and took the man to an undisclosed location.

Qaiser, the elder brother of Faisal, told The Express Tribune that the family reached his brother's workplace to inquire over his whereabouts when the latter was unreachable. However, nobody knew where the worker had disappeared to.

"We were perturbed and frustrated by the fact that he mysteriously went missing," Qaiser added. "We kept on searching and calling his number which finally turned back on the next day." His younger brother called the phone immediately and someone claiming to be a police officer picked up at the call at other end. However, the man refused to disclose his name, but said Faisal was in custody and would reach home soon. He 'policeman' disconnected the call immediately afterwards.

The family called again after two hours on the same number and the person who received the call started abusing and misbehaving. He warned the brothers not to call again.

Unaware of Faisal's condition of whereabouts, the brothers tried everything in their power to reach their missing sibling.

All of sudden, they received information that Faisal had died. A police official called to say that the man had committed suicide by hanging himself with a scarf. "The news fell like a bomb-shell on us. We were really shocked and rushed to the Ghaziabad Police Station," said Qaiser.

He added different police officials were making contradictory statements over the circumstances of the death. He doubted that his brother committed suicide. "He has been murdered by the police," Qaiser alleged.

Qaiser claimed that his brother had never been nominated in a case or arrested, adding the police had not as much as shown up at their doorstep.

The brother said Faisal's "murder", just a few days before Eidul Fitr, was tormenting for the family. He demanded justice from the authorities and said the family had filed in an application with the Ghaziabad police for the registration of an FIR.

DSP CIA Civil Lines Mian Shafqat said the deceased was a robbery suspect and was allegedly involved in three incidents spreading across Ichra, Sabzazar and Ghaziabad.

Ghaziabad SHO Qamar Abbass said the police were awaiting the medico-legal and autopsy report for further action.

Saroop Ijaz, a rights activist and author of the Human Rights Watch report called This Crooked System-Police Abuse and Reform in Pakistan, commented on custodial deaths. He said these incidents were occurring with an alarming regularity. He lamented the lack of investigation in such cases and said there was not a single example of a police official or officer being found guilty.

To avoid such incidents in future, he said fair, transparent and thorough investigations were needed and those found guilty must be punished to eliminate the sense of invincibility among police officials. He said even when an official is found guilty, such cases are seen as departmental negligence.

“Such deaths must be treated as a criminal offence and the FIR should be registered under Section 302 (murder) of the CrPC rather than 155-C of the Police Order.

He also slammed the practice of police of not informing a detainee’s family of the arrest or hiding their whereabouts. He said such an act was a violation of The Constitution of Pakistan 1973 and fundamental rights enshrined in it. Saroop added it was also in violation of the right to a fair trial.

Former additional IG Sarmad Saeed Khan said police usually avoided torture that could lead to deaths. According to him, custodial death could not be justified. “Even if a victim dies of natural causes, the police is responsible for providing medical facilities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1444209/labourer-hangs-police-custody/>
NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 12TH TO JUNE 18 TH 2017
SHEHBAZ VOWS TO ERADICATE CHILD LABOR FROM PUNJAB
Business Recorder, 12 June 2017

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has said that child labour is a social and economic issue which is result of different aspects. Elimination of child labour is a form of worship and mission of Punjab government, he added.

He said that children are like flowers and their protection is responsibility of all of us. Forceful labour imposed on children is the vilest act and none of the societies allow this as children are the future and asset of any country. In a message on International Child Labour Day, Shahbaz said that child labour is a criminal act in international laws and effective lawmaking has been done in Punjab which will uproot the menace of child labour from the province.

Punjab government has abolished child labour at brick-kilns and with the huge funds of billions rupees it has freed 90 thousand children and enrolled them in schools by replacing mud with books from the innocent hands, children are provided with educational scholarships, free books, uniform, shoes, stationery and other educational facilities.

He vowed that child labour will be eliminated from petrol pumps, workshops and hotels as well.

More concentration on the education and training of children will lead the nation to prosperity and progress, he added. It is the responsibility of every member of the society especially NGO’s to concentrate on this issue. The Chief Minister said that he himself is monitoring the steps taken to end up child labour and will continue to struggle to nip this evil in the bud.

He said that steps taken by Punjab government in this regard were appreciated at global level conference. He said that celebrating this day is aimed at expediting the struggle to end up child labour. Today, we have to inform the people about the effects of child labour at the future of children and to express the determination that all needful steps would be taken to abolish child labour.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/12/19-page/881901-news.html>

CALL FOR IMPLEMENTING LAWS ON CHILD LABOUR

Dawn, June 13th, 2017

HYDERABAD: At a programme held to mark the World Day against Child Labour on Monday, speakers called for implementation of the law against child labour and also for bringing the agricultural and domestic labour sectors within the formal sector.

The programme was held in the office of the Society for Protection of Rights of the Child (Sparc) Jamshoro in collaboration with the Child Rights Movement (CRM), according to a press release.

Child Rights Movement (CRM) secretary Zahid Thebo said the last National Child Labour Survey was carried out more than 20 years ago in 1996, which estimated around 3.3 million children to be working in Pakistan.

“It is estimated that 5.7 million 10-17 year-olds, representing almost 20 per cent of all children in the age group, are labourers, according to a 2015 study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO),” he said.

These figures however accounted mostly for those children employed in the agricultural sector whereas a large proportion of children working within the informal economy were completely unaccounted for.

“The closest figures that are available for the prevalence of domestic child labour are from a 2004 ILO report, which states this number as 264,000 children. These numbers appear quite far from the truth considering not only demographic changes over the last decade, but also the lack of any initiatives taken to curb this menace,” he said.

He said that even protections afforded under the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950 had become outdated as it called for amendment and implementation in the province. With the country facing major demographic and economic restructuring, there was a dire need to place stricter and more specific mechanisms to help curb that menace, if those issues were to be addressed meaningfully.

The assistant director labour and focal person of the ‘child-labour free district Jamshoro initiative’, Samand Soomro, said that a district task force had been formed in Jamshoro to provide a focal point for the complaints and actions against child labour in the formal sector.

The task force would utilise the services of the labour department with the support of Sindh police to provide an immediate response to the complaints.

“Some 22.6 million children are still out of school in the country. This is in direct contradiction to Article 25-A of the Constitution under which every Pakistani child between 5-16 years of age has the right to free and compulsory education, according to annual State of Pakistan’s Children Report produced by Sparc,” the society’s regional head Kashif Bajeeer said.

He appealed to the government to place stricter mechanisms on the agricultural and domestic labour sectors by bringing them within the purview of the formal sector. He highlighted the plight of millions of undocumented labourers across the country.

He argued that for the millions employed within the informal sectors in the form of farm labourers and domestic servants, the situation was deteriorating.

“These workers comprising mostly children often work long hours, without any form of minimum wages, pensioners’ benefits or any protection under the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) or worker’s welfare funds. In fact, a large number of workers, especially those who are employed in rural areas, don’t have CNICs,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1339091>

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR: BABY STEPS NEEDED TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOUR

The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2017.

Ali Ousat

LAHORE: Jail Road, which is usually chock-a-block full during the day, is accommodating locals who are out and about the town.

Under the streetlight, there is a makeshift café where a 10-year-old child is serving tea. It is midnight and one can hear distinct voices repeating “Chotay bhai, please bring one more cup of tea.”

Supreme Court Lawyer Humayun Faiz Rasool said people around the world are observing World Day against Child Labour today. In Pakistan, however, most children do not even that they have rights. “Child labour laws are being openly violated in the heart of the city,” he lamented.

According to the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance 2016, the government has set parameters which do not provide cover to adolescents above 14. This is clearly against global laws, including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Children’s Fund and UNICECO.

“Our children are the worst examples of child labour laws,” he said.

There are millions of children, who work as domestic help and the government has failed to implement labour laws, he said. The lawyer added the situation is unacceptable as most kids are subjected to physical and mental torture, sexual abuse or trafficking.

Labour Education Foundation (LEF) Coordinator Jalwat Ali agreed that children in Pakistan are living in the worst conditions.

The population of Ahmed Town – an urban slum – is almost 40,000, she said, adding around 5,000 children below the age of 12 earn to support their families. “We cannot eliminate child labour without social reforms, abolition of poverty, proper social security system and implementation of the minimum wage system,” she said.

In 2015, the Punjab government set a target to send all children to schools and abolish all child labour in Punjab. When contacted, Provincial Minister for Education Rana Mashud Ahmed Khan said due to

some indifferences and lack of coordination with the federal government, Punjab could not achieve its target of sending all children to school.

“The Punjab government has set a new goal and is committed to send all children to school by 2018,” he said.

A country-wide labour movement called Red workers Front (RWF) has compiled data of child labour. RWF Coordinator Adam Pal said around 20 million children are working as labour in the country and 50% of them are below the age of 10.

Children in Pakistan work at brick kilns, weave carpets, work in glass bangle factories, apart from making leather and surgical instruments. They are even involved in coal mining, according to the US department of labour.

“It is a wakeup call for all working classes as poverty, unemployment, hunger, destitution and ignorance has made the system rotten,” he said. “Only socialism can bring the needed change in the lives of working-class people.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1433931/world-day-child-labour-baby-steps-needed-eliminate-child-labour/>

SHC ISSUES NOTICE ON BAIL PLEA IN BALDIA FACTORY FIRE CASE

The Express Tribune, June 13, 2017

The Sindh High Court (SHC) issued on Monday a notice to the special public prosecutor on a bail application filed by a suspect nominated in the 2012 Baldia factory fire case in which 259 workers were killed.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Sadiq Hussain Bhatti, directed the prosecutor to file comments on the bail plea of Zubair alias Lala alias Chariya by the next date of the hearing, to be later notified by the office.

Zubair had approached the court against the dismissal of his bail application by the concerned anti-terrorism court where the trial against Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leaders Hammad Siddiqui, Abdul Rauf Siddiqui, Abdul Rehman, alias Bhola and others is pending in the factory fire case.

A joint investigation team had found that a man, Zubair, supporter of the MQM who ran the finishing department at the ill-fated Ali Enterprises, came on the day of incident to the factory accompanied by Waseem Dehelvi and four others.

An accountant at the factory, Muhammad Arshad, testified that he saw Zubair handing out black shopping bags to the men accompanying him. Zubair was the first to toss a bag to the side of the warehouse and the rest followed course and threw their bags in different directions. The fire erupted within a short period of time, Arshad said.

Zubair’s lawyer, Advocate Muhammad Tamaz Khan, argued that the trial court had rejected his client’s bail plea without considering the facts on record. He pleaded to the court to set aside the trial court’s bail rejection order and grant bail to Zubair.

In the hearing on May 29, the court had issued a notice to the special public prosecutor, Sajid Mehboob Sheikh, to file comments but he was absent during the hearing on Monday. The bench again issued a notice to him to file comments by the next date of the hearing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1433853/shc-issues-notice-bail-plea-baldia-factory-fire-case/>

CHILD LABOUR SURVEY

Dawn, June 14th, 2017

AN NGO has demanded a ‘comprehensive’ survey of child labour in the country, adding its voice to the growing calls for urgent intervention in a neglected area. Pakistani children have to perpetually wait for attention as their elders vie with each other for notice. There is, sadly, far too much evidence of how this country is neglecting its young ones to the point that it sometimes appears that we as a nation no longer have the sympathy we once possessed for our vulnerable segments. Many of those who feel this way have long been frustrated with a system that offers no quick remedies and that shows only a slow improvement in the most sensitive area of child labour. The progress that is visible lies most notably in greater awareness, even if sympathy is often lacking, of the issue as compared to the past. This is something of a feat given that there are many other issues on the state’s priority list that take precedence over the objective of eliminating child labour.

The concerned NGO reminds us that there has been no child labour survey for two decades — the last one was conducted in 1996. To think that a whole generation has come of age in the interlude — the less privileged of its members having to toil in the workshops and in factories and in hidden places that are allowed to exist in the name of cheap labour — is shocking.

However, there will be some who are not concerned about the delay in amassing newer details on the state of child labour. Such an exercise could have placed greater demands on our leaders who are otherwise happy to issue a statement or two on child rights or conduct a raid and free a few young souls from bonded labour. They would like to avoid bad publicity for the country. They want to continue pretending that child labour does not exist in the country.’

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339365>

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS TO GET ‘BENAZIR MAZDOOR CARD’

Dawn, June 15th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The Sindh government announced on Tuesday that all industrial workers would get Benazir Mazdoor Card through the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), which would entitle them to facilities provided by the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (Sessi).

“They [industrial workers] will get these cards very soon for their transparent registration and verification ensuring them all facilities provided by Sessi,” Sindh Labour Minister Nasir Shah said during a meeting with Nadra and Sessi authorities at the Sindh Assembly’s committee room.

The meeting was attended by Nadra's Sindh director general Lt Col Mohammad Ahmed Khatak, its director Khalid Waleed, Sessi commissioner Farooq Leghari, its vice commissioner and other officials.

Nasir Shah, who also holds the portfolios of transport, mass transit and information, informed the meeting that a proposal was under consideration to provide Mazdoor cards through a link of Sessi to be made with Nadra.

All registered workers would get such facility, he said, adding that a modern system would be evolved to provide services and welfare packages to all industrial workers.

Nadra will issue the Mazdoor cards stuffed with database registration, verification and facilities of which the holder will be entitled to.

The meeting was informed that a joint committee had been set up for final examination of the proposal made by Nadra and for firming up recommendations for the benefit of industrial workers.

The labour minister said the Pakistan Peoples Party had always taken worker-friendly measures and established welfare institutions to improve workers' living standard. "This is part of the same policies of the PPP which want to alleviate status of workers in the society."

He said the Benazir Mazdoor Card was part of the development programme of the PPP which it envisaged for labourers and other workers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339548>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 5TH TO JUNE 11 TH 2017 UMERKOT SANITARY WORKER DIES AFTER DOCTORS REFUSE TREATMENT OF 'UNCLEAN' PATIENT

Hanif Samoon

A sanitary worker who fell unconscious while cleaning a drain lost his life after doctors at Civil Hospital Umerkot allegedly refused to treat him until his body was washed.

Thirty-year-old Irfan and his three fellow workers had stepped down into a manhole at Chhore Road Friday for a routine inspection when they fainted due to suffocation, the victim's brother, Parvez, told Dawn.

All four workers were rushed to Civil Hospital Umerkot, where doctors told the patient's attendants to wash his body before they would begin treatment.

Speaking to Dawn, Parvez said the doctors on duty persistently refused to provide Irfan with the necessary treatment until his body was washed.

"My brother died during the process of cleansing the filth from his body," he added, insisting that had his brother been given treatment in a timely manner, he could have been saved.

The other three workers were shifted to Karachi for further treatment.

Infuriated workers of the local municipality and a large number of people from the Christian community in Umerkot took Irfan's body and staged a demonstration outside the local press club, where they protested against the local administration and hospital for wasting the worker's life.

Umerkot police, on the complaint of the victim's father, Nazeer Maseeh, registered an FIR against six suspects, including three doctors.

Police have said they are conducting raids to arrest the accused.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336977>

KHAADI AND TRADE UNIONS WORKING ON DRAFT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

Dawn, June 5, 2017

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: The management at Pakistan's leading brand Khaadi has had two meetings with representatives of trade unions in the past two days regarding a draft related to rights, minimum wage and social security of the workers. According to secretary general of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) Nasir Mansoor, the terms and conditions of the draft are being finalised.

He said that the brand "came forward with the understanding that there were problems which needed to be addressed, which is a good sign".

The meeting between Khaadi representatives and trade union members also touched upon issues related to "safety, security and health of workers and old age benefits", Mansoor added.

Khaadi representative Imran Shiwani was approached for comment on the meeting, but he switched off his phone soon after agreeing to make a comment. Khaadi's deputy general manager for administration Irfan Dalia said that "as a brand we don't encourage unfair labour practices". However, when he was contacted to speak about the recently held meeting, he was unavailable for comment.

The meeting comes after social media posts by activists and bloggers pointed out the lack of coverage in the national media about protests by Khaadi employees since May 22.

The issue itself came to the fore after a number of workers belonging to the leading apparel brand took to the streets in Karachi, Lahore and Multan to protest ill treatment meted out to their colleagues in Karachi. According to a union representative, Usman Ali, 32 workers had filed a form pertaining to unionisation at the National Industrial Relation Commission (NIRC), Karachi bench, which acts as a labour court. The reason the workers had approached the court was to ensure employment security after they apply to form a union.

According to experts, a registration order has to be acquired from the NIRC which also ensures job security for the workers in case the employer decides to sack them.

On May 18, the NIRC Karachi bench issued a stay order asking the administration not to harass workers or terminate their employment in case they unionise. According to a copy of the order by

NIRC issued on May 18, the company responded in an earlier hearing on April 20, 2017 stating that they had no intention to remove or dismiss anyone illegally and asked for the case to be disposed of.

The case was disposed of on May 18. Three days later, however, Usman adds that “the same 32 workers were stopped at the gate of the manufacturing unit without any written statement or legal order. We ended up calling a sit-in outside the unit from morning till evening every day since.”

Looking at the ensuing statement, Khaadi issued a statement stating that the allegations against the brand were part of a conspiracy. An excerpt from the statement goes: “Khaadi has viewed with concern the discussion on social media in recent days emanating from certain false news that have been spread and which seek to damage our reputation.

Initially, our viewpoint was not to respond to what is nothing but malicious and libelous content, but we now feel we owe it to our patrons to clarify the matter. We therefore categorically confirm that Khaadi has NOT terminated 32 of its employees.”

It was also stated by the brand: “We appeal to all to please do not share or spread news that is pure hearsay, or base your comments on speculative news, no matter shared by who, without fully knowing the facts yourself. We request this not only in the case of Khaadi, but as a general principle of social media engagement, as false rumours tend to escalate and can be quite damaging for others, whether it be brands or innocent people.”

However, NTUF’s Nasir Mansoor adds that the brand is now using the name of a third-party contractor, Texmark, which is said to be dealing with the hiring and sacking of employees working at Khaadi. “I must add here that 90 per cent of our garment industry deals with their workers in a similar manner. There are no set rules, no benefits and a minimum wage of Rs13,000 or even less is given to the workers,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1337394>

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017

TWO LABOURERS KILLED

Dawn, July 31st, 2017

GWADAR: Two labourers were killed after inhaling poisonous gas while digging a well in the Koshkalat area of Kech district on Sunday.

Qadir Dad and Tauheed were digging the well in the Koshkalat region of Turbat, but died after inhaling poisonous gas.

Due to lack of rain in Turbat and other areas, the underground water level has gone down deep and most wells are drying, forcing the area people to make wells further deep by digging.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348729>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 17TH TO JULY 23RD 2017 MAIDS' RIOT AT LUXURY HIGH-RISE REIGNITES DEBATE OVER DOMESTIC LABOUR IN INDIA

Annie Gowen | Vidhi Doshi

Dawn, July 17, 2017

NEW DELHI: A violent protest by maids at a luxury high-rise in India and its bitter aftermath have rekindled debate about the treatment meted out to the growing ranks of domestic workers in the country.

Dozens of angry maids burst through the gates of the Mahagun Moderne apartment complex just outside the capital, hurling stones and breaking windows, under the belief that a fellow domestic worker had been held by her employer there against her will in a pay dispute, police have said.

Police are still trying to determine the exact circumstances of the dispute — whether the employer was refusing to pay back wages, as the maid alleges, or whether she stole money, as the employers claim. More than a dozen people have been arrested in the incident, and a flurry of police complaints have been lodged.

The incident has sparked an intense backlash on social media, with critics portraying the maids as lawless illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. It has also prompted calls for India to re-examine its attitudes and policies about its more than four million domestic workers, many of whom work long hours for low wages with little legal protection.

For now, the gates of the Mahagun Moderne, in the New Delhi suburb of Noida, remain closed to the more than 500 helpers who work normally there, washing dishes, folding clothes and tending the children, after residents enacted a “maid ban” in response to the violence.

The domestic workers said they feared losing their jobs permanently but had been moved to protest because they believed that Zohra Bibi, the maid at the centre of the dispute, had been taken advantage of and that they might be next. “We’ve never done anything like this before,” one of the protesters, Haseena Bibi, said.

India’s elite have for centuries employed servants, but economic liberalisation and the rise of the middle class meant that the number of cooks, maids and drivers has grown exponentially in recent decades, journalist Tripti Lahiri wrote in a recent book, *Maid in India*. Hundreds of thousands have migrated from villages to India’s five major urban centres to tend to the needs of the elite.

Some state governments have tried in recent years to regularise wages for domestic workers — in Rajasthan, for example, they now must be paid at least \$87 a month. But many make less than that.

An opinion piece in Saturday’s Hindu newspaper called for the government to enact draft legislation that would protect the rights of domestic workers with required registration and a mandated social security fund.

Class divisions between household staff and their affluent bosses remain deeply entrenched, Lahiri writes: “We eat first, they eat later . . . we live in front, they live in the back, we sit on chairs and they

sit on the floor, we drink from glasses and ceramic plates and they from ones made of steel and set aside for them, we call them by their names, they address us by titles.”

In Noida, more than 2,000 families live in Mahagun Moderne, a 25-acre complex with swimming pools, a tennis court and landscaped pathways. A short distance away, their household help — mostly migrants from the state of West Bengal — live in tin-roofed huts in a muddy field, bathing from a communal tap.

Lahiri said such migrant shantytowns often develop next to buildings in Noida, because the residents don't want to give rooms in their homes to the helpers. “There are also a lot of daily injustices that people swallow when they're working as help and then, at some point, the suppressed anger and fear coalesce around one particular incident, which is maybe what we saw,” she said.

Zohra Bibi, 26, from West Bengal, claimed that when she went to her employers' home to collect \$125 in back pay, she was assaulted, threatened and ended up hiding out overnight in another part of the complex. “Madam said to me, if you try to run away, I'll throw you in the dust bin. I'll kill you,” she said.

The maid's husband, Abdul Sattar, a construction worker, said that after his wife did not return home Tuesday evening, he went to the employer's home with police looking for her and was told she was not there. “No one does anything for us. No one helps,” Sattar said. “God makes us poor. What can we do? We do what the rich tell us to do. We sit where they tell us to sit. They reign over us. Even you know the rich and the poor can never be one. They think the poor are not human.”

The maid's employer, Mitul Sethi, said in his police complaint that the maid ran off after a confrontation with his wife over a theft in the home. The next day, he said, they were confronted by a crowd that started “pelting our home with stones and sticks”, breaking windows and attempting to assault them. The frightened family eventually escaped the melee with the help of security guards.

In the days since the assault, both the luxury complex and the tenement settlement where its workers live remain tense. Workers wonder when the police will raid again and whether the settlement will be torn down.

And the residents of the high-rise have their own concerns — will the rioters return? Will their children be safe at the bus stop? Meanwhile, they are making do cooking and cleaning for themselves as they wait for a community meeting to plan a way forward, according to one resident who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of security concerns.

“Mobs just can't gather like this and take the law into their own hands,” she said. “Everyone is scared.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345712>

FOUR FACTORY WORKERS DIE AFTER FALLING INTO CHEMICAL TANK IN KARACHI
Dawn, July 21st, 2017

KARACHI: Four labourers died after falling into an underground chemical tank of an industrial unit one after another in the Bin Qasim area on Thursday.

The incident came as a grim reminder of last year's tragedy that had left five people dead in a Korangi factory, indicating gross violation of safety measures and the Sindh social security rules, officials said.

SHO of Bin Qasim police station Dhani Bux told Dawn that the labourers died after ostensibly inhaling chemical fumes inside the tank of the under-construction Scada chemical factory near Ghaggar Phatak.

The officer said one of the labourers had been apparently trying to fix the tank's ventilator when he slipped and fell into it. Three other workers died while trying to save their colleague. A fifth worker was, however, rescued and later hospitalised.

The deceased were identified as Zahoor Ahmed, Tanveer Ahmed, Faizan and Faisal while Ali Shah was rescued.

The SHO said the factory owners would be taken to task after fulfilling legal formalities.

In May 2016, five factory workers died after inhaling toxic fumes while cleaning a chemical tank of a factory in the Korangi Industrial Area.

The death of the four workers in the Bin Qasim factory attracted the attention of Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah who sought a detailed report from the secretary of the provincial labour department.

Mr Shah asked if the factory was registered and when was it last inspected.

Police said later on Thursday that the factory had been sealed and that a search was on for its owner.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1346600>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017

AUTOPSY REPORT FINALLY COMES OUT: DOMESTIC HELP DIED FROM REPEATED TORTURE

Dawn, July 15th, 2017

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: The postmortem report of an MPA's domestic worker states repeated torture/trauma as cause of death, while police have inserted anti-terrorism clause in the first information report to avert reconciliation between the parties.

The medical officer after a three-day delay prepared the postmortem report of the domestic worker who was recovered dead from the house of PML-N MPA Shah Jahan.

The report available with Dawn revealed that the boy was repeatedly tortured with a blunt weapon and deep wounds found on the reproductive organ of the deceased could also have contributed to his death.

Akhtar Ali, 16, and his younger sister Atiya of Okara were employed as domestic workers at the house of the MPA for four years.

On Tuesday, Akhtar was sent to buy utensils by the MPA's daughter Fauzia and when he got late allegedly beat him up with an iron rod and club. The victim suffered critical injuries on his body, which allegedly led to his death after three days.

Akbari Gate police had registered a murder case against the suspect Fauzia, who had got pre-arrest bail from the district and sessions court three days ago.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Mubashir Maiken told Dawn that the incident had generated fear in the area and that police were adding terrorism charges to the case. He said they also wanted to avert any settlement between the parties after inclusion of the terrorism charges.

The SSP said the postmortem report suggested the domestic worker had been tortured repeatedly and there were old and fresh wounds on his body. He said the suspect would appear before the investigation team today (Saturday) for interrogation. She had got pre-arrest bail and they would request the court and try to get it cancelled on the next hearing. They were also waiting for a complaint by the Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CPWB) to insert clause of child labour to the case.

CPWB Chairperson Saba Sadiq and the SSP also addressed a joint press conference at her office. Ms Sadiq claimed Fauzia tortured her domestic workers several times. She said they would provide every help, including legal and financial, to ensure justice to the bereaved family. She claimed they were also ready to bear the education, health and legal expenses of Atiya and rejected any pressure regarding provision of justice to the family.

The chairperson said she had visited the family in Okara and Atiya had narrated their ordeal at the employer's house. The children were not allowed to go home for three years, she alleged.

Child rights activist Iftikhar Mubarak told Dawn he was surprised to know that MPA Shah Jahan, who is a member of the standing committee on labour and human resource in the assembly, employed children as domestic workers. How could she contribute to legislation for protection of rights of labour in such a case, he questioned.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345476>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 2ND TO JULY 9TH 2017
CHILD MAID TORTURE: GIRL HAD BURNS, BLUNT WOUNDS
Rizwan Shehzad

The Express Tribune, July 5, 2017

ISLAMABAD: A doctor testified before the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday that the juvenile housemaid, who had been rescued from the house of an additional district and sessions judge in the capital, had superficial burns and wounds caused by a blunt object.

The witness, who was part of the panel of doctors who had conducted the medical examination of the minor housemaid, recorded a statement before Justice Aamer Farooq of the IHC on Tuesday.

He stated that the girl had burn marks, blackening under the eyelids, abrasions on the skin while her face was swollen.

The doctor said that they had first medically examined the child at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on December 29, 2016. At the time, he said, the wounds on her body appeared to be about a day old. He added that the girl had been accompanied by ASI Shabbir Ahmad and Lady Head Constable Maryam Bibi at the tertiary care hospital.

During cross-examination, the doctor admitted that he could not confirm whether the wounds had been inflicted by someone or were accidental.

Documents have revealed that Additional District and Sessions Judge Raja Khurram and his wife Maheen Zafar, were charged for allegedly assaulting, confining, ill-treating, neglecting, abandoning, harming and injuring the minor housemaid.

The couple, though, had pleaded 'not guilty' after they were indicted. They are currently standing trial.

The gruesome story of the juvenile maid was picked up by the media after it first went viral on social media on December 29. Subsequently, the police registered a case and the Islamabad High Court's top judge also took notice and directed the registrar to initiate an inquiry.

Recently, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani during the hearing of the case had revealed that he had concluded an internal inquiry which found the judge to be guilty while suggesting "major punishment".

The counsel then raised objection over the single bench conducting trial and inquiry of the case and the court sent the case back to the IHC chief justice.

Subsequently, the chief justice of the IHC placed the case before Justice Farooq and he resumed the case from where Justice Kayani had left it.

Previously, Justice Farooq had issued notices to a panel of doctors who had conducted a medical examination of the minor housemaid who had been allegedly tortured at the residence of the sessions judge of the capital.

In January, a member of the medical board at Pims had said that it was possible that the 10-year-old housemaid had been a victim of torture and abuse, however, it was up to the police to investigate and determine whether these injuries were the result of torture or not.

On May 23, the minor girl at the centre of the case had recorded her statement before the IHC against the suspects.

In her statement, the 10-year-old girl told the court that it was Zafar who had allegedly burnt her hand, her back and struck her with a ladle resulting in injuries to her hand, eye and back. All this happened, she said, while she was working in "Maheen Baji's house" a few months ago.

On May 24, she was cross-examined where she could not answer several questions, including what is 'swear', 'oath', characteristics of a city, name of the country she was living in, the difference between years and months and where she had lived before coming to Islamabad.

Three other witnesses, who have previously recorded their statements in the case, told the court that they saw the child in an injured condition, provided her with medical care, food, comforter. One of the witnesses said that they had taken the child's photographs with her mobile phone which was later posted on social media.

During the cross-questioning, the defence counsel had tried to establish that the witnesses never actually saw the judge, his wife or any other torturing the child maid or heard anything which could indicate that the minor was being tortured next door.

Following the hearing, the case was adjourned with directions that the registrar office would fix the next date of hearing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1450411/child-maid-torture-girl-burns-blunt-wounds/>

August 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 21ST TO AUGUST 27 Th 2017

TWO PEOPLE KILLED IN LANDMINE BLASTS

Dawn, August 23, 2017

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Two people, including an 18-year-old shepherd, were killed in two landmine explosions in the Fulaji area of Nasirabad district on Tuesday.

Police said that a man identified as Muhammad Nawaz was killed in the first landmine blast which took place in Goth Kanta of the Chattar tehsil. They added that the incident took place when his motorcycle hit a landmine planted by the roadside.

The other landmine blast took place in the Goth Mastkundi area where an 18-year-old shepherd identified as ShanoBugti was killed after he stepped on a landmine planted in the area.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353281>

QATAR LIMITS HOURS, ENSURES PAY FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

Dawn, August 24, 2017

DOHA: Qatar has approved a law limiting domestic staff to a maximum of 10 hours' work a day, the first such protection for thousands of household maids, nannies and cooks in the emirate.

The "Domestic Employment Law" also orders employers to pay staff wages at the end of each month and entitles workers to at least one day off per week and an annual leave of three weeks, the Qatar News Agency reported.

They will also receive end-of-service benefits equating to a minimum of three weeks wages for each year of service when their contract ends.

The law prohibits staff being recruited from abroad who are older than 60 and younger than 18.

Hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have flocked to the gas-rich Gulf emirate in recent years, including almost 100,000 women working as house staff.

Other domestic workers covered by the new law include cleaners, gardeners and drivers.

The legislation was issued on Tuesday by Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, QNA reported.

Although Qatar has come under severe international pressure to improve its record on the treatment of construction workers in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup, until now domestic staff have not been protected by any legislation.

Critics have long campaigned for legal protection for domestic staff, with some claiming that they are subjected to working in slave-like conditions.

These included physical and sexual abuse, no wages being paid and passports being confiscated.

In 2014 it was reported that hundreds of Filipino domestic workers had sought sanctuary at their Doha embassy complaining of harsh working conditions.

The issue of ill-treatment of domestic staff stretches across the region.

In 2015 Indonesia said it would stop sending domestic staff to 21 Middle Eastern countries in protests at the treatment of maids in those countries.

Human Rights Watch backed the introduction of the law. "Tens of thousands of domestic workers in Qatar now have their labour rights protected in law including a limit to their working day and a weekly day of rest," said Rothna Begum, women's rights researcher at HRW.

But she added that new legislation must be rigorously imposed by the authorities. "However, Qatar should ensure there are strong enforcement mechanisms which are key to making these rights a reality."

The legislation comes at a time when Qatar's laws remain under scrutiny from the International Labour Organisation.

The UN body has given Qatar until November to improve its human rights record or face sanctions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353546>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14TH TO AUGUST 20 Th 2017

FOUR WORKERS BURNT IN BOILER BLAST

Dawn, August 14th, 2017

Sheikhupura: Four workers sustained serious burns when a boiler exploded in a factory near Mansoorabad on the Lahore Road on Sunday.

The victims were working in the Pak Land Factory when its old boiler burst with a bang.

As a result, Riaz, Akram, Saleem and Matloob suffered burns. They were shifted to a Lahore hospital where their condition was stated to be serious.

Labour union secretary general Abdul Samad told the media that the factory management did not replace the said boiler despite repeated reminders while the labour department failed to take any action on it. The fire control system in the factory was also not in good condition, he alleged and demanded the factory owners to arrange for proper treatment of the injured and provide them with compensation.

In another incident, three members of a family were injured when the roof of their house collapsed in Khanpur village. The victims, Shazia, 40, Ashfaq, 25, and Sanwal, 7, were sleeping in a room when its roof caved in. All three of them received critical injuries and they were shifted to the district headquarters (DHQ) hospital.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351424>

WORKERS STILL WITHOUT PAY AT CARDIAC CENTRE

The Express Tribune, August 14th, 2017.

Asma Ghani ISLAMABAD: Assisting in an open heart surgery she stands apparently attentive but her heart and mind is preoccupied with thoughts about her kids, and her penurious circumstances

A sharp rebuke by the surgeon for passing on a wrong surgical instrument makes her flinch and jolts her back to reality.

Payments of utility bills, house rent and fees of her children are constant worries that keep her mind perturbed.

Being a single mother she finds it hard to make both ends meet since her salary was stopped over two years ago. Now there is not a single colleague or relative from whom she hasn't borrowed money.

Recently her 12 year old son and 13 years old daughter were struck off twice from the school register because of non-payment of 3-4 months fees. "I have asked my kids to skip the August 14 school function because I don't have money to buy them green dress and flags as asked by the teachers". I fear my kids will celebrate upcoming Eid like this, says the troubled woman who works as a nurse at the cardiac centre of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims). Forthcoming Eid will be the 6th Eid of these aggrieved health experts who can be described as pioneers of the cardiac centre but working without salaries since June 30, 2015 when their contracts expired.

The cardiac center had hired about 37 employees of different cadres when it started operations some 12 years ago. Later some employees left due to ineffective response of the government. In 2016 the regularisation committee of government regularised the services of some 22 employees of grade 15 and below but the 9 employees of higher grade were not regularised nor their contracts renewed.

Of them three are nurses, three medical officers, one cardiac surgeon, one interventional cardiologist and a perfusionist. Interventional cardiologist and surgeons are earning a lucrative income through private practice at both public and private hospitals but the nurses are the worst sufferers especially those who are single parents.

The cardiac center is the only public sector facility for heart patients not only for residents of Islamabad but surrounding cities also. Even patients from Balochistan, Fata, D.G Khan and Gilgit-Baltistan come for treatment. Over 100 visit outpatient department daily while 40 to 50 angiography and angioplasty procedures and open-heart surgeries are done weekly.

On June 19 the Islamabad High Court had constituted a committee headed by finance secretary to submit report in 30 days on why the services of pioneering employees of the centre were not regularised when all the relevant ministries had no objection and need their services. But even after 50 days the committee has not started work. On recent hearing on August 10 the court has given the government two weeks time on request of assistant attorney general.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1480889/workers-still-without-pay-cardiac-centre/>

LABOUR LEADERS CALL FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF WORKING CLASS IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES

Trade unionists and labour leaders demanded on Sunday the provision of proportional representation for the working class in Parliament and all provincial assemblies, as in the current electoral system, labourers and the working class are unable to reach the legislative bodies. A set of recommendations demanded reserved seats for workers and nomination of labour leaders by political parties in general elections.

The recommendations were made at the concluding session of the two-day Sindh Labour Conference organised by the National Labour Council (NLC) in collaboration with the Sindh Labour Solidarity Committee and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) at the Piler Centre in Karachi. A large number of representatives of trade unions, labour organisations and agricultural workers' organisations from across Sindh attended the conference.

The participants of the conference unanimously agreed that since there is no representation of the working class in the sitting assemblies, their issues are not discussed or solved. Members of legislative bodies mostly comprise feudal lords and elites who do not speak about the problems of the working class, said the participants.

The representatives of trade unions demanded that all labour laws be amended according to the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Constitution of Pakistan. The rights activists also called for the abolishment of the third-party contract system, as it was intrinsically exploitative.

A major recommendation made at the conference was for the appointment of new labour inspectors according to proportion of factories, of which half must be women.

The labour leaders also called for setting up hari courts at the district level to hear cases relating to the Sindh Tenancy Act. They also made a demand for making rules of business for the registration of trade unions of agricultural workers and fishermen under the Sindh Industrial Relations Act, 2013.

Sindh Human Rights Commission Chairperson Justice (retd) Majida Rizvi, who was the chief guest at the concluding session of the conference, agreed to the recommendation that women labour inspectors be appointed for effective inspection particularly in fields where women are employed in a large number, like the textile and garments industries.

Speaking on the occasion, Labour Secretary Abdul Rasheed Solangi said that after the 18th Amendment, Sindh is the first province where the mandatory tripartite labour conference is being held in September. Homework for the upcoming conference has been completed and the labour department will draft the new labour policy in light of recommendations that will be approved in that conference, the secretary added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1480783/labour-leaders-call-proportional-representation-working-class-legislative-bodies/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 7TH TO AUGUST 14 Th 2017 FIVE WORKERS TRAPPED IN COALMINE

Tariq Naqash

August 07, 2017

MUZAFFARABAD: Rescuers were desperately trying to recover five workers trapped in a coalmine near here on Sunday but there were bleak chances of their survival.

The incident was reported from Seri Darra village at about 6:30pm, after a gas explosion led to the collapse of mine stopes, Deputy Commissioner of Muzaffarabad Masoodur Rehman told Dawn from the site at 11pm.

Seri Darra is located towards the east of Muzaffarabad, at an hour-long drive through a steep hilly road.

“At the time of explosion, seven workers were inside the mine. Two of them, who were near the mouth of the tunnel, rushed out, but the remaining five were trapped inside,” Mr Rehman said. “They are trapped some 800 feet ahead of the mine’s mouth and so far the rescuers have been able to reach some 700 feet,” he added.

He said that since the workers were trapped for more than five hours, chances of their survival were bleak.

The trapped workers belong to Swat.

Reports suggested that the mining activity was being carried out in the area without a lawful permission.

However, Mr Rehman said the issue would be investigated later.

“At the moment our foremost concern is to recover the workers,” he said.

Coal mining is considered much more hazardous than hard rock mining due to flat-lying rock strata, generally incompetent rock, leakage or explosion of poisonous gases and coal dust, collapsing of mine stopes or general mechanical errors from improperly used or malfunctioning mining equipment.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350067>

BODIES OF FIVE MINERS RECOVERED FROM COALMINE

Dawn, August 8th, 2017

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Rescue officials recovered the bodies of five miners, including two brothers, who were trapped in a coalmine near here on Sunday in an incident that spotlighted lack of proper precautionary measures in mining.

The police arrested the leaseholder and his five partners after registering a criminal case against them under the instruction of Deputy Commissioner Masoodur Rehman.

The mine, where the tragic incident occurred, lies in Seri Darra village, towards the east of Muzaffarabad, at an hour-long drive through a steep hilly road.

Around seven miners were busy digging coal some 800 feet inside the tunnel when a gas explosion caused the collapsing of mine stopes on Sunday afternoon.

Two of them, who were towards the entrance of the tunnel, managed to rush outside with minor wounds but the others were buried under the earth.

According to Rashid Habib Masoodi, the SHO City Police Station, the incident occurred at about 2pm on Sunday “but neither did the leaseholder or his partners initiate a rescue operation on their own nor did they inform the administration instantly.”

The police came to know about the incident at about 7:15pm following which rescuers were rushed to the place to recover the trapped workers, he added.

Mr Rehman and SSP Raja Akmal also reached the spot and supervised the rescue operation until the recovery of the last body at about 4:45am on Monday.

“Had the information been received on time the miners could definitely have been saved,” he claimed.

He said the accused had not enforced any safety measures to save the lives of the workers engaged in a highly risky activity.

The deceased were identified as Noshawan and his brother Bakht Munir, Bahadar Khan and Gulzeb from Gulbar village and Aslam Khan from Amankot village of Swat valley. The injured miners were Bakhti Rohan, a sibling of the two deceased brothers, and Akbar Ali. All the victims were aged between 25 and 35 years.

The lease was in the name of Haji Faridoon Awan, a resident of Haripur (KP), while his partners included Jawad Muzaffar from Muzaffarabad, Saifullah and Mohammad Razzaq from Shangla, Shah Faisal from Charssada and Fazle Rahim from Swat.

DC Rehman told Dawn that the mine had been sealed until the implementation of all safety standards. He said he had also ordered the authorities concerned to conduct a 'security audit' of all mines within his jurisdiction.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350284/bodies-of-five-miners-recovered-from-coalmine>

September 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 Th 2017

KILLING LABOURERS

Dawn, September 26th, 2017

WITH increasing fatalities in the stone-crushing and mining industry, the Supreme Court has been petitioned by a human rights activist to intervene to protect workers. It has been asked to constitute a task force with provincial representation ensuring workers are protected from silicosis — an incurable lung disease caused by long-term exposure to silica dust in the mining, sandblasting and rock-drilling industries. Drawing up preventive strategies for controlling and eliminating silicosis, including the monitoring of factories, is included as a potential task for this commission.

This is not the first time that the court has been approached on the issue. In 2014, when the Public Lawyers Front filed a petition in the Lahore High Court after 18 cases of silicosis deaths were reported in Gujranwala, the apex court took up the matter. But the case continues and little action seems to have been taken to curb the menace. However well-meaning this latest intervention, progress will remain stalled without a functional labour inspection system, better regulation of industries and protective legislation.

The oldest known environmental lung disease, silicosis results in respiratory failure leading to eventual death. Unaware of the repercussions of crushing stones without protective gear, quarry workers must be informed through media campaigns of the dangers. For many trapped in poverty and debt who endure the adverse effects of silica dust in exchange for meagre sums of money, these risks might not even matter.

This is why such inhumane exploitation by factory owners given their desire for profit is criminal and offenders should be severely punished. Most stone-crushing factories are not even registered or government regulated. More significantly, it is only when we see the political will to enact legislation and health and safety measures being implemented by the government through a national plan for safety within factories that the exploitation and death of workers will end.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359999/killing-labourers>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 18 TH TO SEPTEMBER 24 Th 2017

AMMONIA LEAKAGE KILLS TWO FACTORY WORKERS

Dawn, September 19th, 2017

LAHORE: Two labourers died while as many fainted after ammonia gas leaked at a factory at Multan Chungi here on Monday.

According to initial reports, the factory management had stored ammonia gas in a godown to ripen fruit. Four workers were present in the store when suddenly the gas started leaking, leaving them unconscious. Their associates brought them out of the affected area, according to an official of the Gulshan-i-Ravi police station.

He said two of the labourers, including 15-year-old Omer Farooq and 24-year-old Akhtar, died on the way to hospital, while condition of two others was stated to be normal. The police official said apparently the cause of the gas leak was not determined as investigations were under way.

The factory owner who was not present at the time of the incident has been asked to appear before police for questioning. Bodies of the workers were shifted to the city morgue for autopsy.

The official further said they were working closely with the departments concerned, including city district government, to investigate how the incident occurred. He said it seemed safety measures were not taken for the working staff.

Action will be taken on completion of the investigation into the gas leak incident, he concluded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358637>

THREE LABOURERS BURIED ALIVE

The Express Tribune, September 20th, 2017.

Three labourers were killed when a building collapsed due to LPG cylinder blast in Sheikhpura on Tuesday.

Police said the incident took place at New Asia Factory near Toll Plaza, where an LPG cylinder exploded in a paint shop. The blast caused a huge blaze which resulted in the building to collapse.

Three workers identified as 35-year-old Waqas of Rachna Town, Muhammad Rafiq, 55, of Kamoki and Kashif were buried under the debris. After the incident, Rescue 1122 officials rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. The bodies of the victims were retrieved and shifted to a hospital for legal formalities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1510933/three-labourers-buried-alive/>

INVISIBLE ABUSE

Dawn, September 21, 2017

THE death on Saturday of a teenager who worked as domestic help in an upscale housing locality in Karachi continues to throw up distressing questions. The 17-year-old was found hanging from a fan in the home of her employers who claimed that she had committed suicide. This assertion was upheld by the first post-mortem carried out by a medico-legal officer at a large public-sector facility.

The family of the girl, however, maintained that it could not have been suicide, and launched a demonstration against the police until the authorities ordered a second post-mortem. Consequently, it emerged on Tuesday that the child had been strangled to death. The four-member medical board, which included an additional police surgeon, also found marks of torture on the body, and has sent

samples for chemical analysis so that it can be ascertained whether, as the family alleges, she was also sexually assaulted.

Meanwhile, an FIR has been lodged under the clauses of the Pakistan Penal Code relating to premeditated murder, and the child's employers have obtained pre-arrest interim bail.

The law must now take its course and a thorough investigation should be carried out. Additionally, it is important to find out why the first autopsy produced an inaccurate report. There may have been technical deficiencies, but given Pakistani society's realities, another deeply disturbing dimension cannot be overlooked: those who work as domestic labour in this country are among the poorest of the poor, with rights only on the statute books, and next to no capacity at all to seek justice — particularly since such workers tend overwhelmingly to be women and children.

This category of persons, because of social custom and their own powerlessness as society's most vulnerable members, must toil on, often in conditions that resemble modern-day slavery than a situation with proper terms of employment. They suffer high levels of abuse that rarely come to light. In recent years, however, several cases from across the country have emerged where domestic help — mostly children — have been abused to the point of death. It is tragic that only torture or death makes it to the news; abuse that does not prove fatal or falls short of torture is simply accepted.

Laws regarding labour workforce rights must be extended to this unrepresented though numerically large section of the population. Further, some sort of enforcement and redressal system must be devised immediately.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359057>

DEATH TOLL IN ROHRI CEMENT FACTORY INCIDENT REACHES FIVE

The Express Tribune, 21 September 2017

Karachi: Another victim injured in the Rohri cement factory blast passed away at Civil Hospital, Karachi's burns centre on Wednesday.

Muhammad Tahir, who was said to have suffered burns on 90% of his body as well as a head injury, was put on the ventilator late Tuesday night but could not survive due to the third degree burns on his entire body, said Civil Hospital, Karachi's Deputy Medical Superintendent Dr Shane Alam.

According to him, another victim, Shahzad, is on the ventilator and has burns on 91% of his body, while Lal Buksh, who has 70% burns, and Sameer Qazi, who has 63% burns, are also being treated at the facility.

Dr Alam told The Express Tribune that the condition of all three blast victims is not satisfactory, as most victims with more than 40% burns have chances of catching infections.

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, along with Information Minister Nasir Hussain Shah, visited the burns centre and inquired about the patients' health on Tuesday. The Rangers director-general also paid a visit to the hospital and inquired about the victims of the blast.

The blast occurred at a cement factory in Rohri when officials were attempting to diffuse explosives. Four men were killed on the first day.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1512035/death-toll-rohri-cement-factory-incident-reaches-five/>

THREE WORKERS DIE IN CHEMICAL TANK

Dawn, September 24, 2017

KARACHI: Three labourers died after falling into the chemical tank of a fish processing unit in the Korangi area on Saturday night, officials said.

The workers were cleaning the chemical tank inside the fish processing unit located in Sector 50-C, without any protective equipment, when they fell into it and died, said Zaman Town SHO Mohammed Ashfaq.

The officer said that two bodies had been retrieved and sent to the Jinnah Post-graduate Medical Centre for medico-legal formalities, adding that efforts were under way to recover the third body.

The SHO said that two of the three men were brothers hailing from Gilgit.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359698/three-workers-die-in-chemical-tank>

REGIONAL TRADE MOSTLY IN FAVOUR OF PAKISTAN

Dawn, September 24, 2017

Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: Pakistan maintained a trade surplus with all neighbouring countries, except India, in the first two months of 2017-18.

The share of Indian exports to Pakistan increased during the two months despite border tensions and poor diplomatic ties between the two South Asian countries.

But regional trade remained in favour of Pakistan by and large, which is a result of higher exports during the two months. The annual increase in Pakistan's overall exports in July-August was 11.8 per cent.

Indian exports to Pakistan in the period under review rose 12pc to \$216 million. In contrast, Pakistan's exports to India declined 35.3pc to \$58m, resulting in a bilateral trade deficit of \$158m.

Exports to Afghanistan rose 66pc to \$213.5m in July-August. Imports from the country over the same period amounted to just \$15m, resulting in a bilateral trade surplus of more than \$198m.

"Pakistan could get rid of the entire trade deficit if policymakers focused on regional trade. Exports to Afghanistan alone could be worth \$5 billion," said Jawed Bilwani, chairman of the Pakistan Apparel Forum.

He said Pakistan should explore regional markets that offer vast export potential instead of focusing on trade with western countries. He said Iran presents another huge opportunity for Pakistani exporters to grow their share in regional trade.

Pakistan exported goods worth \$5m to Iran in July-August, down 17.4pc year-on-year. Imports from the country in 2016-17 amounted to just \$236,000.

Exports to Bangladesh during the two months were \$105m, up 4pc from a year ago. Imports from Bangladesh grew almost 60pc to \$6.5m over the same period.

Pakistan exported goods worth \$49.3m to Sri Lanka in July-August, up more than 31pc year-on-year. Imports from the country during the same period increased 21pc to \$11.1m.

Therefore, Pakistan witnessed a trade surplus of over \$193m with regional economies during the first two months of 2017-18. Its regional exports amounted to \$449.6m while imports remained \$256m during the period under review.

Imports from India in 2016-17 were \$1.6bn against exports of just \$408m, reflecting a trade deficit of \$1.2bn.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359626>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TH TO SEPTEMBER 17Th 2017

MINIMUM WAGE

Dawn, September 14th, 2017

IN recent years, with a rhetorical flourish in the federal budget speech, the finance minister has announced an increase in the minimum monthly wage for unskilled labour. It now stands at Rs15,000 per month. The federal decision puts pressure on the provinces to also raise the minimum monthly wage for unskilled labour. But reality is very different to what the government presents.

The International Labour Organisation in a report on minimum-wage setting in the garment industry in Pakistan has called for the repeal of the Unskilled Minimum Wage Ordinance, 1969, and the ratification of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970. The aim is to update the legal framework in line with the 18th Amendment devolution and empower provincial minimum wage boards to set wages on the basis of specific criteria that put the welfare of unskilled labour at the centre of wage decisions.

The garment industry, a significant employer of unskilled labour in the country, typifies the problem of labour exploitation. According to labour activists, the monthly average wage for unskilled males is Rs10,000 to Rs11,000, while for women it hovers around Rs7,500. Perhaps as little as 10pc of the unskilled labour force is paid the federally mandated minimum wage of Rs15,000.

Yet, as the ILO report clarifies and labour activists have long campaigned, the problem is not merely at the level of minimum wage implementation but also in determining what the figure should be. The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research advocates a living wage of Rs31,000 while the ILO has recommended a reference wage of approximately Rs25,000 — both significantly higher than the politically determined Rs15,000 that the federal government touts as an achievement and which is barely enforced.

The path to positive change is relatively clear: empower provincial minimum wage boards; define clearly the purpose in and criteria for setting a minimum wage; and eliminate exclusions that remove,

for example, agricultural workers from the ambit of minimum wage laws. But meaningful change will also depend on a change in the mindset of policymakers.

Unskilled minimum wage workers are some of the most vulnerable of economic agents, their labour vital to producing significant wealth for their employers but their legal rights and social status allowing for massive exploitation. Rather than thinking simply in terms of state handouts to the economically vulnerable, should the state not ensure that hardworking individuals are compensated fairly and justly for the value of their labour?

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1357543/minimum-wage>

‘LABOUR LAW AMENDMENTS AFTER CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS’
Dawn, September 14th, 2017

KARACHI: Amendments in labour laws would be reviewed in consultation with the industrialists and any reservations by the industry would be addressed, said Sindh Minister for Transport and Mass Transit, Labour Human Resources and Information, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Wednesday.

Addressing industrialists at a meeting held at the Site Association of Industry (SAI), he said development project in Site would be included in budget allocations. Mr Shah said 600 modern buses would be plied in Karachi to provide better transport facilities to commuters.

President SAI Asad Nisar Barkhurdaria said the area was facing labour-related issues.

He said the association has always remained in the governing body of Sindh Employees’ Social Security Institution (Sessi) but presently it was not a part of it. The association should also be included in the boards of EOBI and Sindh Workers Welfare Board, he added.

The Labour Department should form a joint committee with SAI for resolving all issues, he said. This proposed joint committee should hold monthly meetings for the purpose, he added.

He urged the federal government to revive Karachi Circular Railway.

“Factories inspection by Labour Department officials and Sessi should be conducted only once in a year. Combined annual inspection of factories should be conducted instead of separate inspections by different government agencies with regards to factory safety, and Factory Act,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1357476>

LABOUR LAWS TO BE REVIEWED WITH INDUSTRIALISTS’ CONSENT: MINISTER

Business Recorder, 14 September 2017

KARACHI: Sindh’s labour minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah gave the assurance to industrialists on Wednesday that all reservations of industrialists regarding labour laws will be addressed.

Speaking at a meeting of the SITE Association of Industry, he said that amendments made in these laws will be reviewed in consultation with the industrialists. He said that the Sindh government would try its best to facilitate the business community. He also assured industrialists present at the meeting that the development projects of the SITE would be included in budget allocations.

The minister, who also holds the transport portfolio, said that 600 new buses would be plied in Karachi for provision of better transport facilities to commuters.

President of the SITE Association of Industry, Asad Nisar, stated that industries located in SITE area are facing labour-related problems.

He said the SITE Association has always remained in the governing body of SESSI but is no longer included in it. He requested its inclusion in the governing body.

He said the SITE Association should also be included in the board of the EOBI and a notification to this effect should be issued.

A notification should also be issued for inclusion of the Association in the Sindh Workers Welfare Board, he said. He called for the Labour Department's formation of a joint committee for inclusion of the SITE Association of Industry for resolving the problems affecting the industries. This proposed committee should hold monthly meetings to discuss the subject.

He called for yearly inspection of factories by the Labour Department.

This inspection be combined, and not carried out separately for each factory, he suggested.

Siraj Kasim Teli reiterated in detail about the issues pertaining to the labour-related laws as well as SESSI, EOBI, the Sindh Workers Welfare Board and the Karachi Circular Railway.

The former chairman of the SITE Association of Industry Zubair Motiwala, said the government should extend more support to the owners of Ali Enterprises, whose garment factory was burnt in Baldia Town in a fire which was the worst industrial accident in Pakistan, so that they can restart their business.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/14/8-page/670699-news.html>

October 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 16 TH TO OCTOBER 22 ND 2017

ADDRESSING PAKISTAN'S MODERN SLAVERY PROBLEM

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 16th, 2017

Iftikhar Ahmad

An ILO Report, released last month, has estimated that more than 40 million people are victims of modern slavery today.

Of these, 25m are engaged in forced labour and the other 15m are victims of forced marriages. There is also a gender and age dimension: 71pc of modern slavery victims are women and girls while one in four, i.e., 25pc are children.

There are many manifestations of modern slavery: forced labour including labour trafficking, sex trafficking including child sex trafficking, bonded labour and debt bondage, domestic servitude (in the form of domestic work), forced child labour (including begging), unlawful recruitment and child soldiers, and state imposed forced labour.

Data indicates that the sectors with the highest instance of forced labour worldwide are domestic work (24pc), construction (18pc), manufacturing (15pc) and agriculture and fishing (11pc).

Another interesting finding in the study is that multiple forms of coercion are used by employers or recruiters against the victims.

Nearly one-quarter of the victims had either their wages withheld or were unable to leave because of threats of non-payment of due wages. Other significant means of coercion included threats of violence, actual physical violence and threats against family.

These are alarming statistics. Last year, the Global Slavery Index 2016 estimated the number of modern slavery victims in Pakistan as 2.134m (1.13pc of the total population). In terms of absolute numbers, Pakistan ranked 3 (out of 167 countries) in this index after India (18.354m) and China (3.388m).

Using the above referred percentage of 1.13pc with the new population estimates of Census 2017 (207m), the potential number of victims rises to 2.34m in Pakistan.

Elimination of modern slavery by 2030 is part of Goal 8 (Target 8.7) of the Sustainable Development Goals of which Pakistan is a party.

The United States Department of Labour (US DOL) alleges the use of forced labour in the following sectors in Pakistan: brick kilns, carpet weaving, coal mining and agriculture (cotton picking wheat and sugarcane industry).

Reports by US DOL also indicate the widespread existence of forced domestic work as a result of human trafficking, especially the engagement of child domestic workers working under forced labour conditions.

Different ILO studies, though a bit dated now, estimated that there are over one million bonded labourers in brick kilns and over 1.8m bonded sharecroppers in the agriculture sector.

A multi-faceted response is required which addresses the root cause of the problem along with the prevention, protection and rehabilitation of victims.

As recommended in the ILO report, the social protection system needs to be extended to the informal sector.

Since the leading cause for individual bankruptcies is medical related, either illness of a family member or death of a breadwinner.

Cash transfer schemes (Benazir Income Support Program or Khidmat Card), public employment programmes, health protections schemes (Federal Government's Pakistan Sehat Card and KP Government's Sehat Insaf Card) and various microfinance initiatives (like Akhuwat) can help in preventing the spread of forced labour.

Modern slavery can be dealt with by ensuring fundamental rights for all.

Since bonded labour is more prevalent in the agriculture sector (employing 43pc of the labour force) the government should formalise the sector by extending application of labour laws and rationalising tenancy legislation.

Sindh and Balochistan have allowed workers in the agriculture and fisheries sectors to form and join unions. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces must follow suit.

The other sector with high incidence of forced labour is domestic work. Though Punjab and Sindh have announced domestic worker policies, legislation is still pending. Child domestic work must be treated as hazardous work which is prohibited for children under 18.

Modern slavery is linked with migration and trafficking thus necessitating effective governance of labour migration.

Quite a few Pakistanis are engaged in work abroad and a majority of our exported labour force is in the Middle East which is infamous for widespread exploitation of migrant workers engaged in domestic work as well as construction work.

The government has established Migrant Resource Centres in Islamabad and Lahore to provide pre-departure orientation and information on working and living conditions to outgoing migrants. Pakistan can go a step further by signing bilateral agreements with labour-receiving countries in the Middle East requiring decent working conditions for its emigrants.

There is also a need for labour law reform. Since withholding wages is the most common means of keeping a person in the situation of forced labour, wage payment laws should criminalise the practice except under conditions specified in the law.

Labour laws should be applicable to all sectors of economy and fundamental workers' rights must be ensured for all types of workers. Once laws are enacted or reformed, there is a need for adequate enforcement and rigorous implementation of the same.

District vigilance committees, currently inactive or ineffective, need to be strengthened for countering bonded labour. These committees can also assist in rehabilitation of bonded labourers. The local government system can play an effective role in eliminating modern slavery.

The federal government has been working on a National Strategy for Elimination of Child and Bonded Labour which is a right step towards understanding the issue and dealing with it.

While laws in Pakistan criminalise all manifestations of modern slavery, statistics are scarce on the number of investigations initiated, violation found, prosecutions lodged and convictions achieved.

Unless, an evidence base is created by strengthening and extending national research and data collection, the actual issues will remain unresolved.

Different aspects of modern slavery are encountered by different sectors. Data and knowledge sharing among these departments and sectors is vital in dealing with the menace of forced/bonded labour.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364088>

HOME-BASED WORKERS: NO RIGHTS, LITTLE RECOGNITION

The Express Tribune, October 23rd, 2013.

KARACHI: Zahra Parveen, a home-based worker, remembers being paid merely Rs3 for every set of 300 bangles she made in a small, heated room in Hyderabad.

“I would spend hours in an airless room, and my hands would burn,” she recalls. “And yet, this is what I would get in return.”

Things did not get any better when Zahra moved to Karachi and started stitching shirts for men. She soon realised that she could not even afford to buy the shirts she, herself, had made – they were sold for hundreds, while she got only Rs10 for each.

Amber, another home-based worker, tells a similar tale. This resident of New Karachi and her four children spent the three days leading up to Eid stitching and putting beads on many a kameez. All hopes of a festive celebration were dashed when the contractor refused to pay the wages.

Women like Zahra and Amber are not alone. They are not a rarity. They are joined in their plight by all those who are simply not recognised as workers by the state, despite their labour.

These people came together to express their woes on the International Day of Home-Based Workers, which was celebrated on October 20. The next day, a press conference, organised by the Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), was held at Karachi Press Club.

Zehra Khan, the general secretary of the federation, demanded the chief minister approve a policy regarding the recognition and rights of the home-based workers.

According to Khan, there are unofficially 2.6 million home-based workers in Sindh and most of them work under hazardous conditions. Furthermore, HBWWF figures reveal that across the country there are over 12 million home-based workers, out of which 80 per cent are women.

The work of these people is widespread — they craft bangles, stitch garments, embroider clothes, make surgical goods, sports equipment and packaging material.

In 2000, the Pakistani government agreed to a Kathmandu declaration, which called for a national policy on home-based workers but is yet to be implemented, said Khan.

Nasir Mansoor, a member of a trade union, said acceptance of home-based workers is essential and urgent, so that wages, especially those of women, can improve.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/621057/home-based-workers-no-rights-little-recognition/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9 Th TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017
NON-REGULARISATION OF JOBS: VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE BLOCK METRO ROUTE
FOR 10 HOURS

Dawn, October 12th, 2017

LAHORE: Visually challenged people blocked on Wednesday the Metro bus service corridor for more than 10 hours in protest at the non-regularisation of their jobs.

Up to 25 challenged people gathered at Kalma Chowk and blocked the dedicated Metro bus route to get attention of the provincial government for regularisation of their service and quota in jobs.

The blockage remained for more than 10 hours amid sloganeering against the government.

One of the protesters, Tauseef, told Dawn that they had been demanding regularisation of their daily wage jobs for the last two and half years and mostly they were paid salaries after two to three months.

He alleged they had been detained for two days in Nashaiman when they went to government officials for talks.

Another protester said most of the representatives of the Punjab government were lying to them.

“Every time the government officials make promises with them but do not fulfill them,” said the protester while adding they were again compelled to come to roads.

He said the government had prepared a list of 135 visually impaired people to give them job but the list was not implemented. He said they were given Khidmat cards with Rs1,200 in card account which was not enough to run their house.

Model Town SP Hasnain Haider tried to pacify them but the protesters did not budge.

In the evening Deputy Commissioner Sumair Ahmad Syed along with Capital City Police Officer Amin Wains held negotiations with the protesters and persuaded them to open the track.

Rasheed: Opposition Leader in Punjab Assembly Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed reached the visually impaired persons' sit-in in the afternoon to express solidarity with them and demanded that the government accept their demands.

While distributing meals among the protesters who said they had been there without food and water for the second consecutive day, Mr Rasheed said he would raise the visually impaired persons' issue in the next Punjab Assembly session. The protesters chanted slogans against the government and in favour of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).

After the protesters explained 'injustices' being committed against them as well as their demands, the opposition leader said he would raise the issue in the PA session beginning on Oct 16 and ensure that their problems be resolved.

The protesters said no government functionary had reached them though they had been voicing their plight for the last two days.

Later, speaking to media persons, Mr Rasheed chided the government for its apathy towards the persons with special needs and demanded that the government accept the visually impaired persons' demands.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363259>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8TH 2017
CHILD LABOUR AND GSP PLUS
Business Recorder, Oct 5th, 2017

With the mid- term review to be undertaken by the middle of October, Pakistan will have to show that it is making progress and is on track to achieve the objectives of its GSP Plus status. One of which is it the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the GSP Plus review of Pakistan 2014-2015, it was observed that no dedicated child labour survey has been carried out in Pakistan since 1996 when it was estimated that there were 3.3 million underage labourers. ILO estimated the number to be more than 12 million in 2012 and Unicef estimated it at more than 10 million.

A number of laws are in place in Pakistan to prevent child labour. The Employment of Children Act, 1991, prohibited the employment of children in certain occupations and regulated work conditions. Since its devolution, the provinces are still working on adopting the legislation.

The Punjab Provincial Government has passed legislation establishing 15 as the minimum age of employment and 18 as the minimum age for employment in hazardous work. It also launched the Elimination of Child Labor and Bonded Labor Project. Balochistan has passed the Child Protection Act, which mandates the creation of child protection units and provide a referral mechanism by which rescued children can be placed in protective custody and obtain rehabilitation services.

The KP government has adopted a law on elimination of child labour and allocated funds to improve labour inspections with a special focus on child labour. Sindh Assembly has passed a bill against the employment of children younger than 14 years, making child labour an offence punishable with prison term and fine.

However, the root of the problem is not Pakistan's lack of eagerness to ratify international conventions or pass bills in assemblies with pretty words; it is in the lack of implementation. In the previous GSP Plus review, the European authorities concluded that Pakistan has taken measures to address children's right but is facing significant and capacity challenges. The review stated that the political will was there to address the problem of child labour. But is the will really there with Pakistan's politics mired in Panama and Imran Khan's potential disqualification? How often is child labour part of the political discourse?

The previous stated Pakistan needs to work harder on implementation. GSP Plus is the stick and carrot to address rights' violations in Pakistan. If not for the sake of the children than for the sake of Pakistan's exports, the laws passed need to be implemented to ensure that Pakistan's trade balance doesn't suffer more than it already has.

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/10/05/373175/child-labour-and-gsp-plus/>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 27th TO DECEMBER 3rd 2017

CASH-STRAPPED: PBC EMPLOYEES LOSE HOPE FOR STUCK-UP SALARIES

Sehrish Wasif

The Express Tribune November 29, 2017

Salaries of hundreds of daily wage workers and contractual employees working at the current affairs department of the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) have not been paid for the last four months after the government slashed 30 to 40% budget of the department.

The cold response from the government towards the issue has not only affected the daily wage workers but also the PBC administration which is now facing immense challenges to run the current affairs transmission effectively.

PBC employees have raised the issue several times but their woes remained unheard by the government, after which some of them including translators, analysts and anchors decided to quit. Speaking to The Express Tribune, an official privy to the development said that the total quarterly budget of the current affairs department has been reduced from Rs3.5 million to Rs1.8 million, adding that the move came due to the shortage of funds.

“These people are like a backbone of the current affairs department and now, without them, it has become difficult to run the transmission effectively,” he said, adding it is difficult to find people who can translate news in all regional languages professionally and share expert views on air.

However, due to non-payment of salaries, several employees staged protest demonstrations, but to no avail, he said.

“They are badly discouraged and are reluctant to work now,” he added.

The official said that the employees, through various platforms, tried to contact Minister of State for Information, Broadcasting and Heritage Marriyum Aurangzeb, but due to her busy schedule she was unable to pay heed to the issue.

Meanwhile The Express Tribune tried to contact the state minister several times, but she did not respond.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1571140/1-cash-strapped-pbc-employees-lose-hope-stuck-salaries/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 20th TO NOVEMBER 26th 2017

REGULARISATION OF 3,000 WWB EMPLOYEES ORDERED

Dawn, November 23, 2017

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench on Wednesday ordered the regularisation of the services of around 3,000 contractual employees of the Workers Welfare Board, mostly teachers.

Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth and Justice Mussarat Hilali pronounced a short order in this respect by accepting petitions filed by the WWB All Contract Employees Association through its president

Younas Marwat, All Employees Confederation through its chairman Shah Zulqarnain, and employees seeking permanent jobs for the board's employees.

These employees were mostly appointed by the WWB during the previous government, which, the WWB claims, were appointed on contractual basis due to political consideration.

A panel of lawyers, including Pir Hameedullah Shah, Ijaz Khan Sabi, Zartaj Anwar and others, appeared for the petitioners and contended that the employees were appointed on contractual basis from 2011 to 2012.

They argued that from time to time, the government had extended their clients' contracts but didn't regularise their services.

The lawyers said their clients had mostly been serving in the Working Folks Grammar School run by the WWB and their salaries were paid by the WWF.

They said the petitioners and contractual employees had been staging protests in support of their demands for the last many years.

The lawyers added that those employees were recruited after the fulfillment of all codal formalities and were appointed on merit. They said the government had framed a rationalisation policy to get rid of those employees but the WWF put forward the excuse of the unavailability of budget for them. The lawyers referred to the judgments of the superior courts in support of their contention and said their clients could not be kept in service on contractual basis for an indefinite period.

The counsel for the WWB argued that the board's contractual employees were appointed in an illegal manner without sanctioned posts.

They pointed out that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had 48 WWB schools and only 21 of them were approved, while the rest were set up without proper approval.

The lawyers also said the records of contractual appointments were not available as a fire had destroyed them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372270>

WORKERS' SUFFERING
Dawn, November 23rd, 2017

Parvez Rahim

THERE has been no respite for workers from the monetary losses they have suffered on account of the confusion and complications caused by the flawed application of labour welfare laws in the provinces. The situation is getting worse, and there is no end in sight.

After the passage of the 18th Amendment, the provinces were asked to devolve labour laws by June 30, 2011, but the deadline lapsed. Meanwhile, a bench of the Sindh High Court gave a landmark judgement on Feb 26, 2011, holding five amendments made to the labour laws by the then

government through the Finance Act, 2007, as ultra vires. This affected two of the most beneficial welfare laws: the Companies Profits (Workers Participation) Act, 1968 and the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act (EOB act), 1976.

Based on the amendments of 2007 in the 1968 act, the workers had benefited from the following; (a) definition of 'worker' was amended to include workers employed by or through contractors. Therefore, the number of workers eligible for shares in a company's profit had increased substantially; (b) the maximum allocation of a worker's share in the profit was increased to three to four times the minimum wage; (c) there were increases in the wage ceiling of three slabs prescribed to calculate each worker's share in the profit: (i) from Rs5,000 to Rs7,500, (ii) from Rs7,500 to Rs15,000, and (iii) from Rs10,000 to Rs15,000 or more.

Eligible workers had been getting these benefits at the enhanced rate for four years at the time of the Sindh High Court judgement. Since they were declared ultra vires, the benefits went back to what they were prior to 2007. In November 2016, the Supreme Court also endorsed the high court's judgement.

This matter could have been resolved by the provincial legislatures had they passed their own respective acts. But none had done so, which resulted in further complications especially for companies with factories and business houses in more than one province.

However, the Sindh government took the initiative and promulgated the Sindh Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 2015. Under this act, the provincial government has restored all the benefits discontinued on account of the court's judgement, although a change in the definition of 'company' under this act has created difficulties for trans-provincial companies. Due to this change, a company whose registered office is situated in Sindh, but that has establishments in other provinces — all share a common balance sheet — is required to deposit its contribution to the government's share in the profit in Sindh.

The profit slabs of its disbursement to workers have been revised for the following category; (i) workers drawing the minimum monthly wages as fixed by government, (ii) workers drawing monthly wages exceeding the minimum wages as fixed by government but not exceeding Rs20,000, and (iii) workers drawing average monthly wages exceeding Rs20,000.

Because of the absence of a uniform law in the country, companies are divided over payments. Some trans-provincial companies are paying the workers' profit share at the rates applicable prior to the 2007 amendment. Workers of such companies are consistently losing money on this account. Some other companies are taking risks by paying the profit share at the revised rates under the Sindh act of 2015 to their workers all over Pakistan. However, most of the companies are not paying the huge amount of the government's share to either the federal or Sindh revenue boards.

The minimum pension was increased from Rs1,300 to Rs1,500 a month in July 2007 under the EOB act. A year later, the employers' monthly contribution to EOBI was decreased from six to five per cent of the minimum wage. The 2007 amendment was beneficial to pensioners in that their amounts were not decreased, while that of 2008 benefited employers because the EOBI contribution was reduced. Although both of these were declared ultra vires by the courts, the EOBI did not make any changes — to the detriment of pensioners and employers alike.

The Sindh government also enacted the Sindh EOB act in 2014. None of the other provinces have devolved this law, and the institution formed under the 1976 act continues to function throughout

Pakistan. Nevertheless, hundreds of companies in Sindh have not been paying their monthly contribution to EOBI for over a year, in the belief that the Sindh government might claim it from them retroactively at any point in the future. This state of confusion — bordering on absurdity in the application of two of the most beneficial welfare legislations — is adversely affecting workers' already meagre incomes.

In its own interest, as well as that of workers, the federal government should quickly intervene to rectify this situation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372348>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13Th TO NOVEMBER 19Th 2017

FACTORY WORKER ELECTROCUTED

Dawn, November 13, 2017

SHEIKHUPURA: A worker was electrocuted in a factory located on Lahore Road here on Sunday.

According to Factory Area police, Hanif was working in the factory where he suffered severe electric shock and died instantly.

The labour union president Mian Anwar said the electrical system in the factory was in a shambles but the management did not do anything to rectify it, resulting in the worker's death. The union demanded financial compensation for the deceased worker's family.

The police are looking into the matter.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370147/factory-worker-electrocuted>

WORKERS' SAFETY TO BE ENSURED IN THE PROVINCE

The Express Tribune, 18 November 2017

After the emergence of a number of harrowing tales of deaths and injuries due to lack of safety measures at workplaces in Sindh over the past few years, the Sindh government finally passed on Friday the Sindh Occupational Safety and Health Bill, 2017 to ensure a decent working environment and health and safety of workers in the province.

Moving the bill, Parliamentary Minister Nisar Ahmed Khuhro said that after the law is implemented, every employer will be responsible for providing a safe workplace to their employees. "There is a federal law on this issue, but after the 18th Amendment we are now going to enact our own law," Khuhro told the assembly members.

According to the law, the government will establish a council, comprising the labour secretary, government representatives from the industries department, Sindh Building Control Authority, health department, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, local government fire department, three members from civil society and four members each from the workers trade union and employers as well as four professionals, at least one of whom should be a woman. The council will advise the government on matters relating to workplace safety and recommend amendments to the law.

“It will be the duty of every employer to ensure all possible practicable measures in respect to safety, health and welfare of workers in the workplace,” the law reads, adding that each employer has to provide and maintain tools, machinery, equipment and appliances which are safe and do not pose risks to the workers’ health.

The law states that there will be arrangements at workplaces to control and prevent physical, chemical, biological, radiological and any other hazards that affect the safety and health of workers and other persons at the workplace.

After the law, the employer of any factory or company will have to ensure that measures are taken to safeguard workers’ safety such as adequate first-aid arrangements to deal with emergencies, dangerous occurrences, accidents and industrial disasters. “The owners of companies have to take all practical measures for prevention of fires and safety measures to deal with them,” the law read, adding that employers have to ensure cleanliness at workplaces, freedom from nuisances, noise, fumes and artificial humidification, ventilation, proper temperature control, disposal of waste and effluent as well as drinking water.

In every factory or company, the election of occupational safety and health representatives from amongst the workers is mandatory. The representatives will represent workers in all matters relating to safety, health and welfare at work and may report impending threats, accidents, injuries and fatal injuries to the government.

However, a safety and health officer will also be appointed at companies or factories with more than 49 workers. “It shall be the duty of the health and safety officer to cooperate with and assist the employer to promote and develop measures to ensure the safety, health and welfare of workers,” read the law. “Each worker will be provided a safety hygiene card after examination by a qualified medical practitioner,” the law stated, adding that if the worker is found to be suffering from any contagious, infectious and occupational disease on examination, the employer has to provide him appropriate medical treatment with paid leave.

“An employer or self-employed person cannot not construct a workplace unless its plan is approved by the government and its designated authority,” according to chapter two of the bill. It adds that the government will appoint inspectors to monitor compliance. The chief inspector of factories will work as the chief safety and health inspector to check the overall performance of factories or companies under this law.

Punishment and penalties safety have been suggested if any employer obstructs inspectors from inspecting a factory or workplace and fails to follow the law. In case of lack of safety and health measures at a workplace, the owner can be fined up to Rs250,000. Those who fail to produce records to inspectors will be penalised with a Rs50,000 fine. There are different categories of fines, ranging from Rs50, 000 to Rs250, 000, depending on the infraction.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1561358/1-workers-safety-ensured-province/>

DAILY-WAGE TEACHERS CHALLENGE COURT VERDICT

Dawn, November 19th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The recent judgment of Islamabad High Court (IHC) which declared the appointment of scores of teachers in the government-run institutions in the federal capital as illegal has been challenged in the same court.

The sacked teachers filed petitions in the IHC through Advocate Hafiz S.A. Rehman challenging the November 1 judgment of the single-member bench, comprising Justice Athar Minallah.

The petitioners requested that the judgment be set aside and they be allowed to join duties as regular employees from the dates of notifications issued for their hiring. They further requested the court that during the pendency of the intra-court appeal, the respondents may be restrained from taking any adverse action against the appellants.

In the petition, the counsel said the daily-wage teachers had sought the court's intervention for joining their duties but the single bench did not give its verdict on this particular point. Instead, he said, their appointments were declared illegal.

Justice Minallah had declared that the appointment of all daily-wage staffers in government schools and colleges in the capital without following due procedure and observing principles of transparency was illegal, void and tantamount to misconduct on part of the appointing authority. However, the daily wagers who were appointed through a transparent recruitment process and had been demanding regularisation in basic pay scale grade 1 to 15 shall be scrutinised by their respective departments in light of a recent policy.

He said each petitioner shall be granted a fair hearing and that each case shall be considered and decided by the relevant competent authority within 90 days.

The teachers appointed in different schools and colleges on daily wages, contracts or as contingent staff in grade 16 and above had approached the court seeking regularisation of their services.

Justice Minallah also noted that teachers who were appointed without any prior advertisements of the posts but had served for a considerable time deserved consideration from the federal government.

The longstanding issue of nearly 2,000 daily wage and contractual teaching and non-teaching staff has been lingering for years. Despite having gone through several rounds of discussion in various parliamentary committees and even on the floor of parliament, little had been done to resolve their grievances.

After holding a number of hearings since February this year, the IHC had concluded proceedings on August 2. It subsequently withheld its decision on miscellaneous petitions which were announced on November 1.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371448/daily-wage-teachers-challenge-court-verdict>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25TH TO DECEMBER 31ST 2017 ***ONE YEAR ON, TORTURED CHILD MAID STILL AWAITS JUSTICE***

The Express Tribune, 29 December, 2017.

Exactly a year ago – on Dec 29, 2016 – an additional district & sessions judge (ADSJ), Raja Khurram Ali Khan, and his wife Maheen Zafar were booked and later charged for allegedly assaulting, confining, ill-treating, neglecting, abandoning, harming and injuring a 10-year-old housemaid.

This 10-year-old servant, Tayyaba, is still awaiting justice as the trial of the former judge and his wife lingers on at the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to the consternation of rights activists.

The couple have been accused of keeping the girl in wrongful confinement, burning her hand, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in a storeroom, and threatening her with even worse. They have, however, pleaded ‘not guilty’ and are currently standing trial.

The gruesome story of the juvenile maid had revealed the cruel relationship between ‘masters and servants’ and government’s cosmetic measures to protect children.

It had unearthed the way two judges of a district court and a lawyer worked at breakneck pace to clear the judge and his wife of allegations of mistreating the child. The fact that the maximum penalty for pledging the labour of a child is only Rs250 in Pakistan had also emerged through the case.

Later on, the Supreme Court took a suo moto notice, voiced serious concerns at the loopholes in the ‘compromise’ reached under questionable circumstances, hasty handover of the child maid and the suspicious role of the counsel for her guardians. The SC while declaring it a ‘sordid incident’ had overruled the pardon granted to the couple by the girl’s parents in the name of God.

“The case is delayed a lot despite the SC’s suo motu notice and the attention it got,” said a human rights lawyer, Sharafat Chaudhry, who has provided assistance in legislation for child rights to provinces and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). “It should have concluded within 4-5 months,” he said.

Chaudhry revealed that the ICT Child Protection Bill, 2017, has yet to be imposed in the capital as opposed to other provinces where similar legislations have already been imposed. He said the bill has yet to be tabled before the National Assembly and Senate contrary to some passed ‘overnight’.

“The pending legislation should have been the top priority given the alarming situation of the child rights in the federal capital,” he said, “Capital should lead by example.”

Valerie Khan, a Franco-Pakistani human rights activist working to promote women and child rights, said the higher judiciary has shown the will in the case but one year has passed and still “the best interest of child is not at heart in lower judiciary”.

She suggested setting up a special court to deal with cases of children as recently done by the Lahore High Court’s (LHC) Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah. “Quick disposal of the cases is the fundamental principle not just in this case but all other cases of children,” she added.

For Khan, child’s exploitation is not the solution to poverty. She believes parents’ empowerment by enforcing the minimum wages is the only solution to the child domestic labour.

Khan said 'inadequate charges' have been inserted in the case as the 'offenders' have not been accused of charges dealing with burning and trafficking of the child despite mentioning of burn injuries at least 12 times in the medical report and availability of penal sections in this regard.

"This child is voiceless and the prosecution doesn't take child's interests at heart," she added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1595427/1-one-year-tortured-child-maid-still-awaits-justice/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 18th TO DECEMBER 24th 2017
INDUSTRIES FACE ACTION FOR NOT PAYING MINIMUM WAGES TO WORKERS
Dawn, December 20, 2017

Manzoor Ali

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to act against the industrial establishments not paying the notified minimum wages to their workers in the province.

The relevant officials told Dawn that the department recently took steps to ensure compliance with the government's determined minimum wages and that they showed positive results as around half of the industries working in the province agreed to pay those wages to their workers through bank accounts.

There are 76,000 workers registered with the labour department.

The officials said they won't spare those not paying the minimum wages to employees through bank accounts.

They said the labour department recently sought the law department's opinion on if it could go after the owners of factories not paying minimum wages instead of rounding up their managers.

The officials added that the law department replied that a complaint against the employer for the non-payment of the minimum wages through a scheduled bank could be filed under Section 3 read with Section 2(iii) of the KP Payment of Wages Act, 2013, under which the employer was responsible for the payment of wages.

"However, for persons employed otherwise than by a contractor, sub-contractor, headman, middleman or agent, the manager is responsible as enumerated in clause (a) of proviso of section 3 of the said act," the reply read.

Labour secretary Khayyam Hasan Khan told Dawn that a month ago, the department had launched a drive to ensure the payment of proper wages to labourers in light of the chief secretary's directions.

He said the labour department's field staff had visited around 630 industrial units across the province and of them, 329 agreed to pay their workers wages through scheduled banks.

Mr Hasan said those units were set to pay the fixed wages to their employees.

“It is a huge breakthrough for us as more than 50 per cent of the industrial units have agreed,” he said, adding the move would benefit thousands of families across the province as the Hattar Industrial Estate in Haripur district alone employs around 30,000 workers.

The secretary said the remaining units had also agreed to follow the law but had asked for more time to get approval from their owners.

He said the labour department also contacted banks to get their help in the purpose and got a positive response in line with the State Bank of Pakistan guidelines provided for the Asaan Account, which could be opened with credit of Rs5-Rs10 and that the accountholder would get ATM without any cost.

Mr Hasan said banks told the department they were willing to set up ATMs on the factories’ premises to help management and labourers.

“We are going to wait until January before taking action against the factories not complying with the government directions on minimum wages,” he said.

The secretary said initially, the department took up the issue with the industrialists bodies across the province.

“Some of them agreed initially while the others asked for a year’s concession,” he said, adding that the department told industrialists that it was not empowered to provide relaxations in that respect.

Mr Hasan said the KP Payment of Wages Act 2013 provided for payment through a scheduled bank and several factories were not following this, as it allowed them to not pay minimum wage and get away with it.

“Once they start paying through a bank account, they will not be in a position to not pay less to their laborers,” Mr. Hasan said.

The secretary said the labour department had revised daily wages for brick kiln workers after eight years.

“Last time in 2008, brick kiln labourers’ wages were revised,” he said, adding that the department had increased those wages by 2.5 per cent.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377730>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 11th TO DECEMBER 17th 2017
AS SINDH CM SPEAKS OF LABOUR RIGHTS, POLICE CRACK DOWN ON FARMERS
The Express Tribune, December 12, 2017

Vakeel Rao / Z Ali

KARACHI/HYDERABAD: Farmers from across Sindh took to the streets on Monday after not receiving their desired sugar cane crop price. Their march to Bilawal House was interrupted by policemen, who charged the crowd with batons and then used water cannons and tear gas to disperse them.

A number of demonstrators fell unconscious due to the police action, while many were injured.

The protest came as a reaction to the sugar cane price of Rs182 per 40 kilogramme fixed by the Sindh government.

Following the announcement for protest, farmers had gathered around Boat Basin to march towards Bilawal House. Traffic on the road leading from Boat Basin to Bilawal House was blocked, as all routes leading to the house of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairperson were barricaded by the police.

The demonstrators, who included a number of women and children, chanted slogans against the provincial government and sugar mill owners. They demanded that the government ensures that the official prices set for the sugar cane crop be adhered to and the reopening of shut down sugar mills across the province.

The protest continued for half-an-hour, after which Cane Commissioner Agha Zuhair arrived to negotiate with the farmers. He proposed that a two-member team representing the protesters should join him to discuss the issue with other government officials, but his idea was shot down by the farmers, who then began their march towards Bilawal House.

Policemen stationed along the route began to fire teargas shells and douse the protesters with water from a water cannon. The firing resulted in many people passing out. Law enforcers took 50 protesters into custody and shifted them to various nearby police stations.

The few protesters that were able to make it to Bilawal Chowrangi and its adjacent lanes were also taken into custody.

According to the Clifton SP, 49 people who tried to enter the 'red zone' were taken into custody. However, Sindh Agriculture Research Council (SARC) President advocate Ali Palh and Javed Junejo, who organised the protest, said that around 90 of their companions were taken into custody. "Our protest was peaceful and justified," said Ali. "We wanted to protest at Bilawal House for our rights," he said.

The protesting farmers accused the Sindh government of colluding with sugar mill owners. "The government of Sindh cannot feel the plight of the poor farmers," said the protesters, warning that demonstrations would continue if their sugar cane crop price was not accepted.

Dr Shakil Palh, Ali's brother, told The Express Tribune that his brother is among 80 persons who have been arrested. "The police have locked them up at the Clifton police station while 30 other people are missing, including a seven-year-old child and a woman."

According to Dr Shakil, the police resorted to baton charge and teargas shelling as the protesters reached Boat Basin on the way to Bilawal House. Besides Ali, growers' representatives such as Wali Muhammad Thebo, Rizwan Lashari and Ali Nawaz Chohan were also arrested.

"We wanted to hold a peaceful protest and to convey our demands and complaints to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. But, the police used force and denied us from exercising our democratic right," he claimed. He said if his brother and the other detained people were not released, the protesters will march towards Chief Minister House from the press club.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture leader Nabi Bux Sathio condemned the police action and arrest of the farmers. "A democratic government [would] never opt to baton charge or tear gas peaceful protesters. They always give patient hearing to their legal and due demands."

Ali also represents the Sindh Human Rights Defenders organisation. His arrest drew condemnation from civil society activists. "The corrupt rulers in Sindh are responsible for economic murder of the farmers," alleged Grand Democratic Alliance General Secretary Ayaz Palijo who condemned the police action. He demanded that the police officers and other people who ordered them to beat up the peaceful protesters should be booked in an FIR.

The SARC called the protest over the prevailing sugar cane price controversy. The farmers have been demanding a Rs185 per 40kg rate for their crop. However, the government recently notified a Rs182 price. But, the farmers complain that in violation of the notification the sugar mills are paying them between Rs130 and Rs140. They hold PPP Co-Chairperson Asif Ali Zardari for the alleged exploitation of the farmers by the mills.

According to the Sindh Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950, the Sindh government is obligated to notify the start of the cane crushing in October every year. The government has also been made responsible to fix the buying rate of sugar cane in consultation with farmers and mills, according to the Act.

However, for the last several years, the farmers have been persistently complaining of two to three month delays in notifying the crushing season and fixing low price for the crop to favour mill owners. On their parts, the mills maintain that the growers' demanded rate is not feasible.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice-President Mehmood Nawaz Shah, who also strongly condemned the onslaught, said they are ready for a similar showdown in Hyderabad on December 23. "We will block the highway [at Hatri Bypass in Hyderabad]. We have resolved to go there for a sit-in to draw attention of the government and the sugar mills," said Nawaz, who added that the board and other organisations representing the farmers are under pressure from their community to adopt the course of protests. Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, SARC and Sindh Abadagar Ittehad will also participate in the December 23 sit-in.

He said the Karachi protest was meant to demand from the government to implement its own notification for payment of Rs182 per 40kg against Rs130 to Rs140 which is being currently paid. He lamented that the sugar mills which have been given an over Rs20 billion subsidy by the federal and provincial governments are not paying adequate rates to the growers.

Commenting on the issue, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said that the government was ready to provide a subsidy for the export of sugar. "We want to begin the crushing season but the federal government has not issued any notification regarding the subsidy," he justified. Ironically, Murad was speaking to the media after attending the International Labour Conference organised by human resources ministry.

"The government is sincere with the sugar cane producers. We have announced a price of Rs182 for 40kg to relieve the producers," he claimed in response to a question regarding how exactly the provincial government was 'supporting' the farmers. "The provincial government has already issued a notification in this regard," he assured.

The CM said that a decision to provide a sugar export subsidy of Rs10.70 per kg was made during a Council of Common Interests meeting last year. To further ease the deadlock between sugar producers and mill owners, the provincial cabinet had also approved an additional subsidy of Rs9.30 per kg, giving farmers a profit of Rs20 per kg and ensuring a price of Rs182 for 40kg. “I am sad that the federal government has not issued any notification in this regard,” Murad lamented. “The responsibility of the crisis lies with the federal government,” he said, absolving his government of all blame.

He appealed to the sugar cane farmers to be patient for a peaceful resolution to their issues. “I will approach the federal government again and request it to release the notification soon,” he promised. Condemning the police attack on peaceful farmers who were heading towards Bilawal House, Pakistan Muslim League – Functional (PML-F) Sindh General Secretary Sardar Raheem demanded the immediate release of all the arrested farmers. Talking to Express News, he claimed that at least a dozen of the detained farmers were affiliated with the PML-F. “The PPP, which poses as the champion of democracy, is causing millions of rupees loss to poor farmers and giving a subsidy of billions of rupees to sugar mill owners,” he claimed, adding that the PPP’s crackdown on farmers reminded him of a dictatorship. Rahim announced that a movement will be launched if the government did not free the detained farmers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1581722/1-sindh-cm-speaks-labour-rights-police-crack-farmers/>

CM PROMISES ASSISTANCE TO LANDMINE BLAST VICTIMS

Dawn, December 14, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The government will take all possible measures to fulfil its responsibility to help and rehabilitate the victims of landmine explosions, Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri says.

He was talking to landmine victims of Dera Bugti who were left physically handicapped because of the blasts.

Scores of the landmine-hit people had gathered outside the Quetta Press Club to participate in a demonstration. Among them was a woman. People were carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans against landmine explosions.

The protesters also chanted slogans against the anti-state elements involved in planting landmines on roadsides and fields. They demanded of the government to take action against the elements involved in targeting innocent people, including women and children.

Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri reached the press club to express solidarity with the landmine blast victims. He was accompanied by provincial ministers Sardar Aslam Bizenjo, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhel and Obaidullah Babit.

He told the protesters that his government had already taken notice of landmines blasts and would take action against those involved in such inhuman acts. He said the government would also take

measures for the rehabilitation of disabled people of the Bugti tribe who were targeted through landmines explosions.

He said the government would provide jobs and financial assistance to the victims of landmine explosions.

The chief minister criticised those people who were living abroad and raising slogans of so-called independence. He said they were enjoying luxurious life abroad and were making their own people physically disabled through blast and landmine explosions.

The woman who was disabled in a landmine blast in Dera Bugti district later met CM Zehri at the Chief Minister House. The chief minister welcomed her and placed a chador on her head and also provided her with financial assistance.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376526/cm-promises-assistance-to-landmine-blast-victims>

LABOURER KILLED AT STONE CRUSHING PLANT

Dawn, December 16th, 2017

TAXILA: A man working at a stone crushing plant was killed after he fell from a height of 200ft because of accidental blasting.

Mohammad Ayub, a father of five, received multiple injuries from the fall and then died. The body of the deceased was taken to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, from where it was sent to his native town of Jori Raggan.

Hassanabdal police have registered a case against the manager of the plant, who fled from the scene.

This is the fourth incident this year in which labourers at stone crushing plants have died due to a lack of safety measures and the non-implementation of labour laws.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376875>