

January 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 21ST TO JANUARY 27TH 2019

LABOUR SECRETARY SUMMONED ON PLEA FOR COMPENSATION TO BALDIA FACTORY FIRE VICTIMS

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter January 27, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court has summoned the labour secretary for Feb 14 on a petition seeking compensation for the victims of the Baldia factory fire.

Petitioners Mohammad Tariq, Farida Bani and Syed Hashmat Ali — the victims and their relatives — submitted that provincial Labour Minister Nasir Hussain Shah had announced on May 1, 2018 an amount of Rs580 million as compensation for the victims of the garment factory in Baldia Town. However, that amount had not been released yet, they added.

In an earlier hearing, a two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar had directed an additional advocate general (AAG) to file comments and also issued notices to the respondents.

A deputy secretary appeared before the bench and submitted that he had no information in this regard. The AAG did not appear in court.

The court observed that despite the fact that the deputy secretary belonged to the same labour department, he was totally unaware of the statement his minister had made in a public gathering.

Three alleged facilitators of suspects who stormed the Chinese consulate sent to prison

The court summoned the labour secretary on Feb 14 along with proper comments and warned that in case of his absence the minister concerned would be summoned regarding his statement.

The bench also expressed annoyance over the law officer for not filling comments and directed him to come up on the next hearing with an explanation.

The administrative judge of antiterrorism courts on Saturday remanded three suspects in judicial custody in a case pertaining to an attack on the Chinese consulate general in Karachi in Nov 2018.

After the end of their last remand, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) produced Ahmed Hussain, Ali Ahmed alias Hashim and Mohammad Aslam before the administrative judge and the investigating officer informed him that the investigation had been completed.

The court sent them to prison on judicial remand and directed the IO to file a report till Feb 4.

Initially, police said that they arrested three suspects along with Nadir Khan alias Baladi and Abdul Latif during a raid on Jan 11 in Sadiq Baloch Goth, Taiser Town, and explosive substances as well as

unlicensed weapons were found in their possession. Later, all the five suspects were also formally shown arrested in the Chinese consulate attack case.

However, on Jan 22, the IO had informed the administrative judge that Nadir and Latif had confessed before a magistrate on Jan 18 to have facilitated the militants who stormed the Chinese consulate. The magistrate had sent them to prison after recording their confessional statements under Section 164 of the CrPC.

The same court on Saturday also sent an activist of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) to prison on judicial remand in a case related to provocative speeches.

The police arrested Alamzaib on Jan 21 and after his first physical remand ended, the IO brought him again before the administrative judge of the ATCs in Karachi. The court sent the suspect to jail and asked the IO to file the investigation report as required under Section 173 of the CrPC.

Police submitted that the detained suspect along with around 15 nominated and around 300 unknown accomplices had allegedly used provocative language against state institutions during their speeches at a rally in Sohrab Goth on Jan 20.

According to the FIR, the workers of PTM organised a rally at a ground behind Al-Asif Square allegedly on the directions of PTM leader Manzoor Pashteen.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1459942/labour-secretary-summoned-on-plea-for-compensation-to-baldia-factory-fire-victims>

LABOUR ABUSE

Editorial January 26, 2019

THROUGH interviews with 118 garment workers from 25 factories, union heads, labour rights activists and government spokespersons, a recent report by Human Rights Watch highlighted rampant abuse in the garment industry. Pakistan's highly competitive textile industry is a major source of foreign exchange earnings, as well as a beneficiary of government concessions and tax cuts, and yet it perpetuates some of the worst forms of exploitation. Workers in the sector remain invisible in the national discourse. Meanwhile, the government continues to turn a blind eye to unfair labour practices, as do international brands that outsource labour to developing countries like ours. The garment industry is one of the largest employment sectors, with a workforce of an estimated 15m people. Workers complain of being paid less than the minimum wage, forced to work overtime, and denied pension, maternity leave and breaks. They are not allowed to form independent unions; they face intimidation and threats and arbitrary dismissal when they try to organise for their rights. There is also evidence of minors being hired in the industry.

Evidence of exploitation often gets muted in much of the mainstream media due to conflict of interest and pressure from powerful factory owners. Workers complained of arbitrary dismissal, unsanitary working conditions, long working hours, and being paid less than the minimum wage. In a rare example, protests by the employees of a clothing manufacturer drew attention to the plight of its workers in 2017. But their

difficulties were quickly buried and forgotten, as much as abuse and human rights violations in this country are. Even one year on, there are claims that those workers are being denied their rights mandated by law. It seems as if nobody cares until there is a tragedy one cannot look away from — when it is too late — which is exactly what happened five years ago, when 255 workers perished after a fire erupted at Ali Enterprises at Baldia Town. There were no emergency exits or safety mechanisms in place. The HRW report is correct to point out that the primary responsibility for protecting the rights of workers rests with the government, and then with domestic and international companies that are bound by domestic and international labour laws. All stakeholders must remember that all too often workplace ‘accidents’ turn out to be cases of criminal negligence.

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DOCK WORKERS’ RIGHTS

Zeenat Hisam January 24, 2019

THE recent success of the Port Qasim dock workers’ union in claiming due rights after months of struggle is worthy of our attention for three reasons. Foremost is the fact that this is the first time workers took an open stand against rights violations committed by a Chinese company working for a CPEC project. Secondly, the way the dock workers’ union garnered solidarity of a larger representation of trade unions and civil society reflected positively on the unionised labour in Karachi ports and the trade union movement no matter how weak it stands in the current neoliberal environment. Thirdly, it provides an opportunity to take stock of labour legislation and international standards compliance in our ports.

It is not the first time that labour violations in a Chinese-led CPEC project have come to light. More than 100 on-site deaths and injuries were reported in the construction phase of the Lahore Orange Line Metro Bus project due to lack of health and safety standards. A recent 2018 investigation of labour conditions in the construction of the M-4 Motorway, another project under CPEC, revealed contractual labour on low wages and precarious work conditions.

As infrastructure development under CPEC projects gains momentum, it is critical that, besides economic benefits, social cost should be monitored and efforts made to mitigate adverse implications. Both China and Pakistan have a reputation for poor treatment of their workers. Both got the same ranking (five at the bottom) in the ITUC Global Rights Index 2018. According to the index, countries with the rating of five are the worst countries in the world to work in. Though legislation spells out certain rights, workers have effectively no access to these rights and are exposed to unfair labour practices. Despite all odds, workers in China, like in Pakistan, are collectively making their voices heard. About 600 strikes by workers were reported in China in 2017 and recent estimates are even higher.

Dock workers around the world face numerous challenges with globalisation of trade, economic restructuring and adoption of new cargo-handling methods. Historically, dock workers have struggled against the adverse consequences of their work’s temporary nature. After the great London dock strike of 1889 against the insecurity of jobs, voluntary registration schemes for decasualisation through contribution by employers were initiated in the UK. The scheme, made statutory after the 1945 strike

under the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act, 1946, and administered through the National Dock Labour Board, was termed ‘anachronistic’ by neoliberals and abolished during the Thatcher era amidst protests by trade unions.

Earlier gains made by dock workers are being eroded.

In Pakistan, the Karachi Dock Labour Board was formed under the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment Act), 1974. There are about 2,800 workers registered with the board. In 2006, the World Bank advised the government to abolish the board, register the workers but not treat them as permanent employees and shift the cost of labour protection to the stevedoring companies.

The unions at the port are fighting to keep the scheme going. The KPT exempted the South Asia Pakistan Terminals (Hutchinson Ports Pakistan) from the jurisdiction of the board under an agreement with the cargo handling company. Dock workers fought for years till in March 2018 the conflict over labour welfare cess was resolved. In April, the dock workers’ union successfully negotiated a two-year collective agreement with the Pakistan International Container Terminal that delivered a 20 per cent wage increase, payment of arrears and regularisation of jobs.

The story of Port Qasim is grim; the authorities consider it outside the jurisdiction of the Karachi Dock Labour Board while the workers demand the 1974 law be implemented.

Pakistan has ratified two old conventions (C 27 & C 32) related to dock workers. Since both have become outdated, the ILO has advised Pakistan to ratify Dock Work Convention No.137 and the Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention No.152. The first deals with new methods of work in docks and aims to afford protection to dock workers. It calls the ratifying state to formulate a national policy to provide for registration and permanent employment and ensure health and safety, vocational training and workers’ collective agency.

As the gains made by dock workers in earlier times are being eroded with containerisation, privatisation and port reforms, it is incumbent on the government to formulate and implement a policy that safeguards their rights, inclusive of the right to unionise and collective bargaining, and ratify the relevant ILO conventions. Despite reduction of the workforce at ports due to technological changes, registration of dock workers, their permanent employment and stability of income are still essential for efficient working of the ports.

The writer is a researcher in the development sector.

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RS3.5BN WORKERS’ WELFARE FUND RELEASED BY PUNJAB GOVT

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated January 22, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Monday released Rs3.5 billion workers welfare fund for the labourers of the province.

Punjab Minister for Labour and Human Resources Ansar Majeed Khan distributed cheques among the workers at a ceremony at Bata Factory. He said the government had given gifts to employees of new year in the shape of Rs3.5 billion grant of workers welfare fund. He handed over cheques for Rs21 million to workers, including 185 cheques for scholarship, 77 for marriage and 11 for death grant.

He called the release of the fund a big achievement of his government, saying that they would address all pending issues of the employees.

He said the government would also ensure wages to employees before time under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister Sardra Usman Buzdar.

The minister said they would make social security cards more powerful than identity card for workers and there was sheer injustice with workers for not implementing the welfare fund even after 18th amendment.

He said labour policy was a big challenge of 100 days agenda and they would assure the labour to solve all issues at any cost.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1458979/rs35bn-workers-welfare-fund-released-by-punjab-govt>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 14TH TO JANUARY 20TH 2019

BANGLADESH GARMENT WORKERS CLASH WITH POLICE OVER WAGES

AFP January 14, 2019

DHAKA: Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers churning out clothes for top global brands walked off the job on Sunday and clashed with police as protests over low wages entered a second week.

Police said water cannons and tear gas were fired to disperse huge crowds of striking factory workers in Savar, a garment hub just outside the capital Dhaka.

“The workers barricaded the highway, we had to drive them away to ease traffic conditions,” industrial police director Sana Shaminur Rahman said about Sunday’s strike action.

More than 50 units have been forced to shut down due to ongoing strikes

“So far 52 factories, including some big ones, have shut down operations due to the protests.”

One worker was killed on Tuesday after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at some 5,000 protesting workers.

Bangladesh is dependent on garments stitched by millions of low-paid tailors on factory floors across the emerging South Asia economy of 165 million people.

Earnings come from clothing sales abroad, with global retailers H&M, Primark, Walmart, Tesco and Aldi among the main buyers.

Union leader Aminul Islam blamed factory owners for resorting to violence to control striking workers. "But they are more united than ever," he said.

"It doesn't seem like they will leave the streets, until their demands are met."

The protests are the first major test for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since winning a fourth term in December 30 elections marred by violence, thousands of arrests and allegations of rigging and intimidation.

Late on Sunday, the government announced a pay hike for mid-level factory workers after meeting manufacturers and labour unions. Not all unions have signalled they will uphold the agreement.

Babul Akhter, a union leader present at the meeting, said the deal should appease striking workers.

"They should not reject it, and peacefully return to work," he said.

Minimum wages for the lowest-paid garment workers rose by a little over 50 per cent this month to 8,000 taka (\$95) per month.

But mid-tier tailors say the rise was paltry and fails to reflect the rising costs of living, especially in housing.

Bangladesh's 4,500 textile and clothing factories shipped more than \$30 billion worth of apparel last year.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association, which wields huge political influence, warned all factories might be shut if tailors did not return to work immediately.

"We may follow the 'no work, no pay' theory, according to the labour law," association president Siddikur Rahman told reporters.

Last year Bangladesh was the second-largest global apparel exporter after China. It has ambitious plans to turn the sector into a \$50bn-a-year industry by 2023.

But despite their role in transforming the impoverished nation into a major manufacturing hub, garment workers remain some of the lowest paid in the world.

The industry also has a poor workplace safety record.

The Rana Plaza garment factory collapse in 2013 killed more than 1,130 people in one of the world's worst industrial accidents.

Following the disaster, major retailers formed two groups to introduce factory reforms. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association says its members have since invested \$1bn in safety upgrades.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457437/bangladesh-garment-workers-clash-with-police-over-wages>

BANGLADESH GARMENT MANUFACTURERS RAISE WORKERS' PAY AMID FURTHER PROTESTS

By Ruma Paul

DHAKA (Reuters) – Garment manufacturers in Bangladesh have agreed to raise workers' pay, the commerce minister said on Sunday, urging people to return to work after a week of violent demonstrations.

Last week at least one worker was killed and dozens wounded during protests over salaries, prompting the government to form a panel of factory owners, union leaders and government officials to investigate the pay demands. On Sunday at least 20 people were hurt at in further clashes between protesters and police outside Dhaka.

All parties involved agreed to raise wages across 6 of the 7 pay grades, leaving the minimum wages unchanged at 8,000 taka (\$95), Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi told reporters after a meeting of the panel.

Low wages and trade deals with Western countries have made the sector a \$30 billion industry accounting for 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports, making Bangladesh the world's second-biggest garment exporter behind China.

Earlier on Sunday, Siddiqur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) had threatened to cut off workers' pay if they did not return to work.

"If you don't return to your work by tomorrow, you will not be paid any wages and we will shut down factories for an indefinite period," he said. "Despite repeated assurance of meeting the demands, the workers are being incited to create unrest. We will not allow this anymore."

The revised wages are effective from December and will be adjusted from January, Munshi said.

Amirul Huq, who represented union leaders on the panel which met with Munshi, said they welcomed the wage hikes.

"The discrepancies in the wage structure have been resolved by the prime minister's intervention. We welcome the new wages. As trade unions, we have the right to protest, but that does not mean vandalizing factories or blocking roads. Workers will go back to work," he said.

At least 20 people were hurt on Sunday when police used teargas and water cannons to disperse workers blocking a major highway in the Ashulia garment manufacturing belt, on the outskirts of the capital

Dhaka, according to Saminur Rahman, a director for the Industrial Police, which patrols the country's business hubs.

The protests are a test for the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who just won a third straight term in a Dec. 30 election. The vote was marred by violence and allegations of widespread rigging and voter intimidation.

The government said in September that the minimum wage for garment workers would increase by up to 51 percent to 8,000 taka (\$95) a month, payable in January, the first increase since 2013.

But union leaders say that increase will benefit only a small percentage of workers in the garment sector, which employs 4 million out of the country's 165 million people.

"Most of the workers do not want vandalism. They want to work. They don't want their factories are closed," said Munshi, also a former president of the BGMEA.

"I hope they will join work peacefully," the minister added.

Reporting by Ruma Paul; Additional reporting by Serajul Quadir; Editing by Raissa Kasolowsky

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-garments-protests/bangladesh-garment-manufacturers-raise-workers-pay-amid-further-protests-idUSKCN1P70BY>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 7TH TO JANUARY 13TH 2019

HIDDEN LABOUR

Abira Ashfaq January 13, 2019

HOME-BASED work is a euphemistic phrase. There are countless women workers engaged in industrial labour from their homes on an informal and piece-rate basis. The labour outsourced to women includes many of the intricate processes involved in producing bangles, garments, envelopes, plastic toys, food items, etc, as well as packaging and cleaning batteries. An almost decade-long struggle for their rights led the Sindh government to enact a law enabling their access to social security benefits. This is a step in the right direction — but the only way to ensure that the law is implemented effectively is if home-based workers are vigilant and politically active.

The women labouring in this profession burn out quickly, and the years it took for the government to recognise their labour through legislation is about the time it takes for their health to go from bad to virtually irremediable. Those who cut dates for supari packets or separate plastic toys using industrial scissors complain of chronic pain in their hands. Sitting in strained positions causes persistent back and neck aches. Exposure to chemicals used in multiple processes is harmful. As the work requires intense focus, women complain of vision problems. Many report reproductive ailments and hepatitis.

The economic rewards are few. Home-based workers earn far below the minimum wage for an unskilled worker. Take bangles, for example. There are roughly 60 processes involved in their manufacture. About

20 of these are performed by women at home. These include evening out the open mouth of a bangle and closing it over a flame. The rates for the latter are Rs6 for a bunch that is sold for Rs365. Even the most efficient workers, maintaining a crouched position with the fan off to keep the flame still, will simply reduce the time for one bunch from 20 minutes to 12. Through perseverance, they may increase their daily rate by Rs50, but it is still not enough to be a living wage.

Women working at home effectively subsidise the industrialists.

Although women are free to take or refuse work, and have the convenience of getting work delivered to their homes, they exercise limited agency. Work from home reduces their mobility and exposure to their peers, the market and government offices. Most women are unable to name the factory or investor they are working for. Middlemen who deliver materials can thus exploit their isolation and coerce them into accepting poor wages. Even when increments are won, they are minimal. Moreover, since there is no formal contract and industrial conditions remain volatile, there is never any guarantee of work.

Using one's home for labour has an impact on living conditions. Home-based work necessitates turning one's living quarters into an assembly line. Yet, their rates do not include rent and utilities. Instead, it's the workers who subsidise the industrialists. Their children suffer as well, as they lose access to space in their houses, are drawn in to assist their elders, and are exposed to the same health and safety risks. The fact that home-based workers are predominantly women — unable to unionise effectively, poorly paid, and working in precarious and informal jobs — makes such labour a form of systemic gender discrimination. It contributes to women's economic marginalisation. Women home-based workers who also bear household responsibilities struggle to make time for union meetings.

Since unions are weak, the gap in labour organising has been filled by NGOS. This ensures the issue gets visibility, and eventually pushes lawmakers to write a policy and then enact a law. But the hard work of making rights real requires organising and political mobilisation. Without that, the law itself is nothing but a set of aspirations.

There are multiple hurdles written into the law that render rights merely declaratory. As it stands, the new Sindh Home-Based Workers Act, 2018, will notify a council responsible for overseeing the mapping and registration of home-based workers and formulation of district-level committees. The act mandates a fund for the welfare of home-based workers to be administered by a governing body. An arbitration committee will resolve disputes, which can be appealed in the labour court. It will be months, if not years, before the four regulatory bodies prescribed in the act are functional and women workers start to get grants for sickness and education, and redressal for their grievances.

It would have been simpler to mobilise existing institutions (the EOBI, social welfare department, workers welfare board) to immediately release grants for home-based workers. It is time to challenge the long wait for laws and then the rules to implement them. With welfare benefits mired in layers of bureaucracy, it becomes challenging for women home-based workers to organise effectively. Yet strong unions, with diverse leadership, is exactly what is needed to push for the law's implementation.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457200/hidden-labour>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 31ST TO JANUARY 6TH 2019

INVISIBLE LABOUR

Roshaneh Zafar January 04, 2019

As a development practitioner, I have the good fortune of meeting some phenomenal individuals. Recently, I met Baji Suriya (name changed to protect confidentiality) and was struck by her fortitude and resilience. Baji Suriya lives in a small mohalla in the city of Bhera and has a 17-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy, both with disabilities. Her husband plies a rickshaw, purchased through a microfinance loan, while Baji Suriya supplements the family income with her small tailoring business. Generally, it is assumed that such businesses do not contribute much to the GDP of a country, and that supporting such enterprises through financial services is, at best, a philanthropic measure and, at worst, usury.

It may actually be a good idea to actually look at the economic value of the two businesses highlighted above. In a recent study that was undertaken to gauge the financial impact of common home-based businesses run and managed by low-income households, especially by women, the research showed that a typical rickshaw can generate up to Rs24,000 in net monthly income. The same research estimated that a stitching business run by a woman out of her home will also generate approximately Rs24,000 monthly. The range of net income could be as low as Rs4,713 to as high as Rs46,340 per month.

In Baji Suriya's case, her monthly net earnings were around Rs6,000, since having to take care of two children with disabilities was very time consuming. However, the extra money that she earned from her business was invested in monthly savings in the form of a committee, which allowed the family to build up a nest egg in case of a rainy day.

The relationship between the formal and informal economy is complex.

The question to ask is how all of this transposes at the macro-economic level. One line of argument considers the informal sector negatively as it is seen to be outside the ambit of the law, has low productivity and growth potential, and, at the same time, causes losses to the revenue of the state. From another perspective, it is seen as a means to alleviate poverty, lead to greater wealth distribution, is considered a hotbed of entrepreneurship, and, in some ways, is able to redress gender inequities as it employs a greater number of women.

The reality may, in fact, lie somewhere between both these points of view.

Estimates to measure the size of the informal economy in Pakistan can be seen in two ways: one study places the informal sector as 36 per cent of the GDP, while the Labour Force Survey estimates that 40pc of Pakistan's total labour force relies on the informal sector. When compared with other countries in the region, as a percentage of the GDP, Pakistan's informal sector is much bigger — both as an employer and as a generator of economic opportunities.

Traditionally, it was also assumed that the informal sector is counter-cyclical, ie during periods of economic downturn, the informal sector would grow to absorb the unemployed as jobs in the formal

sector were lost while, in good times, the size of the informal sector would shrink as demand for formal jobs increase.

However, this particular correlation has not held up in the face of empirical evidence, as the relationship between the formal and informal economy is more complex — a point, in fact, that needs to be better understood by today's policymakers. At one level, the existence of the informal sector has a lot to do with the state of human resources in a country — research has shown that there is a positive correlation between the education, the skill levels and the age of the population. This particular aspect could definitely have an impact on the size of the informal sector in Pakistan.

However, even the above analysis does not adequately explain the existence and growth of Pakistan's informal sector. There are deeper structural issues that have created the space for the growth of the informal economy.

One of the most compelling arguments is related to the level of public sector corruption, where most businesses have to pay bribes or face rent-seeking, as a result of which many businesses prefer to be 'out' of the formal sector. Similarly, this is further compounded by the lack of 'ease of doing business' in Pakistan, where many start-ups struggle with basic legal and business registration and other set-up aspects.

There can be no running away from the fact that, in order to improve the overall productivity and the growth of businesses in Pakistan, the government has to tackle both of these points, while also understanding that the informal sector will continue to provide jobs to millions of self-employed men and women in the country. In the long run, the growth of the microfinance sector, combined with access to skills development and education, can also go a long way towards enhancing the productivity of micro-entrepreneurs. There is no doubt that, for people like Suriya Baji and her husband, access to affordable financial services is an important safety net.

The writer is founder and managing director of Kashf Foundation.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1455351/invisible-labour>

February 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 18TH TO FEBRUARY 24TH 2019

20 KILLED IN CHINA MINING ACCIDENT

AFP February 23, 2019

Shanghai: Twenty mining staff were killed in northern China on Saturday and another 30 injured when a vehicle that was transporting them underground experienced brake failure and lost control, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The accident took place in the Xilingol League in Inner Mongolia on Saturday morning, it said.

Fifteen people were killed on the spot and five others died later. The 30 who were injured were in stable condition, it added.

No further details on the accident were given and the report did not say what type of mine it was.

The accident is under investigation.

Deadly mining accidents remain common in China despite efforts to improve conditions and crack down on illegal mines, particularly those that produce coal.

In October, 21 miners died in eastern Shandong province in a tunnel collapse.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/435878-20-killed-in-china-mining-accident>

POLICE PARTY BOOKED FOR NEGLIGENCE AFTER LABOUR LEADER'S DEATH IN POLICE CUSTODY IN KARACHI

Imtiaz Ali February 18, 2019

A day after a senior labour leader died under mysterious circumstances in police custody in Karachi, a case was registered against the police party which carried out the raid to arrest him, police officials said on Monday.

Babu Karim Jan, the president of the Gadani ship-breaking workers union, had died under mysterious circumstances on Sunday morning, soon after being arrested by police from his residence in Metroville, located in the city's SITE area.

Police claimed that he died of a heart attack when he was arrested while relatives and friends, who held a protest demonstration outside the Karachi Press Club on Sunday evening, said he was killed because of police torture during the raid.

Karachi West SSP Shaukat Khatian told Dawn today that a case has been registered against the raiding police party on a complaint of Jan's family on charges of negligence.

However, the senior officer said no policeman has been arrested so far.

SSP Khatian also disclosed that two attempted murder cases against the deceased labour leader had been handed over to the deputy inspector general of the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) by the Karachi police chief, AIG Amir Ahmed Shaikh, for investigation purposes.

AIG Shaikh on Monday took notice of Jan's death and ordered an inquiry to ascertain the circumstances and events that led to his death, police officials said.

The city police chief along with DIG West Amin Yousafzai and SSP Khatian visited the deceased's home and expressed his condolences with the family members as well as people gathered in the area.

He informed the family that a team led by DIG CIA Arif Hanif has been established to probe the incident.

According to a police spokesperson, AIG Shaikh promised that a case would be registered against the police party that carried out the raid “if they were found involved in the incident”.

Shaikh added that justice would also be provided in the cases registered against the deceased and his son Aminul Haq.

Family members and elders in the area expressed their gratitude to the police for taking action against the police team concerned, according to the spokesperson.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464598/police-party-booked-for-negligence-after-labour-leaders-death-in-police-custody-in-karachi>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 28TH TO FEBRUARY 3RD 2019

SENATE PANEL: REGULARISATION OF DAILY-WAGE WORKERS DEFERRED

By Our Correspondent Published: January 31, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Daily-wage staffers will have to wait a while longer for the regularisation of their jobs after a Senate panel on Wednesday deferred the matter until its next meeting.

The panel was further told that the new education policy of the government is expected in three months.

This was stated during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training at the Parliament House with Senator Rahila Magsi in the chair.

During the meeting, Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood said that the framework for the new National Education Policy Framework had been designed, adding that the government had taken all provinces on board in this regard through an Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference.

He added that the policy will focus on three main areas, including enrolling the 25 million out-of-school children in educational institutions, making a uniform education system across the country and to ensure the quality of education.

Mehmood further said that the new education policy will provide guidelines for achieving the desired goals.

The new education policy is likely to be available within the next three months.

He added that improvement in the literacy rate was also included the new policy framework. The literacy rate will be increased from the current level of 58 per cent.

The committee lauded the government's initiatives to launch the new policy framework which is aimed at achieving sustainable development goals (SDG) goals on education over the next four years.

Mehmood said that a total of 376 foreign scholarships for Masters of Sciences or Masters in Philosophy (MPhil) and doctorates of philosophy (PhD) were awarded to students from Balochistan since 2012. Of these, 172 were for PhD and 204 for MPhil.

Mahmood said that "having more number of PhD's is good but we should improve the quality of education."

The committee's chairperson stressed on improving the quality of research and its applicability and connection with socio-economic issues of Pakistan, especially Balochistan. Senator Magsi said that education was critical for the socio-growth and prosperity of the country and efforts must be made to ensure its quality.

Higher Education Commission (HEC) Executive Director Lt Gen (retired) Muhammad Asghar said that the research university — Islamabad National University (INU) — to be built at the Prime Minister House would provide education in four key sectors, including climate change, governance, technology and development.

The university will also be focused on emerging trends in Pakistan, he said.

The committee also discussed the agenda on the Area Study Centre (Amendment Bill 2017". Senator Muzaffar Hussain Shah said that the centres were established to conduct research, especially relating to foreign affairs. He suggested transferring the administrative control of area study centre from the education ministry to the foreign affairs ministry.

The centre is the need of the hour keeping in view regional as well as global circumstances, he said, as he presented a document listing the contributions of the centre in formulating foreign policy.

Other senators endorsed Shah's suggestions to make the centres autonomous. The education minister responded by stating, "We agree with the aims and objectives of the centre." Such area centres are also working in different provinces and are linked with universities, he said. He added that the HEC had increased their budget tenfold over the past 16 years.

He expressed his disagreement with the senator's view, arguing that after transferring administration control to the education ministry, the performance of these centres had improved

Senator Shamim Afridi proposed the establishment of a separate campus for women at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST).

The committee directed the KUST vice chancellor in this regard and sought a detailed report.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 31st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1900572/1-senate-panel-regularisation-daily-wage-workers-deferred/>

GOVERNOR HINTS AT NEW EMPLOYMENT-FRIENDLY LABOUR LAWS

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 30TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh governor Imran Ismail has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is determined to ensure that business and employment-friendly labour laws are enacted so that both employers and workers can actively contribute towards productive enhancement, quality of work, sustainable development, increased workers benefit and privileges as well as substantial corporate profitability. “I compliment the Employers’ Federation of Pakistan for its proactive and constructive role in inspiring private sector in shaping the optimum human resource utilisation,” he said, speaking at the concluding session of International HR Conference and Awards 2019, organised by Employers’ Federation of Pakistan.

The governor further said that priority would be given to employment education, skill development, vocational training and meaningful utilisation of human resources so that Pakistan attains substantial socio-economic growth.

EFP president Majyd Aziz, in his welcome address, quoted the World Bank report 2019-20 that suggests that investment in human capital is fundamental to sustain and progressively enhance economic growth. He urged the government to put in place long term and consistent fiscal, industrial and labour policies to make conducive climate for foreign and domestic investment. He also demanded level playing field for business competitiveness. He asked the government to formulate realistic policies that can promote digital technology, global connectivity and broad based use of artificial intelligence so that these could have a positive impact on youth and women employment and future of work.

During the morning session, eminent global speakers and consultants such as Ronald Thomas from USA and Mir Mehdi Ali from UK dwelt on the ‘Future of Human Resource and Digital Human Resource.’ Thomas stressed there are key features that HR practitioners must seriously address: future of the workplace, future of the enterprise and the future of how work gets done. He said the HR management is like a lever that propels the enterprise to achieve positive financial results. He termed the Head of the HR division in any enterprise as the “Organisational Architect”.

Mir Mehdi Ali said that in his opinion even the HR people in an organisation have the opportunity to create entrepreneurship. He advised the audience that to be a successful HR manager, one should build trust, believe in peer learning and coaching, continuous communication, prudently manage reports and performances, sincerely develop others in the organisations and foster innovation and agility. He said that in the next few years, CPEC may create up to 3 million jobs. He asked whether the HR people in Pakistan are ready to get these jobs filled with trained and skilled workforce.

Umair Jaliawala, a well-known motivational speaker, in his discourse, laid emphasis on the use of artificial intelligence and emotional intelligence as future practical tools in managing and developing people in an enterprise. He said usage of these tools requires a new thinking not only among the workforce and managerial staff but also the Board of Directors.

A panel discussion on ‘Impact of Economic Initiatives on HR’ was held where four CEOs representing varied sectors participated. They responded to the question of how CPEC would impact the economy of

the country. They advised that it is a good sign that the mindset of the government, bureaucracy as well as the private sector is changing towards the new business environment. There is a very serious effort to improve the rating of ease of doing business. The foreign investors are gradually becoming more confident and they have a positive outlook on investing in Pakistan.

The second panel discussion of seven senior HR practitioners focussed on 'Win-Win HR Practices' which they can develop in responding to the business challenges confronting enterprises in the future. Input from them was based personal examples and the efforts they made in their organisations to bring about fundamental changes in the role of human resource with their role as strategic business partners in their enterprises. They emphasised that in every enterprise there should be an institutionalised network to share ideas both innovative and transformational so that an enlightened enterprise environment become a possibility and reality.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190130443358/>

March 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 25TH TO MARCH 31ST 2019

UNICEF TO CONDUCT CHILD LABOUR SURVEY IN SINDH

By APP Published: March 28, 2019

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Minister for Labour and Manpower Ghulam Murtaza Baloch has said that a child survey is being conducted by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to ascertain the exact number of child labour in the province. Sindh Government was extending full cooperation to UNICEF and was ready to prepare a comprehensive strategy against child labour once the survey is completed. The minister said this while talking to the media during his visit to Hyderabad on Wednesday.

The minister expressed satisfaction over the standard of education to children in the schools being managed by the provincial labour department.

He said that maximum facilities were being provided in these schools with continuous efforts to make these institutions on a par with international standards.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1938693/1-unicef-conduct-child-labour-survey-sindh/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 18TH TO MARCH 24TH 2019

‘LABOUR LAWS ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR IMPLEMENTATION’

By Sidra Maniar Published: March 20, 2019

KARACHI: Trade is inextricably linked with labour rights in the world today. If you want to promote trade, you must ensure that human rights and labour laws are being followed.

These views were expressed by Zulfiqar Shah, joint director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), at a panel discussion jointly organised by PILER and Institute of Business Administration (IBA) on Tuesday titled, ‘Business and Human Rights: Opportunities and Challenges’.

The moderator, Zeenia Shaukat of PILER, said that to compete internationally, each country strives to achieve the lowest cost of production. Hence, many countries promote trade by ‘closing their eyes’. Company owners do not invest in things like work environment to cut corners and the labour suffers. She said that compromised building structure played a role in the Baldia Factory fire.

In Pakistan, there are around only 337 labour inspectors to cater to the need of the whole country, said Shaukat. She added though that many companies outsourcing their production try to leverage the exporter by asking it to implement certain laws. These brands in turn are forced by their consumers to do so. She said that the impact of these efforts is low, however, compared to what a state policy may bring. She asked Shah if it is possible to bring ethics into trade and if any efforts in this direction have indeed proved beneficial.

In response, Shah discussed the impact of Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). He said that Pakistan became a part of this in 2014 and since then has gained duty-free access to the European market. This essentially means they have received a discount of 10 to 15% in selling their products.

Becoming a member though is conditional upon things like compliance with the convention on basic human rights and labour laws. Thus, Pakistani companies had to improve the conditions for the labour working in their factories.

Talking about the Modern Slavery Act 2015 that the United Kingdom adopted, Shah said that companies based in UK have to annually file a declaration that all their outsourced production units do not use bondage or slavery. Thus, he added, to increase trade Pakistan has to ensure labour laws and rights are implemented.

Talking about the daily realities of these efforts however, Abira Ashfaq, a lawyer, researcher and activist who has worked closely with home-based women workers, said that these have little impact. She said that when Pakistan signs international conventions, it puts pressure on the government to develop laws in relation to it. She said that the devolution of labour to provinces has brought progressive laws. “Sindh is ahead in creating progressive law but not their execution,” she added.

For Ashfaq, these laws mean nothing to the women in the informal sector. She said that people should also refrain from saying that law is there, but no implementation, because it undermines the problem. “The laws are not designed for implementation,” she lamented.

Pointing to one of the main hurdles, she said that till the council stipulated in the Sindh labour law is formed, workers can’t be registered and can’t avail the benefits. She asked why this bureaucratic hurdle was put in place if not to discourage the workers. She said that the organisation and infrastructure was in place for workers to go get themselves registered, then why could they not do so directly. “We merely do paper work to gain things like GSP,” she alleged.

Shaukat then asked one of the panellists what was stopping businessmen from ensuring laws were being followed given their close link to better trade opportunities. Zubair Motiwala, an industry leader, said that industries are doing this; they have been compelled to do this. He said to gain the opportunity for example to work with Wal-Mart, one has to meet a social compliance standard and so companies are doing that. He said that Baldia fire was a political incident and not caused by lax building regulations. According to Motiwala, due to the economic conditions prevailing in the country, meeting low costs becomes difficult. Citing terrorism, gas hike and electricity shortages as the issues, he said that the business community was trying hard to stay afloat. He added that the importers are attracted to Pakistan when it offers cheap products.

Shah, disagreeing with Motiwala’s claims, said that the problems do not really affect big companies like Gul Ahmed that follow these standards. It is the informal sector and the unregistered workers who suffer and they were the ones under discussion. These conditions persist even in the formal factories, he added. Talking about the Baldia fire, Shah said that 1,500 workers worked in the factory but only a mere 150 were registered. Facts were being hidden by companies to meet standards, he alleged, adding that just a few days ago, labourers fell to their death while working on a building in Karachi. For Shah, this incident occurred in the fast growing construction industry where there is money to ensure standards are met.

Taking his point further, Ashfaq said that Walmart was the worst employer which manages to sell its products at the cheapest rates by exploiting labour. She added that gaining a chance to do business with them was not “a badge of honour”. “We should be making them implement laws, standards.”

Referring to Motiwala’s comments, Ashfaq further said that Pakistan seems ‘attractive’ to the exporters because, “it is a race to the bottom”. She added that the labour laws are not made to cover the workers at the lowest end.

Motiwala said that Pakistan fails to maintain a competitive edge because we do not do value addition to our products. He said that state policies are also important in boosting trade. He added that they played a major role in Bangladesh that now manages to produce the same products as Pakistan, but at 21% less cost. “How can you ensure compliance when you are incapable of selling your product?” he questioned.

In response, Ashfaq said that one should not break the problem into a dichotomy of dreamy aspirations of human rights or gritty business deals. Rather, both need to be worked out together.

Answering a question on why there was a gap in law and implementation, Gulfam Nabi Memon, former official of the labour dept, said that all laws are designed for implementation. He added that home-based workers are a completely different category and this new group does need new laws. He added that under

Sindh's labour law, registration is being processed in the absence of the council. He negated Ashfaq's idea that the bureaucratic hurdle had a huge impact or that it made it impossible to implement the law.

Commenting on child labour in the country, he said that the last survey was conducted in 1996 and soon another survey will be conducted. He said that first steps had been taken in this regard and the government would be collaborating with the UNICEF.

Labour laws are an important issue in the country. For Ashfaq, women are the worst-affected as they make the major portion of the informal economy. She said that women in the formal economy too suffered mainly because of harassment. "Sexual harassment has to be seen as an economic issue," she said.

In the end, the speakers all agreed that there was a lack of political will to address the issue.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 20th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1933078/1-labour-laws-not-designed-implementation/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 11TH TO MARCH 17TH 2019

LABOUR HAZARDS

Editorial March 12, 2019

WORKERS in many trades in Pakistan are exposed to occupational hazards mainly due to the negligence of employers, and the apathy of the state. This sad fact was once again highlighted when six lives were lost on Saturday in Karachi's Clifton area. The workers were installing glass panes in a multistorey building when they fell to their deaths from the 13th floor as the construction lift buckled. Two of the deceased were brothers. The individual who provided the lift has been held by police while a case has been registered against the building owner and his partners. As reported, it was the police that rushed the unfortunate workers to the hospital, indicating that there were no emergency facilities available on-site, while the victims were working without any safety gear. The reality is that life is cheap in our society, and the welfare and safety of workers is the least of employers' concerns. Labourers in most cities and towns can be seen working on building sites without any safety equipment, and the threats to their safety increase when the building in question is a multistorey structure.

Workers in various other high-risk professions also complain of the lack of occupational health and safety measures, and while employers should answer for these lacunae, the state also needs to explain why it is so disinterested in the safety of workers. For example, the Sindh Assembly has passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but its rules have reportedly not been framed. It is not enough for officials to express sorrow over such tragedies; occupational safety laws must be enforced to ensure that conditions for workers are adequate and that people are not putting their lives on the line just to earn two square meals. Moreover, in case accidents happen, suitable compensation needs to be defined by the law so that families that lose their breadwinners can be given financial assistance.

Published in Dawn, March 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469130/labour-hazards>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4TH TO MARCH 10TH 2019

SIX WORKERS FALL TO DEATH AFTER CONSTRUCTION LIFT BUCKLES IN CLIFTON

Imtiaz Ali Updated March 10, 2019

KARACHI: Six workers died after a fall from the 13th floor of a 23-storey under-construction building in Clifton as the construction lift buckled on Saturday morning, Boat Basin police and hospital officials said.

Six workers were trying to install glasses on the 13th floor of the building with the help of a lift fitted with a trolley when its rope broke, said Boat Basin SHO Mohammed Ashfaq.

As a result, the lift twisted and all the labourers in the trolley fell to the ground. They sustained critical injuries.

“Three of them died on the spot, two others while being taken to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and the sixth one succumbed to injuries during treatment,” said the area SHO.

Dr Seemin Jamali, executive director of the JPMC, confirmed that five labourers — Abdul Rehman, 30, Mohammed Asad, 21, Faisal Islam, 32, Riaz Khan, 29 and Nasir Shamshad, 30 — were brought dead to the facility. The sixth labourer, Musab, died during treatment, she added.

SHO Ashfaq said that the builder, Aga Amin Patel, was constructing a 23-storey building in Block 7 of Clifton.

CM orders probe, minister promises compensation, SP wants building owner booked over tragedy

Clifton SP Suhai Aziz said she had directed the police to register a case against the owner on behalf the state in case the victims’ relatives did not approach the police for it.

The Clifton SP, who visited the site, told Dawn that the district administration and the Sindh Building Control Authority were conducting an inquiry to ascertain the exact cause of the incident.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah took notice of the tragedy and sought an inquiry report from the commissioner of Karachi. Mr Shah asked the authorities who was monitoring the quality of the construction of the building.

“The Sindh government would conduct a thorough probe into the incident,” said Adviser on Information Murtaza Wahab.

Minister for Labour Ghulam Murtaza Baloch, who visited the site, told Dawn that the construction work had been stopped and the building sealed by the district administration and SBCA, which had put up banners to that effect there.

The minister said that they were trying to get the construction workers registered at the labour department to provide them compensation in such a tragedy and bring the builders to justice through a labour court. Mr Baloch said that three deceased workers belonged to the rural areas of Sindh while the other three were residents of the city. He promised that compensation would be paid to the heirs of the victims.

Meanwhile, South SSP Pir Mohammed Shah said that there was “criminal negligence” on part of the builder as no helmets or ropes were provided to the workers in case of a fall to save their lives.

On Feb 25, a couple and their two young sons died when a ground-plus three-storey building collapsed in Malir’s Jaffar-i-Tayyar Society.

Saturday’s tragedy in Clifton once again highlighted the lack of proper precautions and safety measures at multistorey buildings. Workers are often seen performing their duty without any safety gear.

Published in Dawn, March 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468611/six-workers-fall-to-death-after-construction-lift-buckles-in-clifton>

PUNJAB GOVERNMENT PLANS SPECIAL LABOUR CARDS TO INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 9TH, 2019 | LAHORE

With a view to extending relief to the industrial workers, the Punjab government has decided to issue special labour cards to the industrial workers through which they would get different articles on subsidized rates.

The Punjab Chief Minister, Sardar Usman Buzdar on Friday chaired a high-level meeting in which performance of the Labour Department and steps taken for the welfare of the industrial worker were reviewed in detail. The meeting decided to give relief to the industrial workers and the CM gave approval to implement the programme aimed at welfare of the industrial workers. It also discussed the proposal of giving a special discount in providing governmental services through labour cards.

The meeting also decided to enhance the minimum wage of workers from Rs.15000 to Rs.16500. It was informed that labour colonies are being constructed in different districts for the industrial workers and allotment of flats in the labour colonies of Lahore, Nankana Sahib and Multan will be started soon.

The CM directed that spadework should be completed at the earliest for launching labour cards. He hoped that this would facilitate the patients in their treatment and patients’ medical record will also be properly organized. The proposal of providing free treatment facilities to retired workers in social security hospitals was also discussed and the CM directed that social security hospitals should be constructed in Rahim Yar Khan and Sargodha as well. All the social security hospitals will be made centres of excellence through a phased programme, he added. Labour Minister, Ansar Majeed Khan Niazi,

Chairman P&D, secretary labour, commissioner PESSI, Secretary (Coord.) to CM and others attended the meeting.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190309453169/>

April 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1ST TO APRIL 7TH 2019

HUMAN CAPITAL: A CATALYST FOR WEALTH CREATION

Jawaid Bokhari Updated April 01, 2019

CONFRONTED with stubborn macroeconomic imbalances, the PTI-led government's greatest challenge now is figuring out how to integrate its wealth creation and public welfare policies into an effective strategy.

The problem lies in mobilising enough resources for increased capital spending on human resource development to stimulate investment and minimise the import-export gap. Chronic balance of payments difficulties created as a consequence of a huge trade deficit is a major obstacle in import-oriented economic growth.

According to the World Bank report 'Changing Wealth of Nations 2018,' human capital is the largest source of wealth in most advanced economies, contributing 70 per cent of the wealth in high-income countries.

Calling for investment in people, a World Bank policy note 'Pakistan@100 Growth and Investment,' notes that the country's large young population is its greatest asset.

The critical issue is to put the idle manpower to work.

Any meaningful progress can only be made by serious, improved and sustained effort by the provincial governments

The second quarterly report of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), released on March 25, highlights that the incoming labour force needs greater skill and knowledge for CPEC projects. CPEC is soon expected to enter its second phase, focused on industrialisation.

The SBP report urges the government to take serious notice of human capital deficiency. It points out that labour force productivity is 'on the low side' when compared with countries with similar stages of economic development. According to the World Bank's Human Capital Index, Pakistan ranked 134 among the 157 countries surveyed in 2017 and 2018.

While noting the steps taken in this regards, the central bank report also called for an overhaul of the education system, effective enforcement of the Digital Pakistan Policy and expanding/upgrading vocational and technical skills of the labour force.

Any meaningful progress in this regard can only be made by serious, improved and sustained effort by the provincial governments. It also calls for strengthening participatory federalism, more active public-private sector partnerships and much widened community participation.

As Michael Menser author of 'We decide! Theories and cases in participatory democracy' says: Policymakers often tend to forget that 'participatory democracy is a tool for social change ... It is about power wielding not over them but with them.'

But for vocational and technical training of manpower for exports, the PTI-government appears to be more focused on a federal subject: nurturing wealth creation.

EVOLVED in consultation with all private sector stakeholders, the Trade-Related Investment Policy Framework (TRIPF) envisages investment packages for 19 priority sectors, anticipating that local investors will develop joint venture proposals to attract foreign partners.

Interestingly, 25 heads of top Malaysian companies, accompanying their Prime Minister, have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with their Pakistani counterparts for investments worth \$800-900 million in various sectors. The MoUs' implementation will depend on the financial viability of individual projects.

The importance of expanding the manufacturing sector which contributes the bulk of the exports as well as tax revenue cannot be overemphasised.

World Bank data shows that export earnings of manufacturers in total foreign sales of merchandise have risen from 24pc in 1962 to 77pc in 2017. Sharp cuts in imports have also created room for development of import substitution industries. If implemented effectively, TRIPF can ultimately help reduce trade and current account deficits to manageable levels.

For decades, the country's savings, investment and capital formation have been very low and consequently heavy dependence on foreign capital and financial inflows have now turned prohibitive.

So far issues arising from chronic balance of payments difficulties, adverse terms of trade, fast depreciating rupee and unsustainable debts are being addressed in ways that result in more foreign dependence and transfer of wealth abroad. The flexible foreign exchange and policy interest rates discourage domestic investment.

The expected International Monetary Fund bailout will no doubt bring more dollars as a temporary relief for managing fiscal and current account deficits.

The Fund however would expect the authorities to increase slow growing tax revenues, notwithstanding the fact that the economy is sliding downhill. The latest SBP forecast for growth during FY2019 is at 3.5-4pc. Hence, whether the PTI-led government will be able to provide incentives for trade-related investment remains a big question mark.

But for the hike in electricity and gas rates, besides a few symbolic moves, no serious effort has been made to curb non-development spending.

Addressing the national conference on ‘Taxation: a Pathway to Prosperity’ organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountant of Pakistan, the institute’s President Jafar Husain lamented: “We are moving in circles. We are having same changes every five to six years. To increase the tax revenue, we need to document the economy.”

The PTI manifesto pledges to incentivise informal businesses to enter the formal segment of the economy. Authorities expect that the subsidised bank credit to underserved segments will step up the documentation drive. But this is easier said than done.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 1st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473019/human-capital-a-catalyst-for-wealth-creation>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 8TH TO APRIL 14TH 2019

PM EMPHASISES UPON IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS TO PROTECT DOMESTIC WORKERS’ RIGHTS

Published: April 13, 2019

Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Saturday that it was the responsibility of the government and society to ensure that the laws made to protect the rights of domestic workers are implemented, Radio Pakistan reported.

Chairing a meeting regarding Punjab Labour Policy and steps taken for the welfare of workers in Islamabad, the premier said that making laws was not enough, the real challenge was to make sure these laws were implemented.

During the meeting, the prime minister was given a detailed briefing about workers’ rights and protection to their self-respect, provision of congenial working environment and formulation of various laws for the welfare of workers by the Punjab government.

Imran said that the steps taken for the welfare of common man and underprivileged segments of society were above any kind of political gains.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1949744/1-pm-emphasises-upon-implementation-laws-protect-domestic-workers-rights/>

PAKISTAN’S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DIPS SLIGHTLY IN LAST YEAR OF PML-N’S TENURE

By Shahbaz Rana Published: April 14, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s unemployment rate has slightly gone down to 5.7% in the last year of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) tenure due to slightly better economic growth rate and less

number of people looking for jobs, which the statisticians largely attributed to labour discouraged phenomenon.

The Pakistan Employment Trends report of 2017-18, published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) this week, reflects some interesting patterns about the job market. The overall unemployment number stood at 5.7% – a decimal point lower than the last surveyed year, 2014-15. Such a low rate always creates doubts about the authenticity of critical socio-economic indicators.

About seven out of every ten jobs were created in the informal economy during the last fiscal year, which is also an indication of large size of the informal sector.

The Labour Force Survey of 2017-18 also showed marginal increase in literacy rate, largely because of people who did not get formal education. The literacy rate went up from 60.7% to 62.3% in fiscal year 2017-18, but the percentage of people who were treated literate without formal education went up from 0.4% to 1.6%, according to the report.

The percentage of people who got married slightly increased while the divorced ratio remained unchanged at 0.3%.

However, a key factor behind such low unemployment number was the labour force participation rate. In 2014-15, the labour force participation rate was 53.3% that declined to 51.9% last year. The percentage of total population that was actively looking for jobs also reduced from 32.3% to 31.7%, according to the survey.

Similarly, another trend, the refined participation rate – the people who are above 15 years of age and in search of job – also decreased from 45.2% to 44.3%.

The reduction in participation rate is also attributed to labour discouraged phenomenon – a situation where some people, who have done everything they can to find a job and still remain unemployed, give up trying to find and move on to something else.

There are fears that the unemployment rate may significantly increase in the coming years due to stagflation. The economic growth rate that was 5.2% in the last fiscal year is projected to stand at only 2.9% by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for this fiscal year. The IMF has also projected average 2.5% economic growth rate for next five years – a pace that will surely increase unemployment and poverty in the country.

The PBS has not done anything to improve credibility of its numbers and is using definitions that create doubts about reliability of unemployment statistics.

According to the definition, an employee is anyone over the age of 15, who worked at least one hour during the reference period and was either paid-employed or self-employed. The government also treats a person as employed who is jobless but helping his family member in routine work.

According to the survey, own account worker ratio dropped from 37.2% in 2014-15 to 35.7%. The industrial sector caught one out of every four jobs, while the share of the agriculture sector in the total jobs went down to 37.4%. The jobs in the services sector increased from 35.8% to 38.6%.

The Labour Force Survey report showed that the literacy rate went up from 60.7% four years ago to 62.3% last fiscal year. The increase was witnessed both in the case of females, where literacy rate jumped from 49.6% to 51.8%, and males, from 71.6% to 72.5%.

Area-wise rates suggest increase both in rural and urban literacy rates and male-female disparity seems to be narrowing down with the time span, according to the report.

The number of married persons has also slightly gone up in four years. The ratio of married persons that was 52.6% four years ago increased to 53.5% in the previous fiscal year. There was correspondence reduction in the ratio of never married person to 42.3% last fiscal year.

The ratio of widowed slightly jumped to 3.9% but the divorced person ratio remained unchanged at 0.3%.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1950164/2-pakistans-unemployment-rate-dips-slightly-last-year-pml-ns-tenure/>

CHEAP LABOUR CAN ATTRACT FOREIGN FIRMS TO PAKISTAN

By APP Published: April 14, 2019

LAHORE: Cheap labour force can help Pakistan attract foreign industrialists and encourage them to shift their units here, which will definitely ensure more profit margins for their products, said Task Force on Textile Chairman Salman Shah.

Addressing a seminar on Pakistan's textile sector held on the sidelines of TEXPO-2019, Shah said that the textile sector had great importance for Pakistan as it contributed around 57% in exports, while 51% of its economy related to textile industry, adding that cotton, as a major and basic input raw material, played 50% role in the country's textile industry.

In the seminar, people from the textile industry shared their views and gave recommendations for promotion of textile and its allied and value-addition industry. They also stressed the need for expansion of mutual trade with regards to export and import of textile products.

The chairman said that wages of labourers were very high in China when compared to wages in Pakistan and we should take advantage of this in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects. He said that various reports and surveys were being assessed and reviewed in order to improve the country's overall exports volume.

He said that Pakistan was faced with numerous economic challenges including promotion of trade and exports, for which all the stakeholder would have to play their due role to do away with these challenges.

Shah was of the view that TEXPO-2019 would play a pivotal role in presenting the real and soft image of Pakistan to the world nations. He said that the four-day TEXPO was one of the mega exhibitions of Pakistan's textile sector at government level.

On the third day of mega exhibition of Pakistan's textile sector, TEXPO-2019, business observers from 53 countries and 230 textile sector's exhibitors and major textile products brands including readymade garments, bed-sheets, leather garments, fashion garments and other related products from across Pakistan ensured their active participation in the event.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1950151/2-cheap-labour-can-attract-foreign-firms-pakistan/>

GSP+ AND LABOUR RIGHTS

Iftikhar Ahmad April 14, 2019

Though implementation of labour laws is still a challenge, GSP+ has played a crucial role in sustaining stable export earnings

“While no proof exists, anecdotal evidence suggests that GSP+ has been an important incentive for all actors to further promote compliance with ILO standards.” This was a key sentence in EU's 2016 assessment of implementation of core labour standards in Pakistan after grant of GSP+ status.

Pakistan was granted GSP+ status by the European Union in December 2013, thus applicable from January 2014 onward. It has been five years, nearly half a decade, and it is reasonable to assess the implementation of core labour standards in the country through empirical evidence instead of merely using qualitative opinions and anecdotal evidence. This empirical evidence comes from Labour Force Surveys. The comparison is done with the results of LFS 2013-14 and LFS 2017-18, launched in January 2019.

So, what is GSP+? It is a unilateral trade preference scheme by the EU which allows Pakistan to export more than 6,000 tariff lines, including textiles and clothing without paying any duty to the European Union. Other than Pakistan, there are 7 beneficiaries of GSP+ scheme which include Sri Lanka and Philippines, other than Pakistan. The duty free access helped Pakistani products compete with the products originating from competitor countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Just prior to the grant of status in 2013, Pakistan's exports to the EU were 4.5 billion Euros. Of these, textile exports accounted for 3.15 billion Euros. In 2018, the total exports to EU increased to 6.8 billion Euros of which 5.2 billion Euros were for textile exports. This indicates an increase of 52 percent for overall exports to EU while 67 percent increase for textile exports. European Union has always been a major trade partner for Pakistan. Currently, 36 percent of Pakistani exports are directed to the EU. Thus, GSP+ has played a crucial role in sustaining stable export earnings.

The fundamental labour rights or core labour standards, which must be protected to retain GSP+ status, include the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Monitoring compliance with these conventions is not easier. Labour Force Survey, the major document in the country on assessment of labour market, does not provide data on forced labour and freedom of association.

There is no direct collection of data on instances of forced and compulsory labour in the country. Some studies indicate that forced labour exists mainly in brick kilns, agriculture and to a certain extent in domestic work.

Just prior to the grant of status in 2013, Pakistan's exports to the EU were 4.5 billion Euros. Of these, textile exports accounted for 3.15 billion Euros. In 2018, the total exports to EU increased to 6.8 billion Euros.

Similarly, the updated data on trade union rights (number of trade unions, their membership, collective bargaining agent status, strikes and lockouts) is not readily available. A 2018 ILO study determined the total number of trade unions at 7,096 and their total membership at 1.4 million. However, many trade union federations have expressed concerns on the findings of this study.

Labour Force Survey, however, helps in estimating instances of child labour as well as gender pay gap. Child labour, estimated using ILO global methodology, has decreased from 4.02 million in 2014 to 3.73 million in 2018. The gender wage gap, an indicator of how less women earn compared to men, has reduced from 42 percent in 2014 to 40 percent in 2018. Both the statistics show improvement.

Incidence of occupational accidents has decreased from 4.3 percent to 3.7 percent. Still, on average, every 25th worker faces occupational accident or injury in the country. Share of agriculture in total employment has reduced from 43.5 percent to 38.5 percent. Formal sector now employs 28 percent of the non-agricultural labour force; earlier it was 26.4 percent. In terms of absolute figures, instead of 8.4 million workers in 2014, now 10.6 million workers enjoy the protections afforded by the labour legislation. The actual labour force is 65 million workers.

The percentage of workers without formal contract has worsened from 72 percent to 74 percent. Similarly, female labour force participation has rather decreased from already low 22.2 percent to 20 percent. Those trapped in the modern forms of slavery have increased from 2.12 million to 3.19 million.

While textile sector is the main beneficiary of GSP+, it is imperative to look at the LFS data for the sector. Nearly 5 million workers are directly engaged in the textile production sector. LFS data shows that 57 percent of the workers in the textile sector receive less than minimum wage of 15,000 rupees. The ratio is 93 percent for female workers. The percentage of those working without any formal contract is 86 percent in textile sector. The percentage further aggravates to 97 percent for female workers. The gender wage gap is 70 percent in the textile sector which means that for every 100 rupees earned by men, women earn only 30 rupees doing the same work. The percentage of regularly paid wage employees is 36 percent in the textile sector. For women workers in textile, the percentage drops to 5 percent!

While there is a lot of improvement in terms of legislation, the same is not seen in actual changes in working conditions. There are a couple of reasons for that. First, there is always a lag between enactment of a legislation and actual change in the situation on the ground. The lag period is protracted due to a lack of implementation rules for the newly enacted legislation. For legislation enacted in 2013 onward, rules are still under preparation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh.

Second, labour inspection system plays an important role in implementing legislation. While no clear statistic is available on the number of labour inspectors in the country, figure ranges between 500-600. There is one labour inspector (considering 500 inspectors in total) for every 17,000 formal sector workers.

If we consider the overall 61 million employed workforce, there is one labour inspector for every 122,000 workers in the country!

As identified in the first EU report on GSP+, the arrangement has acted as “useful instrument” to improve labour rights in the country. While the first five years focused more on the legislative side, the next 5 years, considering that the current GSP regulation is applicable till 2023, should focus on implementation.

Labour inspection system needs an overhaul while encouraging citizen and worker generated data on workplace compliance with the labour legislation. Instead of hiring more inspectors, the local government system as well trade unions at workplaces need to be used effectively to ensure compliance. To analyse progress, more robust data is needed. For that purpose, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics must be engaged as a key partner and data on core labour standards and other working conditions must be collected through LFS on annual basis.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/gsp-labour-rights/#.XLR4NTAzbc>

PM KHAN BRIEFED ABOUT STEPS TO SECURE WORKERS' RIGHTS IN PUNJAB

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated April 13, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Friday his government had made labour-specific policies for welfare of the poor and marginalised class and not to get political mileage.

“Ensuring implementation of labour laws is a real challenge which requires special attention,” he said while chairing a meeting at his residence in Banigala on the Punjab Labour Policy and various initiatives undertaken for welfare of workers in the province. The policy was announced by the prime minister in December 2018.

According to the PM Office, the prime minister appreciated various steps being taken for welfare of workers, particularly domestic workers, in the province.

Ensuring implementation of labour laws is real challenge which requires special attention, says Imran

The meeting was attended by Ansar Majeed Khan Niazi, Punjab labour minister; Dr Shahbaz Gill, spokesperson for the chief minister of the province; Sarah Aslam, provincial labour secretary; and Saqib Manan, commissioner of the Punjab Employees Social Security Institution (PESSI).

Prime Minister Khan was told that Punjab's labour policy had been formulated with a vision to ensure gainfully employed and satisfied labour force which optimally contributed to national growth and worked in a decent environment as per national and international standards. He was told that the policy was based on labour rights guaranteed by the constitution and labour laws of the country and International Labour Organisation conventions.

The prime minister was informed that the Punjab Occupational Safety Health Act 2019 and Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 had been approved by the provincial legislature. The latter will help in

protecting the rights of some of the most disadvantaged workers in the province by providing them the official identity of worker and a forum for redressal of their grievances.

He was told that the Punjab Minimum Wages Act 2018 streamlined four different laws to regulate and facilitate successful implementation of minimum wage across the province.

The prime minister was informed that the draft Punjab home-based workers act 2018 recognised those who worked at/from home as a special category of workers with an equal legal status and right to traditional market-based wages. The Punjab Workers Welfare Fund Act 2019 and Companies Profit (Workers' Participation) Act 2019 are under process. The latter will enable workers to get due share from five per cent profit of the companies and the left over will go to the Worker Welfare Fund.

Prime Minister Khan was apprised that allotment process in labour colonies had been streamlined under the new allotment policy. Applications have been sought for allotment of 1,397 flats in three labour colonies in Multan and Warburton and Defence Road in Lahore.

He was informed that Rs3,997.6 million had been disbursed among 37,860 beneficiaries as welfare grant during the past nine months in the province against Rs1,416m grant distributed among 12,519 beneficiaries in 12 months during the previous year.

It was brought into knowledge of the prime minister that a proposal for enhancement of minimum wages was under consideration by the Punjab government.

The PESSI commissioner said that the entire registration process of businesses had been made online along with initiation of online payment for pensioners. A health insurance scheme for retired workers was also under consideration, he added.

Prime Minister Khan was told that a proposal for "loyalty scheme" was also being considered through which special cards could be issued to the registered labourers, enabling them to avail concessions at Utility Stores and in railway fares.

Published in Dawn, April 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475775/pm-khan-briefed-about-steps-to-secure-workers-rights-in-punjab>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15TH TO APRIL 21ST 2019

NATIONALIST PARTY PROPOSES FORMATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL TO LOOK INTO 'INJUSTICES' WITH PAKISTANIS

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent April 18, 2019

HYDERABAD: Jeay Sindh Mahaz-Khaliq (JSM-K) chairman Abdul Khaliq Junejo has called for an impartial and independent tribunal at the international level to look into injustices being faced by the people of the country for 70 years and to address their issues immediately.

He said that all must accept the decision taken by the tribunal.

The JSM-K chief said the rulers of the country, the state and system of the country were responsible for this mess and nationalist and democratic movements were not responsible for the crises being faced by the country nowadays. The rulers and state must be accountable for it, he said.

He was addressing a press conference held at the local press club on Wednesday. JSM-K vice chairman Hashim Khoso, information secretary Khalid Junejo and joint secretary Zahoor Leghari were present.

“The most fundamental question arises here that those constitutions, which are often formed and done away with, are considered more sacred and important than the Pakistan Resolution of 1940. We are not traitors. The rulers of this country ... have committed violations of this resolution 70 times during 70 years.

That is why we demand for formation of an independent and impartial tribunal at the international level in this respect,” Mr Junejo said.

He stated that it was high time for the people of Sindh to make a struggle while implementing 1940 Resolution in letter and spirit for political, cultural and economic rights instead of begging the rulers for charity. He said the JSM-K would continue its peaceful and political struggle in this respect.

He appealed to all Sindhi patriotic people to support the struggle. All races of the country, including Punjabis, should second this effort which would ensure development, peace and brotherhood in the region, he added.

He said Sindh was not conquered, but it was included in the new state of Pakistan under a social contract of Lahore’s Resolution of 1940.

He said that all natural resources of Sindh were “occupied” while culture and identity of Sindh were disappearing on the basis of religion.

He condemned development schemes, including Bahria Town, Zulfikarabad, DHA, Thar coal project etc, and described them as “encroachment” on the land and water of Sindh.

He said that unfortunately some elements had deviated from the basic principles of the nationalist movement and put it at the mercy of feudal lords, pirs and mirs while some other elements described it as narrow-minded, race-based and conservative movement.

Published in Dawn, April 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476729/nationalist-party-proposes-formation-of-international-tribunal-to-look-into-injustices-with-pakistanis>

MAY, 2019

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15TH TO APRIL 21ST
2019***

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Published in Dawn, April 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476729/nationalist-party-proposes-formation-of-international-tribunal-to-look-into-injustices-with-pakistanis>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 6TH TO MAY 12TH 2019

“WE ARE DEMANDING A LIVING WAGE INSTEAD OF A MINIMUM WAGE”

Ather Naqvi May 12, 2019

The News on Sunday: In Pakistan’s context, do you think the present amount of minimum wage determined by the government is justifiable? If not, why?

Karamat Ali: It is not justifiable at all. We have been demanding to make it a living wage instead of keeping it at a lower level minimum wage, but the government is not listening to us. For a minimum wage determination, they don’t have any basis, even though they have a formula. If we count inflation, it is around 8-10 percent, so they just raise the minimum wages by 8 to 10 percent annually. For example, in Sindh they raised the minimum wages for unskilled workers to Rs 16,200 from yesteryear’s Rs15,000, which we think is still insufficient.

For determination of minimum wages, the Labour department goes through an exercise and convenes consultation meetings in which representatives of employers and employees are also invited. In Sindh during such consultations, we insisted on increasing the minimum wages for unskilled workers to Rs20,000, but employers were not ready to give such a raise. So, we left it to the government, which they later notified at Rs16,200.

We have a recent example of calculation done by International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the case of determination of pension for families of the victims of the Baldia Factory fire incident. In that case, ILO had fixed Rs25,500 as monthly minimum wage in2012 when the incident happened. So, we can say it should be not less than Rs 30,000 in 2019.

TNS: What is the current mechanism of calculating minimum wage in Pakistan and what changes do you propose in the system?

KA: In Pakistan, minimum wages are determined through a provincial minimum wage board under the respective minimum wages laws. For example, Sindh has Sindh Minimum Wages Act 2015. Earlier in Pakistan the basic law was West Pakistan Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance 1969, which has been adopted by all provinces with few changes. There was another Minimum Wages

Ordinance 1961 which also determines wages for workers of various industries. Under the latter Ordinance the West Pakistan Minimum Wages Rules, 1961 were drafted.

TNS: Are there enough laws to ensure that labourers are not paid less than the minimum wage? What more legislation do we need in this regard?

KA: I think the existing laws are sufficient and if they are properly implemented, they will serve the purpose. But we can see that the implementation of laws is the major challenge to the government.

TNS: It is unfortunate that even though the provincial governments keep raising the minimum wages from time to time, workers in most cases are not paid accordingly. How to ensure that they get their rightful share?

KA: The provincial labour department is empowered to ensure implementation of the minimum wages in all private and public establishments. A separate Board of Minimum Wages is there in each provincial Labour Department, which not only determines wages, but is also responsible for implementation. This board has powers to issue minimum wages not only for unskilled workers, but for various skilled workers every year and then ensure implementation.

TNS: The Punjab Minimum Wages Board recently raised its minimum wage to Rs16,500. Do you see enough political will to ensure that an unskilled worker earns a decent living in the formal and informal sector in view of the rising inflation?

KA: The political governments have no political will to provide any relief to the working class citizens. The Punjab government is not different from other provincial governments, but it is a fact that Punjab has the largest number of workers and a large number of industries exist there. Seriousness of the provincial government can be gauged from the fact that the Punjab provincial government has announced minimum wages when the fiscal year is about to end. Usually, minimum wages are announced at the time of presenting a budget. It was only Sindh government which announced the minimum wages at Rs16,200 for unskilled workers.

TNS: Are minimum wages for a skilled and unskilled worker differently calculated? Do employers in Pakistan take this factor into account?

KA: Both wages for skilled and unskilled workers are calculated by provincial Minimum Wages Boards. The boards hold consultations with both employers and workers. For determination of wages, they create a basket of needs and then calculate it. For skilled workers, they also calculate the values of skills in the wages and for each industry, separate minimum wages are notified.

TNS: There's no mechanism to address issues of home-based workers and housemaids regarding their wages, how to provide them job security in this respect?

KA: Only Sindh and Punjab have formulated their policies for home-based workers. Sindh has also made the law, but it is still not implemented. Although Pakistan has signed two important Conventions of ILO pertaining to home-based workers and domestic workers, but not ratified any of them. They are C177 – Home Work Convention, 1996 and C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011.

Any country that has ratified any ILO Convention has to make laws, but Pakistan has still not ratified any of them. Housemaids come under domestic workers categories but due to absence of any law, they suffer a lot. A large number of children are engaged as domestic workers and they suffer torture and humiliation. We have read many such cruel incidents in the newspapers and media but there is no such law to protect their rights.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/demanding-living-wage-instead-minimum-wage/#.XNk37hQzbc>

FACTORY WORKER DIES AFTER GETTING STUCK IN MACHINE

A Correspondent May 06, 2019

HARIPUR: A young factory worker died after getting stuck in a machine in Hattar Industrial Estate, police and labour department officials said here on Sunday.

Factory sources and Hattar police said Mohammad Ayaz, 22, of Kahuta, Rawalpindi, was busy in manufacturing process at a papers mills when he got stuck in the machine.

However, his co-workers switched off the machine and informed the management which shifted the seriously injured worker to Rawalpindi General Hospital. However, he could not survive due to head injury and excessive bleeding.

According to Tahir Amin, general secretary Hazara Labour Federation, the factory management tried to hush up the matter but after intervention of the federation and local police the body was brought back to Haripur for autopsy and legal proceedings.

He said local entrepreneurs were criminally ignoring the workers' safety.

Deputy director labour Hazara division Faizullah Khan confirmed the worker's death, saying he would visit the factory on Monday (today) for preparing a fact finding report. He said the factory management informed him that the worker was not wearing proper uniform during the production process.

He said if the management was found responsible for poor safety arrangements he would take stern action against it. He said the deceased's family would be compensated.

Published in Dawn, May 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480533/factory-worker-dies-after-getting-stuck-in-machine>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 13TH TO MAY 19TH 2019

LITTLE PROGRESS ON SIX-POINT DEAL WITH PTI: RAISANI

By MOHAMAMD ZAFAR Published: May 13, 2019

QUETTA: Central Leader of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) Nawabzada Haji Lashkari Raisani has said that the party is waiting for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to implement its six-point agenda within the given time but the Prime Minister Imran Khan-led government seems reluctant to make any progress on it.

The BNP-M senior leader made these remarks while talking to a private news channel on Sunday.

“PM Imran has been hiding behind senior PTI leader Jahangir Tareen, who was the front man in signing accord with the BNP-M for joining the PTI-led coalition in the Centre,” said Raisani, adding that despite lack of our trust over the federal government, the BNP-M is still standing by its commitment and is waiting for the government to fulfill the demands made.

However, he cautioned that the party is only waiting for the given time to end after which it shall be free to take any decision regarding its future in the coalition government.

Replying to a question regarding the nine-month performance of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)-led provincial government, Raisani called the incumbent Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, ‘a selected CM’.

“CM Jam Kamal was selected for the office following a specific agenda in Balochistan. Till the end of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government he was a federal minister but just months before the general election he joined a party that was not even established by a political leader but by a government employee,” said the BNP-M leader.

Raisani was further irked that the chief minister should have taken all the opposition parties into confidence when preparing the provincial budget but unfortunately the ‘selected’ government is busy in preparing the budget and Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) secretly.

Earlier this month, CM Jam Kamal while chairing a meeting to review 2019-20 provincial budget directed all concerned departments to ensure implementation of guidelines given by the Planning Commission and Balochistan High Court while finalising the budget.

Sharing his views on the provincial government’s bid to amalgamate Levies Force into Police, the BNP leader said that the government had claimed that the Levies forces are not able to maintain the law and order situation in the province but despite the presence of both the police forces and the Frontier Corps (FC) hundreds of people have been killed in the provincial capital alone.

“It seems, the government wants to end the Levies system from the province to introduce its own system and transfer police officers from Punjab and other provinces to Balochistan,” alleged Raisani.

Answering a query regarding federal government’s decision to cut funds for the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Raisani said not only the federal government but the provincial government is also playing its role in destroying the education sector in order to keep our people illiterate.

The Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) has announced that it backed the demands of the protesting employees of the Balochistan Development Authority (BDA).

BNP-M MNA and party central information secretary Agha Hassan Baloch visited the camp of the protesting employees on Saturday. He told them that his party supported the demands of the workers' joint action committee and would raise them in the national and provincial assemblies.

"The BNP-M has been taking up the province's case in parliament," he said.

"During his tenure as the chief minister, Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal [BNP-M chief] increased the salaries of government employees," he added. "We will continue supporting the province's government employees."

Masood Khan Bazai, a leader of the BDA joint action committee, informed the MNA about the employees' issues and urged him to raise them in the National Assembly.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1971774/1-little-progress-six-point-deal-pti-raisani/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 20TH TO MAY 26TH 2019

CHINESE ENGINEER ACCUSED OF PUSHING WORKER INTO FURNACE IN SAHIANWALA

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated May 23, 2019

FAISALABAD: Sahianwala police took a Chinese engineer into custody on charges of pushing a worker into a furnace following a row at a factory in industrial area here on Wednesday.

The worker has been hospitalised with 40 per cent burns.

Following the alleged incident, Chinese engineers and workers exchanged words. The workers staged a protest demonstration against the Chinese engineers and demanded registration of a case against the suspect.

The workers also called police demanding arrest of the suspect. Otherwise, they threatened to go on strike for an indefinite period.

Some of the agitating workers told reporters that behaviour of the Chinese nationals working at the factory was harsh towards them. They complained that nobody listened to their complaints against the foreigners who were given protocol by police and other government officials.

They alleged that following exchange of words, the Chinese engineer deliberately pushed a worker, Shehroz, into a three-foot deep furnace. He was immediately rescued by some of his colleagues working nearby. Shehroz, who suffered burns, was shifted to hospital.

They said now the police were trying to hush-up the issue and pressurising by pressing Shehroz for giving statement that he had accidentally fallen into the furnace.

Madina Division SP Tahir Maqsood said the incident occurred at a battery manufacturing unit where reportedly a worker and his Chinese supervisor exchanged words after remote control of a machine went missing.

He said the workers were alleging that the supervisor pushed their colleague into a furnace intentionally, while the foreigner claimed that it was an accident. The worker, according to doctors, suffered 40 per cent burns, he added.

The SP said the matter was being probed into and would be decided on merit.

Published in Dawn, May 23rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1483942/chinese-engineer-accused-of-pushing-worker-into-furnace-in-sahianwala>

JUNE, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 27TH TO JUNE 2ND 2019

SINDH GOVT FAILS TO RELEASE KMC WORKERS' SALARIES BEFORE EID

Tahir Siddiqui June 02, 2019

KARACHI: Financially-strapped Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's employees will not get their salaries and pensions disbursed before Eid due to inordinate delay in release of funds by the Sindh government, it emerged on Saturday.

Well-placed sources told Dawn that the provincial government not only delayed the release of funds to the municipal administration, but it also shrank by 30 per cent the amount of total funds required by the KMC to meet its expenditures in June.

They said that the KMC received funds from the provincial government on May 30 on account of salary and pension for the month of June in advance.

However, the sources said, the municipal administration could not disburse the salary and pension to the KMC employees before the eve of Eidul Fitr as the provincial government delayed the release of funds which were still not cleared by the banks.

They said that Rs215.489 million was required for disbursement of KMC employees' salaries and pensions, but the provincial government released only Rs150.842m.

The sources said that the KMC needed actual funds to the tune of Rs805.536m for the month of June to meet its expenditures including the payment of employees' salaries and pensions. However, they said, the Sindh government released only Rs563m and withheld remaining Rs241.661m.

Talking to Dawn, Mayor Wasim Akhtar said that a number of civic and municipal problems of the city would have been resolved, had the municipal administration of the city got required funds from the provincial government.

He said that the payment of salaries and pensions to the KMC employees was delayed solely due to “lacklustre performance” of the provincial government.

“The funds were to be released on May 27 by the Sindh government”, he said and deplored that the money had not yet been transferred in the KMC accounts.

“Had the provincial government wanted employees’ salaries and pensions disbursed before Eid, it would have released the funds to KMC [on time] on or before May 27,” he added.

269 Bagh Ibne Qasim gardeners given cheques

Earlier, the mayor deplored that the provincial government withheld every month Rs500m funds generated and collected through Zila Octroi Tax. “We can resolve several city problems, if we get full share of Octroi Tax by the provincial government,” he added.

He was talking to media persons after distributing cheque of Rs5,000 each among 269 gardeners of the Bagh Ibne Qasim as reward in appreciation of services they rendered for the renovation and restoration of the iconic park.

KMC’s Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Saifur Rehman, senior coordination director Masood Alam, director general parks Afaq Mirza and media director Bashir Saddozai were also present on the occasion.

The mayor said while the city’s municipal government was facing acute shortage of funds for the uplift of Karachi, the provincial government appeared uninterested in the development of the city.

He lauded the services of the gardeners and said that the iconic park stretching over 130 acres along the coast, which was in a highly dilapidated condition, could not have been renovated and restored without their hard work. “Everyone in the country including Prime Minister Imran Khan was so happy to see the park so artfully renovated and restored for the public,” he added.

He termed the restoration of the park a great success adding that the municipal administration completed the task despite limited resources and acute shortage of funds.

Mr Akhtar said that the KMC wanted to pay the gardeners a month’s salary as reward for their hard work, but it did not have sufficient funds. “They have been given reward of Rs5,000 as Eidee,” he added. He said that the KMC did not even have funds to disburse the salaries of doctors and staff of the fire brigade department.

Published in Dawn, June 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1485936/sindh-govt-fails-to-release-kmc-workers-salaries-before-eid>

GOVT TO FIX WAGES, WEEKLY OFFS FOR BRICK KILN LABOURERS

By Our Correspondent Published: June 1, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government has decided to introduce legislation for the protection of the rights of brick kiln labourers and to fix their wages with a weekly day off.

Justice Jawad Hassan was hearing a petition seeking direction to the quarters concerned to take appropriate measures for the protection of brick kiln labourers. The petitioner requested the court that facilities be provided to the labourers working at brick kilns.

As the proceedings commenced on Friday, the Assistant Advocate General Rai Shahid Saleem appeared before the Lahore High Court (LHC) representing the provincial government.

He informed the court that the government was going to take concrete steps for the survival of the labourers through its legislation. He told the court that the labourers' wages would be fixed and a day will also be marked as their weekly off day in the legislation draft being prepared by the provincial government.

He informed the court that this was the first time the government is going to take concrete steps for the rights of labourers. He said that it was a very serious issue which the government would not neglect at any cost. He submitted that the registration of 6,999 brick kilns has been completed and the government has also a plan to issue social security cards to the labourers.

Shedding light over the child labour, Assistant Advocate General Shahid Saleem informed the court that the law prohibiting child work was being implemented strictly.

Justice Jawad Hassan observed that the labourers who work at brick kilns be given the status of workman.

Meanwhile, the court directed the secretary labour to submit detailed report on what measures had been taken for the protection of labourers of the brick kilns all over the province.

The petitioner in his petition had contended that the brick kiln labourers had been left on their own and no one was ready to ensure the provision of even nominal facilities to them. It was further stated in the petition that the labourers were receiving minimum wages as compared with other institutions. Neither health nor proper education facilities were being given to them or their children.

On March 28, LHC's Justice Razaal Hasan had directed the secretary labour to take appropriate measures for paying the school fee of the children working at brick kilns.

Justice Hasan passed the order on a petition filed seeking direction for the Punjab government to pay the fee as the continuation of a scheme which the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) government had initiated in its tenure.

As the proceedings commenced, Advocate Syed Farhad Ali Shah had contended the court that PML-N government had launched a program under which the children, working at brick kilns, had been given an opportunity like other children to get an education.

He submitted that the fee of the children had been paying to the schools concerned but now when the Pakistan Tehree-e-Insaf (PTI) government came into power, the fee was not being paid which was regrettable and against the moral values.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 1st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1984521/1-govt-fix-wages-weekly-offs-brick-kiln-labourers/>

FIRST PART OF PUNJAB DOMESTIC WORKERS ACT LAUNCHED

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 29TH, 2019 | LAHORE

Provincial Minister for Labour and Human Resource Ansar Majeed Khan has formally launched the first phase of Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 at a ceremony held in a local hotel.

The event was attended by Secretary Labour Sara Aslam, Additional Secretary Dr Sohail Shahzad, Commissioner Punjab Employees Social Security Institution Saqib Manan, DG Labour Faisal Nisar Chaudhry, Vice Commissioner PESSI and a large number of domestic workers and house owners. Domestic workers also got registered in the ceremony.

The Minister while addressing the ceremony said approval of Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 by PTI government is a historical initiative. He said basic purpose of this act is to provide security to the domestic workers of the province. He further maintained that in the first phase domestic workers of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Multan will be registered.

The minister assured that in future no domestic worker could be mistreated or put into force labour. In this act domestic workers will be called “Labourer”. Ansar Majeed Khan said providing security to every member of society is basic and important responsibility of the state. He said domestic workers and owners are being registered free of cost. Children less than 15 years of age cannot be hired as domestic worker.

He told that a helpline has also been set up to redress any kind of complaint of domestic workers. The Minister said labour and human resource department has rapidly progressing according to the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. He said secretary labour Sara Aslam has played an important role for the approval of Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190529481981/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 3RD TO JUNE 9TH 2019

HISTORY OF HARIS’ STRUGGLE

Dr Himayat ullah Yaqubi June 9, 2019

In the feudal society of the subcontinent, organising unprivileged peasants and poor Haris has remained one of the daunting tasks for the leftist and progressive workers. Peasants uprising in various parts of the subcontinent not only heralded a new era but posed grave threats to powerful landlords and political and economic systems as well. Being a very dangerous proposition for the political elites, peasants uprisings had always been suppressed throughout history. Like many other parts, peasants in Sindh were ruthlessly

exploited by the Muslim landlords and Hindu moneylenders for a very long time. Generally, they were treated as serfs and were subjected to unprecedented subjugation.

According to journalist and poet Ahmad Salim, before the British occupation of the land of Sindh province, the condition of Hari community was as miserable as during the British period. The landlords, under Kalhoras and Mirs dynasties, used to forcefully collect huge percentages of the total produce, called "Chouth". A major reason of the deplorable condition of the Haris was increasing share of the landlords. Many times, zamindars illegally expelled Haris from their lands which deprived them of their only source of income.

The brutalities of landlords and the sub-human condition of Haris in Sindh brought about political awareness and the deprived people of Sindh decided to combine their efforts for a joint struggle against their masters by forming the Sindh Hari Committee.

Sindh Hari Committee was formed in 1930-31 in Mirpur Khas. Its programme was to improve the condition of the Sindhi peasants and to make efforts for providing them with better facilities of life. It was established due to the efforts of comrades Abdul Qadir, Jamshed Mehta Nasrwanji, Jethmal Parsaram, G. M. Syed and Abdul Majid Sindhi. 'Land to the tiller' and 'total abolition of landlordism' have always been the basic slogans of the Committee since its inception. The seizure and distribution of the land of landlords still remains the central rallying point amongst the peasantry and other democratic classes. Without the victory of this slogan, they posited, there cannot be any solution to rural poverty, unemployment, and the miserable living condition of the Haris of Sindh.

Sindh Hari Committee was associated with the All India Kissan Sabha and its flag was of red colour indicating its communist mark. Author Cesar P. Pobre is of the view that in its initial years it worked as a committee with the objective to look into the deplorable working condition of the Haris. In 1945, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi joined the committee after resigning from his government job as revenue collector. At that time the leading members of the Committee included Abdul Ghafoor Jan Sirhindi, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi, Maulvi Nazir Hussain, Abdul Qadir and Ghulam Muhammad Leghari.

In view of its proletarian character, the committee was bound to be suspected of communist leaning. And it was because of this that despite the assurance of its president Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi that the committee did not have anything with communist and that the Haris only wanted their bread, some still believed that the Sindh Hari Committee and Sindh Communist Party are like "twin brothers." In the context of communist politics in Sindh, the major initial push was given by Narain Das Bechar in mid-1940s. In addition, a parallel Communist Party was formed due to the struggle of Qadir Bakhsh Nizamani, Abdul Qadir and Muhammad Amin Khoso. It enjoyed the support among the poor carriage drivers, ginning workers, peasants and shop assistants. In the laborers' movement, Qazi Mujtaba used to be a dedicated young communist worker.

The main objective behind the formation of the Hari Committee was to instill a coordinated effort to counter the exploitation of the Hari community of Sindh, and provide a platform to the exploited and oppressed peasants for joint action against the Jagirdar's and zamindars. Abolition of the jagirdari system and the establishment of a socialist state was the committee's objective. As a representative of peasants on different matters and problems, Sindh Hari Committee became very influential and carried enough weight to challenge the bureaucracy and the zamindars.

One important effort initiated by the Sindh Hari Committee was its strong protest against the Tenancy Legislation proposed by Sir Roger Thomas. A number of other progressive groups also came out openly to challenge the legislation. The committee had a firm belief in democratic values; all the issues were resolved and discussed in the general body of the executive council. The committee was much organised which had established branches on grass-root levels across the province. Their processions against the British imperialists and zamindars were also much organised. They have also organised many conferences on the problems of the Hari community of Sindh.

Proprietary right to the landless Haris was one of the main objectives of the committee. It always insisted that land should belong to the tiller and that the present zamindari system must be replaced by peasant proprietorship. To a larger extent they were successful because a number of government officials also started supporting their demands. The committee demanded that Kotri Barrage lands should be granted to the landless peasants without further delay, but the authorities did not agree. The political elites disregarded most of these demands.

The committee was among those progressive organisations which remained active for a long time. A sense of getting a rightful position was inculcated among the Hari community by the ideologues of the committee. In fact, some of its founding members like Abdul Majid Sindhi, G. M. Syed and many others established separate parties. However; the committee continued its efforts to mobilise Haris for getting political and economic rights.

The name of Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi is worth mentioning here. He was moved by the inhuman condition of the Haris and took interest in improving their living conditions. He was a torch-bearer of the leftist politics and very famous for his struggle to organise Haris. He was a member of Indian National Congress, the Theosophical Society and the Communist Party of India. He had also served as deputy collector, but left the job to serve his people and became the president of Sindh Hari Committee. He opposed the capitalist class of the British period in which zamindars enjoyed a luxurious life.

In the 1940s, following the decision of the Communist Party of India (CPI) to support the self-determination of the Muslim nation, the committee under Jatoi also started supporting Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan. The Haris saw in the creation of Pakistan relief from high-handedness of Hindu mahajans (moneylenders), allotment of lands grabbed by Hindu absentee landlords, freedom from feudal exploitation and prosperous future.

In Sindh, political activities of the leftists and regionalists intertwined in the early 1950s. On provincial level there were a number of political organisations fighting for the rights of ethnic Sindhi people and the Haris. A loose alliance was established by merger of four political groups which was called the Sindh Awami Mahaz (SAM) for contesting the provincial elections to be held in May 1953. Leaders behind the establishment of SAM were Abdul Majid Sindhi and G. M. Syed. They were instrumental in forming the SAM by merging G. M. Syed's Sindh Awami Jamaat, the Sindh branch of All Pakistan Jinnah Awami Muslim League, the All Pakistan Dastur Party and the Sindh Hari Committee.

The basic demands of the SAM, in 1953 elections, were the abolition of the jagirdari system and limitation of zamindari acreage and redistribution of population from over-populated to under-populated areas. G. M. Syed was interested to transform this political alliance into a full-fledged political party for playing a positive role in the Sindh politics. In one of his speeches in the assembly, he said that SAM had

been formed on permanent basis by all the coalition partners. Moreover, SAM would work as a political party of the people of Sindh. It caused differences within the coalition and Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi of Sindh Hari Committee decided to dissociate his group from the SAM.

To organise the Haris under the banner of the committee a number of conferences were arranged. In the Annual Conference of the Sindh Hari Committee in Hyderabad in December 1955, a resolution was passed saying if the vested interests inside and outside the government are too strong to permit Zamindari to be abolished, this council makes a number of modest demands for the government's immediate implementation. Security of tenancy rights should be guaranteed to all peasants of Pakistan. The arbitrary eviction by Zamindars should be legally prohibited. Besides, the committee was in the forefront in the leftists' protest when the One Unit Scheme was imposed on the people of Pakistan.

The positive fallout of the protest against the One Unit Scheme was that it brought unity of purpose among the leftist politicians in Pakistan. The era heralded the unification of the regionalists, ethno-nationalists and leftists on national level. Initially, they operated in the form of a loose organisation which was called the anti-One Unit Front in West Pakistan. Apart from the Sindh Hari Committee, the main parties in the Front included defunct Khudai Khidmatgar Organisation, the NWFP branch of AL under the Pir of Manki, Wrur Pukhtun, Sindh Awami Mahaz and Azad Pakistan Party.

A convention of all these progressive groups was organised by the Punjab wing of the Azad Pakistan Party of Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din in Barkat Ali Mohammedan Hall at Lahore on November 30-December 2, 1956. In the convention, Pakistan National Party (PNP) was established with the amalgamation of all these parties.

The PNP started up well with the campaign for the dissolution of One Unit Scheme which was its main concern and a "rallying point" for all the ethno-nationalists and progressives. The organising committee of the PNP was composed of Abdul Majid Sindhi, Amir Muhammad Khan, Abdul Karim, Muhammad Hashim Ghilzai, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi and Mahmud Ali Qasuri.

In a nutshell, the role of the Sindh Hari Committee (SHC) is very important in bringing the issues of the Haris to the forefront. Its struggle for the rights of peasantry and land reforms would be remembered in golden words. The Haris are still facing problems like illegal evictions, lack of access to health facility, drinking water and education. It is the collective responsibility of all of us to give them due share on the basis of their hard work.

Abolition of zamindars is no longer a question of mere theoretical or academic interest; the system has been practically abolished in many parts of the globe. But unfortunately, in Pakistan, even after the partition, the roots of the zamindari system are getting stronger and stronger.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/history-haris-struggle/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 17RD TO JUN 23TH 2019

THREE LABOURERS ELECTROCUTED IN TEXTILE MILLS

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent June 22, 2019

FAISALABAD: Three labourers were electrocuted and two others were injured in a textile mills in Khurrianwala on Friday.

The incident occurred at the Arzoo Textile Mills. The deceased were identified as Yasir, 23, of Narowal, Amjad, 40, of Layyah, and Latif, 42, of Chak 192-RB.

Rescue 1122 shifted injured Zahid Iqbal, 21, of 105-GB, and Mohammad Yousaf, 23, of Chak 73-RB, to the Allied Hospital where their condition was stated to be critical.

Jaranwala Division Superintendent of Police Hassan Afzal confirmed three deaths and injuries of two others and said investigation into the issue had been launched and action would be taken accordingly.

He said the reason for electrocution had yet to be ascertained

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489643>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 24th TO JUN 30th 2019

650,000 WORKERS REGISTERED WITH SESSI: LABOUR MINISTER

By News Desk Published: June 26, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Labour and Human Resources Minister Ghulam Murtaza Baloch has said that since March, almost 650,000 workers have been registered with Sindh Employees' Social Security Institute (SESSI). He added that they were aiming to increase the workers registered to one million in the next fiscal year.

Baloch expressed these views in a meeting convened to discuss the welfare of workers and their families in his office on Tuesday. Labour Secretary Rasheed Ahmed Solangi and other officers also attended the meeting. More than Rs200 million are being spent annually to provide welfare and medical facilities to the workers and their families, said Baloch, adding that they were taking more measures to provide relief to them.

While briefing the meeting, the labour secretary said that on the directives of Sindh government and in collaboration with the World Bank, SESSI had launched the Sindh Business Registration Portal.

The purpose of this web portal is to provide on-line registration facility for national and international investors, industrialists and owners. Through this portal, they can register themselves in all relevant departments in one go.

Baloch said, “Under SESSI, Valika and Landhi hospitals, have been upgraded and ICU for newly born children have also been established in these hospitals”. He added that a 25-bed hospital had almost been completed in Sukkur while a 25-bed hospital in Daharki was under construction. For the first time in the history of SESSI, 42 employees from grade one to grade 11 had been given offer letters on quota for the deceased, the minister said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2000235/1-650000-workers-registered-sessi-labour-minister/>

JULY, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 1ST TO JULY 7TH 2019

FDE MISSES DEADLINE TO REGULARISE DAILY-WAGERS

By Zaigham Naqvi Published: July 1, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Education and Professional had directed the federal directorate of education (FDE) to regularise its daily-wage employees.

FDE officials, meanwhile, told The Express Tribune that they were still working out the modalities for regularizing daily-wage employees divided into three categories according to court’s orders.

They added that those employees who were seeking a transfer will be provided with their posting orders soon. For the rest, officials said that they are seeking details of employee cases from the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC).

According to the FDE sources, posting orders for permanent employees have yet to be issued despite receiving clarifications on the legality of the move by the law ministry.

Further, the education ministry has directed the FDE to send data of all employees who are seeking posting orders and the financial implications in this regard.

A senior official of the education department, while requesting anonymity, said that employees will be regularised as per court orders. Delays in issuing the transfer and regularisation orders were due to administration processes.

Asked about the regularisation of staffers between basic pay scale (BPS) grade 1 to BPS-15, as ordered by the court, the official explained that the matter has been sent to the federal cabinet as there were no vacant posts matching their eligibility.

Furthermore, the official said that issues pertaining to codal formalities will be reviewed by the ministry itself.

As many as 1,790 teaching and non-teaching daily-wage employees have been demanding regularisation for almost a decade.

A division bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) headed by Justice Aamer Farooq had ordered on June 22, 2018, to make all daily-wage staff in federal educational institutions up to basic pay scale (BPS) grade 15 permanent, including all those employees regularised by a committee led by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker Khurshed Shah.

Moreover, the court had further directed that permanent employees would have to join their respective institutions within three months.

It had been further directed that the case of regularising and promoting employees from BPS-I to BPS-15 should be sent to the federal cabinet so the move could be formalised.

The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA) has criticised the Punjab government's decision to ban teachers' recruitment in universities. The federation also expressed its support for protests launched by teachers of public universities in Islamabad against their respective administrations.

According to the sources, the federation has rejected an official notification from the Punjab higher education department and threatened to shut down universities.

In this regard, the FAPUASA President Dr Sohail Yousuf lamented that the department was totally unaware of the law and regulations or about the needs and requirements of universities.

He warned that the universities will be unable to start their fall sessions in September unless the selection boards were formed during the course of the summer vacations.

“Universities will be shut down if the government does not want to keep teachers,” he said. Dr Yousuf said that the action will damage the teachers and students.

Subsequently, the sources said that federation has expressed its complete support for teachers who plan protests in the big universities of the federal Islamabad, including the International Islamic University (IIUI). A sit-in is planned for the Kashmir Highway on July 2.

The Federal Education Board will announce matriculation results tomorrow.

In this regard, a ceremony will be organised in the federal board where position holders will be awarded prizes and certificates.

Similarly, the board will announce results for Grade 9 on July 3.

The results will also be uploaded to the board's website while the students can inquire about their results by sending an SMS to 5050.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2003748/1-fde-misses-deadline/>

WORKERS, ACTIVISTS DENOUNCE FEDERAL BUDGET, DEMAND BETTER WAGES, PENSIONS

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated July 07, 2019

KARACHI: People from all walks of life, including labourers, home-based workers and rights activists, observed a 'black day' by holding a rally from Regal Chowk to the Karachi Press Club on Saturday against the terrible price hike.

Chanting slogans, they also voiced their agony about not getting water, electricity and gas despite paying the bills through their noses.

The rally, organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation and the National Trade Union Federation, criticised the recent federal budget, which they said was made in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and that it was going to break the common man's back. They said that basic necessities such as wheat flour, cooking oil, rice, lentils, milk, meat, fruit and even vegetables had become so expensive that they were now beyond the reach of the common people.

There were demands for the minimum wage of workers to be set at Rs30,000 at least. "Otherwise we are going to starve!" screamed one protester. "We don't even have money to feed our children. How are we to send them to school?" she said.

Call for minimum wage to be set at Rs30,000

Further demands by the protesters included a 30 per cent increase in the salaries and pensions of government employees, making pensions equal to minimum wages, more hospitals and schools to be set up with a reasonable public transport system.

"The country is suffering because of the bad choices and poor policies of the government. Why should the common people have to bear the brunt of that?" said another protester.

"According to this new budget, there will be up to a 200 per cent increase in our utility bills. Now we have to make a choice between eating food to stay alive or paying utility bills," said a woman who had copies of her electric bills with her. "We only have two fans and three or four lights in our small home with a small fridge, but look at the astronomical bills we receive," she said showing the bills which were all more than Rs10,000.

Others there wanted to know: "Where are the people displaced due to the Karachi Circular Railway scheme to go?" "What are the poor shopkeepers displaced in the name of removing illegal encroachments to do?" And "Who is going to pay for the devaluation of the rupee?"

Published in Dawn, July 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1492532/workers-activists-denounce-federal-budget-demand-better-wages-pensions>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 8TH TO JULY 14TH 2019

**DOMESTIC WORKERS ACT TO HELP CONTROL VIOLENCE:
MINISTER**

RECORDER REPORT JUL 10TH, 2019 FAISALABAD

Punjab Minister for Labour & Human Resources Ansar Majeed Khan has said that the enforcement of Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 was a revolutionary step of present govt. which would provide social protection to the domestic workers.

He stated this while addressing the inaugural ceremony of registration of domestic workers held at local Banquet Hall at Jaranwala road. Provincial Parliamentary Secretary for Labour Shakeel Shahid, MPAs Latif Nazar, Mian Waris Aziz, Commissioner Social Security Punjab Saqib Manan, Divisional Commissioner Mahmood Javed Bhatti ADC Finance Asima Ejaz Cheema, ACG Musawar Niazi, SP Tariq Sukhera, President FCCI Syed Zia Alamdar Hussain, Directors Social Security North, East & West Muhammad Hassan, Sardar Shehzad, Ihsanul Haq, Director Labour Malik Munawar Awan, labour leaders Latif Ansari, Aslam Wafa and others were present on the occasion. The ceremony was attended by a large number of men and women domestic workers.

The Minister for Labour said that the registration of domestic workers was a completion of Prime Minister's vision regarding welfare of the workers which was being initiated in Faisalabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan districts in first phase and the scope of this Act would be expanded in throughout Punjab province in near future. The Minister said that the law would protect the rights of the domestic workers and they would have get facilities like other workers including health cover. He said that the health screening of the registered domestic workers would be carried out besides administrating the vaccine to avoid epidemic diseases.

He asked the industrialists, traders and business community for extending cooperation for the proper implementation of this Act and motivated the citizens for getting their domestic workers registered with social security for the protection of rights of employees and employers.

The Labour Minister said that the incumbent govt. was giving special attention on the betterment and welfare of the workers as they were playing vibrant role in the development of national economy. He said that the various reforms would be made in worker welfare funds and payment of minimum wages would be made ensured through legislation. He said that the working of the Labour Department would be improved through automation and no corruption would be tolerated.

Responding the question of the media persons, the Labour Minister said that the incidents of violence of domestic workers would be controlled through the Punjab Domestic Workers Act.

Commissioner Social Security Punjab Saqib Manan highlighted the salient features of the Punjab Domestic Workers Act and said that the process of registration of domestic workers had been made simple and easier and registration could be made through Android Mobile Application. He informed that as per the survey report about 675,000 domestic workers are working in the Punjab. He said that the employment of the domestic workers could be regulated to secure their legal rights. He informed that this Act prohibited child labour under 15 years, bounded labour, forced labour and discrimination besides regulating the manner of employment, leaves, holidays, maternity leave and wages of daily wages workers to bring them at par with other former sector workers.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190710496046/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 15th TO JULY 21st 2019

REGISTRATION OF 62 TRADE UNIONS CANCELLED IN BALOCHISTAN

Saleem Shahid July 19, 2019

QUETTA: The provincial labour welfare department on Thursday cancelled registration of 62 trade unions of government and private organisations under the Balochistan Servant Conduct Rues, 1979 on the orders of the Balochistan High Court (BHC).

According to an official notification, the trade unions whose registration was cancelled include National Bank of Pakistan Employees Union, Quetta; Agriculture Engineering Employees Union, Quetta; Balochistan Irrigation Employees Union, Quetta; Balochistan Printing and Stationery Workers Union, Quetta; Metropolitan Corporation Employees Union, Quetta; QDA Employees Union; Wasa Sewerage Authority Employees Union, Hub; BDA Employees Union, Quetta; Municipal Committee Employees Labour Union, Khuzdar; Local Government Employees Union, Loralai; Municipal Committee Employees Union, Usta Mohammad; Wasa Workers Union, Quetta; and Wasa Workers Union, Quetta.

The notification said the cancellation orders would be implemented with immediate effect. Under the BHC orders, these unions cannot work.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1494962/registration-of-62-trade-unions-cancelled-in-balochistan>

LHC ORDERS RELEASE OF BRICK KILN WORKERS

By APP Published: July 20, 2019

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court ordered the release of 22 kiln workers, including six women and 11 children.

Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan passed the orders while hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Ghulam Sabir for the production and release of kiln workers.

Earlier, a bailiff produced the kiln workers before the court after recovering them from the custody of a Sahiwal brick kiln owner.

The bailiff reported that the workers had been detained by the kiln's owner. The petitioner's counsel argued before the court that the respondent owner was extracting forced labour from the workers and they were not being paid according to market rates. However, the respondent's counsel submitted that the workers had received advance cash and were being paid regularly. The court ordered the release of workers besides action against the brick kiln owner.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2017158/1-lhc-orders-release-brick-kiln-workers/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 22nd TO JULY 28th 2019

COAL MINER KILLED IN LANDSLIDE

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent July 23, 2019

DERA MURAD JAMALI: A miner was killed and another was injured after a landslide in a coal mine in the Margat area of Mach on Monday.

Mine inspector Jumma Khan said the incident took place inside a private mine.

“The landslide hit two coal miners who were working inside the mine,” he said, adding that one of the miners was killed.

The injured miner was shifted to the district hospital in Mach. Subsequently the mine was closed temporarily for investigation.

The coal miner who died during the incident was identified as Mohammad Hussain. His body was handed over to the family after medico-legal procedures were completed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495637/coal-miner-killed-in-landslide>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 29th TO AUGUST 4th 2019

SENATE COMMITTEE LOOKS INTO COAL MINERS DEATHS

Khaleeq Kiani Updated July 30, 2019

ISLAMABAD: A Senate panel on Monday expressed concern over the deaths of coal miners in Balochistan, insufficient safety arrangements and delayed compensations to the affected families.

The Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum discussed an **accident** at PMDC Collieries Degari on July 14, which claimed nine lives and left one person injured. The meeting was informed that the rescue operation was completed in 50 hours.

Balochistan's secretary for mines and minerals told the committee that the depth of the mines, unstable electric voltage, inadequate safety measures and law and order were some of the key reasons for accidents in coal mines. He said the Quetta Electric Supply Company (Qesco) had been asked in writing about the low voltage on July 1 this year, and was then reminded repeatedly.

He explained that the mines had gone to 3,800 to 5,000 feet and required stable electricity for continuous operation of the exhaust fans necessary for the evacuation of hazardous gases. The secretary said that last year, 21 accidents were reported in Balochistan's coal mines, causing 66 deaths, while 39 accidents had so far been reported this year involving 53 deaths. He said a total of 985 deaths had been reported due to such accidents since 1999.

The secretary said that workers' associations and labour welfare organisations were required to extend Rs200,000 and Rs500,000 (per head) as compensation to the heirs of workers losing their lives in

accidents. However, all these payments had been pending for five to seven years due to issues relating to the registration of workers and the establishment of their nationalities (given the fact that a large number of labour is of Afghan origin).

The members of the committee expressed their displeasure over holding up compensations and death grants to bereaved families, for the want of technicalities, and observed that irrespective of their nationality or registration problems, systems should be improved and compensations provided to the families of deceased workers without any delay. For this, various departments of the government should improve their coordination and legal and procedural hitches should be removed. The committee observed that Afghan workers also had basic human rights that should be protected at all cost and their families be extended maximum facilitation in availing their rights.

The meeting of the committee presided over by Senator Mohsin Aziz also discussed the measures adopted for the safety and security of mine workers and facilities provided to them by the mine owners and the procedure and amount of compensation being given to the mine workers in case of death or injury during work. It also reviewed the grievances of mine owners' associations and mine labour associations.

The committee members expressed dissatisfaction over the unsatisfactory responses given by the officers concerned regarding the questions raised on the registration of Afghan nationals, the number of mine workers, the safety measures adopted and the mode of inquiries against the contractors who violate the terms, among other issues.

It was revealed that the law governing mining was made by the British in 1923 and is still extant, envisaging a maximum fine of Rs4,000. The problems in death grants, compensation, low wages and old methods of mining were also touched upon.

The committee heard the government officials as well as the representatives of owners and workers. The three sides presented contradictory information.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497006>

AUGUST, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 05th TO 11th 2019

FIVE KILLED AT STONE CRUSHING PLANT

The Newspaper's Correspondent August 07, 2019

SARGODHA: Five workers were run over and killed by a crusher and another suffered injuries during a blast to excavate stones from hills at Chak 26 Gamin near Pull 111 on Tuesday, some 20km from here.

The deceased have been identified as Yaqoob, Rashid Masih, Zulfikar of 115 Risala, Fatyad Nabi of Chiniot, Sherzada of Chenabnagar and Mansha of Chak No.193 and shifted to DHQ hospital.

Locals rescued an injured worker on a self-help basis.

Accidents are common at stone crushing units here owing to poor working conditions and labourers off and on suffer at these sites as no safety measures are adopted.

It merits mentioning that during the last 19 years as many as 370 labourers died and thousands lost their limbs who are living with disabilities.

This [crushing] industry is considered one of the major stone crushing industry all over Asia but neither owners of plants nor the labour and mines departments have initiated any solid precautionary steps for the safety of the workforce.

BA/BSc RESULTS: Girl students excelled in University of Sargodha BA/BSc annual examinations 2019, grabbing top positions in both science and arts groups.

The university announced position holders on Tuesday afternoon.

In the BSc exam, Ramla Shehzadi of the Superior College of Commerce, Sargodha, got first position by securing 667 marks while Irum Samreen of Punjab College of Science, Sargodha, stood second with 662 marks. The third position was obtained by Tehreem Zameer (Punjab College) with 654 marks.

In BA, Mubasira of Government College for Women, Bhakkar, secured 650 marks and stood first and Sahar Munir of Superior College, Bhalwal, clinched second position with 644 score. The third position was clinched by a private student Dur-e-Shehwar with 634 marks.

A ceremony will be held at Sargodha University (Main Campus) on Wednesday (today) wherein the vice chancellor will distribute medals, cash prizes and merit certificates among the position holders.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498583/five-killed-at-stone-crushing-plant>

BRICK KILN OWNERS MOVE PHC AGAINST LOADING RESTRICTIONS

Bureau Report Updated August 10, 2019

PESHAWAR: The brick kiln owners of Nowshera district have taken the communication ministry to the Peshawar High Court over the new loading restrictions claiming that the move has caused them huge losses.

The petitioners, including Brick Kilns Owners Association, Nowshera, president Haji Yousaf Khan and general secretary Mohammad Ashraf Khan, had challenged the communication ministry's letter and the subsequent notice for the implementation of the axle load regime (ALR) on highways and motorways.

They said the notice was ambiguous and self-contradictory about the permissible weight for different axle vehicles.

The petitioners requested the court to declare the May 23, 2019, letter and the subsequent notice illegal, un-implementable and illogical.

They also sought the court's directions for the respondents, including the ministry of communication, National and Highway Authority through its chairman, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary, Motorway Police's director general, and KP inspector general of police against interference in their lawful business.

The petitioners, who moved the court through lawyers Mian Muhibullah Kakakhel and Saifullah Muhib Kakakhel said no reference to any law had been made in the ministry's letter.

They added that the relevant law on the matter was the National Highway Safety Ordinance, 2000, whose Article 89 revealed that the government should make rules in consultation with the National Highways and Pakistan Motorway Police by notification on the official gazette to carry into effect the provisions of the ordinance's relevant chapter.

The petitioners said the NHA chairman had circulated a notice showing the maximum load, which could be carried by vehicles with various axles.

They said both the letter and notice did not make it clear whether some rules had been framed to implement the ordinance.

The petitioners claimed that the load mentioned at the bottom of the notice didn't correspond with the load limit given in the body of the notice and therefore, it was self-contradictory.

They contended that there was a prevalent procedure of check and balance on the weight of vehicles and that was done on highways, while a separate checkpost had been set up on highways for the purpose.

The petitioners said no obstacle like the impugned letter had been created for them since the British rule in the region and that there had been no complaint whatsoever regarding any damage or any nuisance created by loaded trucks on roads as they were mainly allowed to ply at night and sometimes after midnight until morning.

They claimed that they used to load 7,000 bricks on a single axle vehicle, which had been reduced to almost half, while the load limit for a tandem axle vehicle, which used to carry 10,000-11000 bricks, had been reduced to 4,800 bricks.

The petitioners said they had to pay double the amount of goods carriage and thus, suffering huge losses.

They said if the ALR was implemented, the cost of bricks would be doubled inconveniencing the people as well.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1499017>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14th TO 18th 2019

SC DIRECTS SUGAR MILLS TO PAY 6% OF SALARIES IN WELFARE FUND

By Our Correspondent Published: August 17, 2019

KARACHI: The Supreme Court rejected on Friday the petition filed by Mehran Sugar Mills and directed it to contribute to employees' welfare fund at the rate of six percent of the employees' salaries.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah heard the case.

The petitioner's counsel maintained that Mehran Sugar Mill was exempted from paying taxes applicable for the welfare of the employees. "The money spent on charity should instead be given to employees and the amount for such welfare payments should be at least six percent of the employees' salaries," remarked Justice Arab.

The Sindh Employees Social Security Institution had directed the sugar mills to pay six per cent of salary as welfare fund to its employees. However, the Tando Allahyar Sugar Mill challenged this measure in the social security court. The Sindh High Court has rejected the petition filed on behalf of Mehran Sugar Mills.

The counsel for the employees had maintained that the factory owners had to pay six percent on salaries of the employees. The counsel of the social security institution said that the sugar mill has to pay given dues for the period between 1987 and 1990.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2035606/1-sc-directs-sugar-mills-pay-6-salaries-welfare-fund/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 19th TO 25th 2019

CALL FOR END TO MODERN SLAVERY IN SHAPE OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent August 21, 2019

HYDERABAD: A consultative session held here on Tuesday called for an end to the 'modern slavery' and implementation of all relevant laws.

The dialogue on 'Eliminating labour exploitation' was organised at a local hotel under the aegis of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and attended by peasant rights activists and civil society representatives, including Prof Mushtaq Mirani, Dr Hyder, Zulfikar Halepoto, Comrade Taj Marri, Punhal Sario, Aliya Bakhshal and Mustafa Baloch.

A presentation was also given by Advocate Zulfiqar Ali Qureshi, who is also associated with the HRCP, to highlight some figures of the Global Slavery Index 2016 suggesting that Pakistan ranked third among 167 countries, after India and China, as far as modern slavery was concerned.

The index says that 2.134 million Pakistanis (1.13 per cent of population) face modern form of slavery which included forced marriages, forced labour and debt bondage at kilns and the agriculture sector.

It adds that all these things are linked with social disparities.

According to the presentation, the figures are rough estimates pertaining to five years before 2016. It also mentions that Pakistan did not sign the 2014 Protocol on Forced Labour.

Participating in the debate, Prof Mushtaq Mirani said that share cropping in the agriculture sector was also a form of slavery. He said haris remained at the losing end in case of disaster in farms as agriculture was most vulnerable sector of society.

He said that there used to be a hard form of slavery when guards used to be deployed on peasants and they used to work in chains in fields. But, he said, this later turned out to be a form of soft bondage. He further said that there was no crop insurance in case of pest attacks or severe weather conditions.

Punhal Sario said that a child, who should be in school, worked in fields because of poor economic condition of a peasant family. He stated that every household of peasant was controlled by landowner in rural Sindh.

Comrade Taj Marri was of the view that poverty played a major role and poor families tended to have more children only to make both ends meet, adding that every child in such families worked to earn some money. He said children initially worked as domestic workers and then went for cattle grazing before ending up as peasants. He said that no action was taken against forced labour and it was rather increasing. He said that had the Tenancy Act been implemented, situation would have been different today.

Aliya Bakhshal recalled that during a recent election campaign in Qambar-Shahdadkot district, which she belongs to, she had seen some families having as many as 12 children. She said that these families opted for having many children to eke out a living. She added that even young girls were seen taking care of their newborn siblings.

HRCPC representative Tahira Habib said the commission created awareness about every new legislation regarding forced labour. She said that since Pakistan was a signatory to international laws on labour; their implementation must be ensured and added that various laws were available at provincial and federal levels but they were not implemented.

HRCPC coordinator Imdad Chandio said the purpose of holding the programme was to analyse implementation of laws relating to forced labour. He said that bonded labour was also a form of modern slavery in Sindh. Forced labour had pushed humanity to the worst kind of slavery in a systematic manner, he added.

Rights activist Mustafa Baloch said that kiln owners and landowners kept people in bondage along with their families. He regretted that implementation of existing laws continued to elude vulnerable segments of society. He noted that rules were not framed years after they had been passed. He said child marriages were continuing despite legislation against the menace.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500659/call-for-end-to-modern-slavery-in-shape-of-labour-exploitation>

SC ACCEPTS FACTORY OWNERS' PLEAS AGAINST SESSI

By Our Correspondent Published: August 21, 2019

KARACHI: The Supreme Court accepted on Tuesday the plea filed by factory owners regarding the mandatory contribution to the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (SESSI).

A two-member bench comprising Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was hearing the plea at Supreme Court Karachi registry. Counsel for factory owners, Zaheeruddin Minhas argued that the factory owners had contributed a far bigger amount of money. Factory owners said that minimum salary fixed by law was 10,000 rupees but SESSI demanded the contribution on more than Rs10,000 salary. They said that from 2000 to 2016, minimum salary fixed under the law was Rs 10,000. However, now the minimum salary has been fixed at Rs16,200.

The court had already ordered to contribute 6% of the minimum salary according to the current law. The court also has ordered to adjust the additional contribution and contribute 6% of the minimum salary according to the law present since 2016. Some 55 factory owners had filed appeals in the Supreme Court. Sindh enacted new laws in 2016 after the 18th Amendment. The SHC's verdict of May 2018 was challenged in Supreme Court.

The SC ordered to submit the copies of advertisement given for the appointments of police officials who were dismissed from Police Department Hyderabad region.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was hearing the pleas filed by dismissed police officials at the Karachi registry. Government lawyer argued that these police officials were dismissed on the orders of Supreme Court for being illegally appointed. The officials were given a chance to get reappointed in 2017 after their dismissal.

Petitioners' counsel maintained that all of the officials were serving at the time of appointments. The court inquired from the police officials that what was the date when the advertisement was given for appointment. DIG informed the court that he doesn't know the date. The court ordered police officials to submit the copy of the advertisement.

The same bench sought a reply from Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in a case of non-regularisation of the services PIA employees.

The bench was hearing the contempt of court pleas filed by Raja Parvez Iqbal and other PIA employees at the Supreme Court. PIA's counsel maintained that the appointments in PIA are restricted according to the judicial orders. Appointments and regularisation cannot be made due to the restriction imposed by the court.

The court sought a detailed reply over the issue on the next hearing. The plea filed argued that the Supreme Court ordered to regularise the employees in August 2018. But PIA was not implementing these orders.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2038447/1-sc-accepts-factory-owners-pleas-sessi/>

IHC HEARS PETITION AGAINST GOVT FOR NOT REGULARISING SERVICES

August 22,2019

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday heard a petition against the government for not regularising the services of daily wages / contract employees despite court orders.

A single bench of IHC comprising Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani conducted the hearing and deferred the case until September 16 as FPSC has not submitted its reply.

Earlier, a division bench of IHC had directed the government for regularisation of services of employees working in various government/ semi government departments as well as statutory bodies through a cabinet sub-committee. The dual bench of IHC comprising Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Mohsin Kayani had issued a 72-page verdict in this regard and held that the federal government shall not issue any new regularisation policy in future from now onwards as there must be an end to any illegal action. “We should take first step to stop such kind of temporary arrangements which are not protected by law,” said the verdict.

It said that no one is permitted to hire any person on daily wages or contract basis in any project, organisation, office, ministries, divisions, etc, except in accordance with law. The judgement added that all persons have to be appointed on permanent posts only and appointment on ad hoc basis could not be considered for regularisation and no individual could any claim legal right for regularisation under any consideration while appointed on ad hoc basis.

It continued that all project employees who are appointed in BPS-16 and above could not claim regularisation of their services unless their projects have been converted from development to non-development phase by the government of Pakistan. In such eventuality, all those employees who are working on those projects shall continue to work and if their initial appointments in the project have been made through a transparent manner i.e. advertisement, test, and interview, then their cases be sent to FPSC in terms of Section 11(b) of the Civil Servants Act, 1973 read with the powers referred in Rule 4 & 5 of the FPSC (Functions) Rules, 1978. Their posts and their appointments shall be considered regularised subject to decision of the FPSC on the question of their eligibility, qualification and fitness merely on the basis of opinion of FPSC or conducting test and interview within a period of six months.—TERENCE J SIGAMONY

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/22/3-page/797321-news.html>

SEPTEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 2nd TO 8th 2019

LABOUR IN THE AGE OF TECH

Mutaher Khan September 02, 2019

Technology has redefined the way we think about employment. From the age of unions, pensions and permanent jobs, we have now moved on to an era where everything is flexible and increasingly on demand.

Whether it's the expanding popularity of working from home or the ever-growing number of job opportunities now available to make some quick cash, the new economy has been transformed in ways no one could have perceived.

And with all of this come the new complications, giving rise to the debate over the very definition of an employee and how it's distinct from an independent contractor — something central to the business model of quite a few players in the new economy.

The argument goes that these tech platforms simply provide a portal for everyone to list their services exercising control and the freedom to choose when to work, hence making them independent service providers or contractors.

Given Pakistan's largely underdeveloped tech start-up ecosystem, the overall debate might not be particularly relevant. But the issue is quite pressing when it comes to ride-hailing companies that have found a sizeable market in the country and are trying to battle it out for turf. The current model of these companies allows drivers to choose the number of rides they take and charges a certain commission for every ride. In addition, there are also some bonuses and guarantees based on performance and ratings.

Over the last few years, these international players have amassed a massive fleet with a significant base of 'independent contractors' who rely on these newfound opportunities for both full- and part-time employment. However, that initial enthusiasm for new income avenues dies down fairly quickly for drivers largely because of their negligent say in most matters, be it pricing or hours worked and with frequent changes in company policies.

As far as the independence of contractors is concerned, they undoubtedly have it in terms of choosing working hours. But when it comes to the rates, there's none as the two companies unilaterally make any adjustments to pricing and commissions.

Asked whether they signed any contract at the time of registration, all drivers answered in the negative and said that relevant details — related to service charges and fares — were communicated verbally instead. Only the licence and CNIC are checked and the car briefly inspected, said multiple drivers.

I also tried to sign up as a Careem captain and took the online training, but the app started acting up afterwards. So I couldn't get to the terms and conditions.

The drivers also commented on how, despite increasing fares for consumers, they aren't getting a proportionate share. The company's commission, which was initially conveyed to the drivers to be 20 per cent (for Careem) has gone upwards of 35pc.

In the case of Uber, the drivers do not even know what commission they are going to pay on every ride as the company charges a variable service fee 'to make its upfront pricing work'.

All of this adds to the uncertainty faced by the drivers who are already largely missed by regulation that doesn't even envision the concept of ride-hailing and hasn't been able to keep up with advancements in tech. Unsurprisingly, the 'service providers' of the two companies have time and again protested across the country to demand better rates but to no result.

To give some protection to the drivers (and passengers), both Uber and Careem do have in-ride insurance for the distance between pick-up and drop-off points.

This isn't to say that all gig workers are equal: some are more equal than others. Developers or designers, for example, are a well-off segment with many techies now even choosing to go freelance instead of pursuing a full-time job as they can earn higher sums through foreign clients while also protecting themselves from the exchange rate risk.

Thanks to the unprecedented rise of ride-hailing, some lawmakers have finally realised its importance. "At the provincial level, there was no separate tax category for ride-hailing services until the 2019-20

budget. However, Sindh recently categorised ride-hailing platforms in the Sindh Finance Act 2019 as “cab aggregators” with a 5pc sales tax on services levied on their total revenue, including the share of the captain.

“On the other hand, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has also recognised ride-hailing as a separate category with a 2pc tax levied on the share of the platform, exempting the captain under the KP Finance Act 2019,” a statement from Careem explained.

California, which houses the tech hub Silicon Valley, has been the most proactive as its assembly passed a bill, AB5, this May that could potentially change the business model of many a start-ups.

It adopts an ‘ABC’ test to identify if the worker is an independent contractor. To classify an individual as such, the employer must prove that (a) the work must be free from the control and direction of the company in connection with the performance of the work, both under the contract for performance of the work and in fact, (b) the worker performs work that is outside the usual course of the company’s business and (c) the worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation or business of the same nature as that involved in the work performed.

The European Union didn’t stay behind either as it introduced new rights to all employees, including gig economy workers, with the aim of giving some predictability and protection to the most vulnerable of segments.

Keeping the ABC criteria in mind, it’s not hard to see that many of the new start-ups are misclassifying huge numbers of employees as independent contractors and thus bypassing many of the labour laws.

But in Pakistan where even a data policy is yet to go beyond a draft and legislators seem to be living in the Stone Age, it’ll again the most vulnerable segment of workers that will continue to bear the brunt of the lack of imagination of our law.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503036>

WOMEN WORKERS

Editorial September 08, 2019

WOMEN labourers who pick cotton from the fields of Sindh highlighted their grievances at a recent press conference in Karachi, flanked by members of human rights organisations. Other than long hours and tough working conditions that expose them to a host of health complications — the lack of safety measures provided by employers making them especially vulnerable to disease and injury on the job — they are paid very low wages and are offered virtually no social protection. The women present at the event requested the Sindh government to give them the same status and rights that industrial workers are entitled to. Workers employed in the agriculture economy are some of the most exploited and ill-treated. Since there is no data and agriculture is considered part of the ‘informal’ economy, it is uncertain what percentage of women are employed, but labour organisers estimate that nearly half of the total agricultural workforce of Sindh consists of women. Due to their perceived lower social status, they are left all the more defenceless.

Out of all the labour laws passed over the years, not a single one has extended to agriculture workers, with the exception of the right to form unions under the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013. This might be because many of Pakistan’s parliamentarians are landowners themselves, and the emancipation of their workers would not be beneficial to their own interests. Last year, women legislators vowed to work for the rights of rural women, particularly those employed in agriculture, those who MNA Nafisa Shah

referred to as the “slaves of the slaves”. Perhaps as a result of their efforts, the Sindh cabinet approved the Sindh Women Agriculture Act this year, but it is yet to be passed by the Sindh Assembly. It may be a rarely acknowledged truth, but much of this country’s economy runs on the backs of women. It is time their voices are heard.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1504163/women-workers>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 9th TO 15th 2019

KP GOVERNMENT FIXES COMPENSATION FOR WORKERS FAMILIES

RECORDER REPORT SEP 9TH, 2019 PESHAWAR

KP Minister for Mineral Development, Dr Amjad Ali Khan has said that the provincial government is taking steps for the welfare of labourers and miners. Addressing a ceremony at Minerals Department, Mingora he said that a compensation of Rs.0.3 million has been fixed for families of those workers who had dead, injured or had become disabled. The welfare-oriented steps taken by the provincial government has started bearing fruits.

Beside, Chairman, District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC), Fazal Hakeem, Chairman, KP Assembly Standing Committee on Minerals' Development, Azizullah Gran, officers of the department and a large number of workers were also present on the occasion. The provincial minister said that beside provision of financial assistance, the provincial government will also on safety relating training to job workers. He further said that the government has announced maximum facilities for the contractors with the minerals department as well as traders of the sector.

He said that bidding system for the contracts of minerals have been made transparent that had helped establish the supremacy of merit. Later, he distributed relief cheques among the heir of the dead and disabled workers of district Swat and no objection certificates (NoCs) among the contractors of mines.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190909516480/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 16th TO 22nd 2019

MANY INDUSTRIAL UNITS NOT PAYING MINIMUM WAGES SET BY SINDH GOVT, PA TOLD

Tahir Siddiqui September 17, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was told on Monday that the provincial government had set the minimum wages for an unskilled worker at Rs17,500 per month, but the decision was not being implemented by many industrial and commercial units.

Furnishing a statement and replies to lawmakers’ queries during the Question Hour in the house, Labour Minister Saeed Ghani said the rate of wage for an unskilled worker during 2018-19 was Rs16,200 which was enhanced in the current financial year on recommendation of the Sindh Minimum Wages Board.

He said the government decision was being implemented through labour inspectors of the directorate of labour, Sindh, conceding that a large number of unskilled workers were underpaid as the provincial

labour department did not have resources to keep a check on every industrial and commercial unit due to meagre resources and manpower.

In reply to a written question by Pakistan Peoples Party member Ghazala Siyal, the minister said the labour and human resource department had constituted a 'Minister's Task Force', headed by the labour director and comprising all joint directors and labour leaders, to ensure implementation of the minimum wages required for workers to meet their family expenditure and preserve their health.

Besides, he said, all the presidents of industrial zones had been advised to implement the minimum wages in all industrial zones. "Also in order to resolve the issues and grievances of employers and employees, tripartite committees in all industrial zones have been constituted and notified," the minister added.

Answering a verbal question, he said an underpaid unskilled worker could lodge his or her complaint against the employer with the labour department which would pursue the case and get the matter settled between the employee and the employer.

Mr Ghani said the labour department would file a complaint in the labour court if the employer did not settle the matter with the employee.

He said the complainant worker could also move the labour court against the employer for not paying him the notified minimum wages on their own.

Replying to a supplementary question asked by Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Mohammad Hussain, he conceded that the provincial government's decision of minimum wages was surely not being implemented in several factories.

The minister said that it was not practically possible for the labour department to check the implementation of the minimum wage law in every industrial unit as there were over 10,000 industrial and thousands of other commercial units.

He said that there was no provision of contractual employees in the provincial laws, while the practice was rampant in the industries and other commercial units. "We are trying to end this contract system in employment, but we cannot take harsh steps against this as it would render people jobless," the minister added.

He also conceded that several unskilled workers of certain provincial departments were also not being paid the notified minimum wages. "The chief minister has asked the ministries concerned to ensure that the minimum wage decision is implemented in letter and spirit in the government departments."

In reply to a written question, he said that the new building of Madina Dispensary at SITE Circle, Karachi, was established and upgraded at a cost of Rs8.7m by the labour department.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1505562/many-industrial-units-not-paying-minimum-wages-set-by-sindh-govt-pa-told>

OCTOBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 30th TO OCT 6th 2019

SHC STRIKES DOWN TENANCY LAW'S SECTION TO PROHIBIT UNPAID LABOUR

Mohammad Hussain Khan October 02, 2019

HYDERABAD: A division bench of the Sindh High Court, Hyderabad circuit, on Tuesday gave a landmark judgement in respect of peasants' rights.

The bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Adnan Iqbal Choudhry struck down Section-6 of the Sindh Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 2013 whereby Section 24-C of the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950 was amended to omit prohibition of begaar (unpaid labour).

According to the ruling, after separation of judiciary from executive, assistant commissioner, additional commissioner and commissioner/collector do not have jurisdiction to make judicial determinations (of disputes) under Sections 27, 29 and 30 of the STA, 1950 and to that extent the said provisions are ultra vires to Article 175, 202 and 203 of the Constitution.

The bench observed that till necessary amendments were made to the STA, 1950, the proceedings pending under these (27, 29 and 30) sections of the act be transferred to the district court concerned where the district judge would assign tenancy applications under Section 27 to civil court exercising territorial jurisdictions and appeals and revisions pending under Sections 29 and 30 would be decided by the district or additional district judge.

A 65-page verdict — authored by Justice Panhwar — was announced in the court on Tuesday.

The court had appointed Jhamatmal Jethanand, Suleman Dahri and Jawad Ali Sahar as amicus curiae.

The bench had heard a petition filed by a peasant, Ghulam Ali Laghari, through Advocates Ali Ahmed Palh and Abdul Sattar Sarki.

According to the petitioner's case, he had been cultivating agriculture land of landlord Leemon Khan Junejo as tenant/hari for 35 years. But for 32 years, Mumtaz Ali (son of Leemon Khan) did not settle his accounts, which were calculated at Rs2.617 million as outstanding against Mumtaz Ali and his brothers.

The landlord asked the petitioner to vacate the land as he wanted to hire some other tenants/haris. The petitioner moved assistant commissioner/tenancy tribunal, Sinjhoru, on Nov 20, 2013 but in vain. He also filed his pleas before same authority on Aug 20, 2014. The tribunal, through its order issued on Sept 8, 2014, declared him permanent tenant of Mumtaz Ali, who was restrained from evicting him from the lands.

The petitioner filed an appeal before Sanghar's additional commissioner on Jan 3, 2015 for the settlement of accounts which annoyed Mumtaz Ali, who tried to dispossess the hari's family. The family was finally dispossessed and it led to registration of multiple number of FIRs from both sides.

The appeal filed by the landlord's side was dismissed by the Sanghar additional commissioner on Sept 8, 2015. The appellant had also raised legal questions before the SHC bench on the jurisdiction of mukhtiarkar/assistant commissioner to act as the Tenancy Tribunal arguing that they were executive officers with no magisterial powers.

The appellant's counsel contended that the original STA 1950 had a clause that prohibited begaar but through an amendment made in 2013, landlords were allowed to take begaar from haris.

Jhamatmal Jethanand submitted that a committee was formed by government for a new legislation on peasant-landlord relations 15 years back. A draft was prepared in 2007 but it was without sanctity.

He said that at the time of promulgation of STA, 1950, mukhtiarkar having magisterial powers used to be so powerful to enforce his writ.

Suleman Dahri stated that peasants formed 60 per cent of Pakistan's population and not a single peasant had become a member of the legislative assembly. Therefore, since 1950, no amendment or new legislation for the rights of peasants was seen and their rights continued to be usurped routinely. Influentials and landlords used to be elected to the assembly, he said.

Jawad Ali Sahar said begaar was declared illegal by the Supreme Court. He said assistant commissioner or mukhtiarkar were not competent to act as magistrates, therefore, such section be declared ultra vires and all pending cases be transferred to civil courts.

Additional Advocate General Allah Bachayo Soomro argued that tenancy tribunals should be presided over by judges like labour courts.

Justice Panhwar in his judgement threw light on peasant movement and role of Hyder Bux Jatoi, who had resigned as collector. He observed that "realising gravity of situation, Quaid-i-Mohammad Ali Jinnah constituted Sindh Hari Committee to submit proposal with regard to legislation between zamindar and hari".

The bench observed that assistant commissioner lacked magisterial powers yet he was authorised to hear and determine all disputes about alleged contravention of provision of the act or of rules.

"Accordingly, legal and binding position of law allows us to declare Section 27 of Act as ultra vires of Article-175 of Constitution. It may be added prima facie executives including assistant commissioner cannot act as tenancy tribunal".

It said that "we find it in all fairness to authorise civil judge/judicial magistrate to exercise jurisdiction of tenancy tribunal till section 27 of Act is amended by legislature in line with spirit of Article-175".

The bench set aside orders passed by assistant commissioner and additional commissioner in petitioner's case under Sections 27 and 29 of the STA, 1950 and said that his tenancy application would be decided afresh by a civil judge under Section 27 preferably within three months.

The bench struck down Section 6 of the Sindh Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 2013 whereby Section 24(C) of STA, 1950 was amended to omit prohibition of free labour.

It asked the Sindh chief secretary to issue directives to the revenue secretary and deputy commissioners across Sindh to comply with rule 3(1) of the Sindh Tenancy Rules, 2002.

It also asked the government to make necessary amendments to the STA, 1950 in order to bring it in line with the Constitution and in accordance with peasants' rights as defined under the relevant United Nations declaration.

The bench said: "The government is directed to make necessary legislation for agriculture labour within six months and government should also bring on record all labourers through a mechanism to register every single labourer including farm labourer".

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1508420/shc-strikes-down-tenancy-laws-section-to-prohibit-unpaid-labour>

SHC BARS DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION FROM LITIGATING BETWEEN LANDLORD PEASANTS

By Our Correspondent Published: October 3, 2019

HYDERABAD: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has barred the district administration officials from adjudicating litigation between a landlord and a peasant under the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950. In a detailed 65-page judgment issued by the Hyderabad circuit bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Adnan Iqbal Choudhry on Tuesday, the adjudicating authority has been transiently transferred to subordinate courts.

The judgment was given in a petition filed by a peasant, Ghulam Ali Laghari. The case was pleaded by advocates Ali Palh and Sattar Sarki for the petitioner. Revenue officials are often regarded as partisan while dealing with cases concerning peasants and landlords, mostly in favour of the latter. The pendency also exists due to executive workload on district administration officials.

"After the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the assistant commissioner, the additional commissioner and the commissioner, don't have jurisdiction to make judicial determination under Sections 27, 29 and 30 of the Act and to that extent the said provisions are ultra vires of Articles 175, 202 and 203 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973," observed the bench.

They pointed out that the assistant commissioner does not have magisterial powers but the Act authorised them to hear and determine disputes between the landlords and the peasants. They further stated that the legal and binding position of the law allows the judiciary to declare Section 27 of the Act as ultra vires of Article 175 of the Constitution.

"The executives including the assistant commissioner can't act as the 'tenancy tribunal' nor can they deal with appeal, revision, etc." While transferring the existing petitions before the assistant commissioners to district courts, which will refer the cases to the civil judge and judicial magistrates, the SHC gave a month to the Sindh Assembly to amend the Act. "...subject to satisfaction of true spirit of Article 175 of the

Constitution.” The court further ordered that the appeals and revisions pending under Sections 29 and 30 of the Act should also be decided by the relevant district judge or additional district judge.

The SHC also struck down Section 6 of the Sindh Tenancy (Amendment) Act 2013. The amended law had omitted the prohibition of free labour by doing away with Section 24 C of the 1950 Act. “Under the amendment, zamindar [landlord] has been allowed to take begaar [free labour from peasants] that is completely against humanity.” argued advocate Palh at the last hearing of the petition on July 30.

Advocate Jawad Ali Sahar, who was appointed amicus curiae by the bench, pointed out that in a 2009 Supreme Court order, free labour taken by landlords from peasants has already been declared unlawful. “...it has become unavoidable to show how legislatures have been unjust towards the haris [peasants] and even went on to include such amendments which are even against Article 8 of the Constitution,” the SHC noted.

To corroborate the assertion, the bench referred to the original 1950 Act which stated that landlords should not take free labour from peasants or their family members. The bench observed that removal of that clause in the 2013 amendment amounted to giving a ‘licence’ to landlords to exact free labour from peasants and their families. The SHC’s judgment stated that the 2013 amendment concerning free labour contravened Article 8 of the Constitution.

“... the binding directives of the honourable apex court have entirely been ignored while making the amendment in Section 24 (c) of the ACT,” the order reads. “... hence section 24(c) of the Act is to be read as it was before such [2013] amendment.”

The judgment further ordered the government to eliminate discrimination towards peasants; assure restraint on sudden eviction and compensations thereof; assure education of peasant’s children and access to healthcare for their families and assure a sense of protection for their women and children. The SHC also directed the government to provide compulsory life insurance to the peasants and their family members as well as social security as provided by the state.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2070765/1-shc-bars-district-administration-litigating-landlord-peasants/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 7th TO 13th 2019

‘CAPITALISM, NEOLIBERALISM HAVE CREATED UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS’

Staff Reporter October 09, 2019

KARACHI: Precarious work conditions in Pakistan have become a menace for workers and they should organise themselves to achieve the target of decent work, said speakers at a rally on Monday marking International Day for Decent Work.

The rally was jointly organised by National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and Home-based Women Workers Feder-ation (HBWWF).

NTUF officials said they arranged such rallies in Hyderabad, Faisalabad, Hassan Abdal and other cities and towns.

The rally started from Habib Chowrangi in SITE industrial area and culminated at Siemens Chowrangi. It was led by Zehra Akbar Khan, general secretary of HBWWF and NTUF Sindh chapter president Gul Rehman.

A large number of industrial and home-based workers attended the rally.

Speakers said capitalism under the agenda of neoliberals had created unsafe working conditions and deprived workers of decent work to earn huge profits. They said such policies had resulted in growing poverty, price hike and joblessness.

“International lenders like World Bank and IMF are compelling nations to adopt these anti-workers’ policies. To fight these policies it needs an international movement of workers,” said Nasir Mansoor of NTUF.

He said Pakistan was braving the worst economic crisis of its history. He said unprecedented depreciation of the Pakistani rupee had slashed the real wages of workers by 50 per cent.

“More than 95pc of workers are deprived of basic facilities like pension and social security.”

HBWWF’s Ms Khan said the main weapon of neoliberals was to shift industrial work from organised to unorganised sector, resulting in a sharp increase in home-based workers. Majority of home-based workers were women, who got lesser wage as compared to male workers. She said as per a survey a home-based woman worker was paid Rs11,884 and for the same work a male worker was paid Rs19,946.

Gul Rehman said the government and industrialists were not fulfilling their commitments under international agreements to give due rights to their workers.

He said there was no mechanism as to how workers could lodge their complaints and hence the government and industrialists were getting benefits but were reluctant to give workers their due rights.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509744>

LANDLORD KILLS ONE, INJURES FOUR OTHERS IN HYDERABAD

By Our Correspondent Published: October 12, 2019

HYDERABAD: A landlord allegedly shot dead one peasant and injured four other persons in separate incidents of violence in Husri, a rural town in Hyderabad, on Friday. According to police, the arrested suspect, Arfaat Ali Noohani, who belongs to Hyderabad, has also been nominated in an FIR under Sections 302, 324 and 6/7 of the Anti Terrorism Act.

Noohani, who is the son of famous educationist and activist, late Maryam Sultana Noohani, first allegedly clashed with some persons of the Rajput community in a dispute over some shops. During the clash, he

left four persons injured. He later fired multiple gunshots at Razzak Kumbhar, 28, at a different location in Husri.

“Noohani later took Kumbhar’s dead body and threw it outside the residences of the Rajputs.” However, the police told, that the Rajputs, besides telling that they were eyewitnesses of the incident of Noohani throwing the body in their street, pointed out that blood of Kumbhar could not be seen in the street.

“They rightly pointed out that if Kumbhar was killed with gunshots in their street, his blood would have spilt over the road. But the fact was that he was killed elsewhere and his body was thrown in their street perhaps to show that he was killed during the clash.”

The injured were shifted to Liaquat University Hospital. One of them, identified as Ali, is said to be in a critical condition because he sustained a gunshot wound in his neck.

The incident stirred a protest as hundreds of people blocked Hyderabad-Tando Muhammad Khan road along with the body, grinding the movement of traffic to a halt. The protest ended after more than two hours after their demand for the arrest of Noohani was accepted by the police.

The police lodged FIR on the complaint of Muhib Ali Kumbhar, brother of the slain person.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2077762/1-landlord-kills-one-injures-four-others-hyderabad/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 14th TO 20th 2019

THOUSANDS OF WORKERS SENT HOME AMID PLUMMETING SALES, CLAIM AUTO VENDORS

Aamir Shafaat Khan Updated October 20, 2019

KARACHI: Vendors have shown exit doors to thousands of daily wage workers, outsource employees and contractual workers from July until date following massive decline in sales in the overall auto sector.

Pakistan Association of Automobile Parts and Accessories Manufacturer (Paapam) Chairman Capt (retd) Mohammad Akram told Dawn on Saturday that he had received feedback from association’s 400 members across the country regarding layoffs of around 40,000 people in view of the steep fall in parts procurement by the car and other auto assemblers after massive sales drop.

He said there are around 1,500-2,000 other small and medium-size vendors who supply parts to the aftermarket. “I think they are not hit hard as aftermarket is going quite strong. We [Paapam’s] 400 vendors supply parts to the auto assemblers exclusively.

“I see more joblessness in case the sales slowdown continues in the next two to three months,” Akram feared while adding that the axe may also fall on permanent workers in the next phase of layoffs. He said the 1QFY20 had already ended in red for the entire auto sector while sales are likely to remain depressed until December.

On rising vehicle prices — especially cars, he cited low localisation in vehicles as one the main reasons. “What assemblers claim of achieving high localisation is wrong, I can prove it,” he said while adding that higher localisation would definitely have averted frequent increase in prices of cars on falling rupee against the dollar.

Akram also complained that assemblers have been persistently increasing vehicle prices but they hesitate in passing on price increase to vendors for parts procurement.

Former Paapam chairman Munir Bana said he had fired up to 300 employees (daily wage workers, contractual, supervisors etc) from July till to date. He added that contracts of those employees who over the age of 60 and were already on extension, were not renewed. “I still have 1,000 workers and staffers left,” he added.

He said after closing down the second shift, his company is now observing four Saturdays as holidays instead of two. Besides, due to lack of workload, the company has also stopped giving overtime as well.

A Balochistan Wheels Ltd official said the company has laid off 300 daily wage workers, workers, contractual and permanent staffers. He said the company has been observing non-production days from Oct 11-24.

“Many vendors are either unable to pay salaries or delaying payments to their workers and staffers due to cash flow problems,” he claimed adding that around 7,000-8,000 workers and staffers had lost their jobs in vending industries of Karachi and Lahore alone.

Contrary to this, the Indus Motor Company (IMC) — the maker of Toyota vehicles — has announced that there will be no layoffs of employees despite slowdown in production. The IMC resumed auto production at 50 per cent capacity from Oct 1 after shutting down plant for last 15 days of September.

The rupee depreciated by around 31.6pc in the last 12 months, but “by not laying off workers and staffers, we are absorbing this financial crunch,” IMC representative said.

Car assemblers have been struggling under rupee depreciation, reduction in car financing, imposition of 2.5-7.5pc federal excise duty, 7pc additional customs duties and 3pc additional sales tax on all imports.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1511878/thousands-of-workers-sent-home-amid-plummeting-sales-claim-auto-vendors>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 21st TO 27th 2019

SINDH GOVT ASKED TO NOTIFY RULES, PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT HOME-BASED WORKERS' LAW

Shazia Hasan October 22, 2019

KARACHI: “I work all day, ironing buckram for shirt collars. I am given the work by garment factories but I don't work at any factory. I work from home. For 100 ironed buckram collars I get paid Rs20 only.

It doesn't cover my electricity bills," Rukhsana Shafiq, a home-based worker, told Dawn on the occasion of International Day of Home-based Workers on Monday.

A rally of home-based workers, organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), was also taken out with a majority of women workers holding up red flags and placards asking for their rights as they walked under the hot sun from Fawwara Chowk in Saddar to the Karachi Press Club.

Shazia Yaqoob, another home-based worker, said that she did Baloch embroidery at home.

"It is intricate work and doing embroidery work on one shirt, shalwar and dupatta takes me about two months. I get paid Rs300 per suit," she said. "This is all the work I know and I work hard doing it but feel I am not getting what I really deserve."

The rallying workers demanded that the Sindh government issue early notification of rules and procedures of the Sindh Home-Based Workers Act so that the law could be practically implemented.

Scores of workers take out a rally to mark International Day of Home-based Workers

Zehra Khan, HBWWF's central general secretary, said that her NGO had been fighting for the rights of workers including peasant women, lady health workers, teachers and nurses for three decades now.

"It was after a long and untiring struggle that home-based workers in Pakistan, especially in Sindh, have gotten accepted their legal status in the form of the passing of the Home-based Workers Act, which is a historic milestone not just for the home-based workers of this country but also for this region," she said.

Saira Feroze, the general secretary of United Home-Based Garments Workers' Union, said that even though they were grateful to the Sindh Assembly for passing of the Home-based Workers Act, it was sad to find that the rules of the act had not been formulated and there had been no implementation of the law even after the passage of one year.

"We, the home-based workers, would only be happy when the law is practically implemented," she said.

Nasir Mansoor of the National Trade Union Federation said that the struggle of women home-based workers was heroic and historic and now factory labourers also consulted with them for forming trade unions.

"It is heartening that now a large number of home-based workers are forming their unions and becoming a strong voice against the atrocities of capitalism," he said.

The workers demanded that the government of Sindh make the rules of the Home-based Workers Act and issue its notification while practically implementing the law.

They wanted legal acceptance of home-based workers as regular workers in other provinces just like in Sindh.

They demanded that all home-based workers should be registered with social security institutions. They also wanted better wages.

They said that wages should be given to home-based workers involved in making glass bangles as per the government notification. The wages of home-based workers should be fixed on the pattern of Sindh Minimum Wage Board, it was said along with the demand for the federal government to ratify the ILO Convention 177.

It was also said that home-based workers and their contractors should be registered and all supply chain workers should be given legal status along with the right to make their own trade unions.

It was also demanded that the Sindh government should allocate annual funds for welfare of home-based workers. Another demand was the strict implementation of the law to stop harassment at workplaces.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512143>

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION PROGRAMME AIMS TO IMPROVE LABOUR WELFARE

Staff Reporter Updated October 25, 2019

LAHORE: The Better Work Programme (BWP) will help improve Pakistan's compliance and exhibit its commitment to improve labour welfare, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Country Director Ms Ingrid Christensen said on Thursday.

Sharing details about the project during a consultative session at Pakistan Textile Exporters Association, Ms Christensen said the BWP aims to improve working conditions in textile industry and make the sector more competitive by enabling collaboration between government, global brands, factory owners and workers.

"This program includes a comprehensive framework on improving industrial relations through training and compliance with International labour standards including occupational safety and health, nature of employment, discrimination and other forms of labour practices as well as strengthening employers and workers organisations in textile industry," she said.

Addressing the session, Joint Secretary Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Atika Riffat said the foreign trade has a lot of attached responsibilities as the international buyers are increasingly getting sensitive about ethical sourcing and international compliances.

"We have carried out various interventions to improve working conditions in the country. There are also a number of avenues where the Textile Industries in Pakistan in collaboration with ILO, can bring improvements in the work practices thus enabling more exports to Europe," she said.

Earlier, PTEA Chairman Sohail Pasha appreciated the concerted efforts of the government to pave the way for enhanced sourcing of Pakistani products by leading international buyers by initiating the BWP in Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512809>

NOVEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 04th TO 10th 2019

GHANI STRESSES ON TRANSPARENCY IN ALLOTMENTS FOR LABOURERS

By Our Correspondent Published: November 9, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Information, Archives and Labour Minister Saeed Ghani said that transparency must be ensured in the allocation of flats and houses to workers and labourers in the province. Heading a meeting of the Worker Welfare Board in his office on Friday, the minister said that the board should utilise all its resources for the allotment of 4,242 flats and houses constructed across the province for workers and labourers.

Besides, said Ghani, a policy should be formulated to ensure immediate assistance to workers and labourers for marriages, scholarships, deaths, and other grants. The conditions of all secondary and primary schools under the Workers Welfare Board should be improved, he added. Ghani said that a policy should be formulated for the promotion of teachers at said schools in a timely manner.

The minister was briefed on the houses, colonies and flats leased under the welfare board across Sindh. He was informed that flats were provided to flood affectees in 2010 in Labour Colony, Hyderabad and Shaheed Benazirabad had not been vacated as yet but flats provided as immediate relief in other labour colonies of the province have been vacated.

Ghani was told that 512 houses in Kotri, 1,024 houses in Sukkur, 192 in Nooriabad, 512 in Shaheed Benazirabad, 96 in Larkana, 100 in Ranipur, 74 in Jacababad, and a total of 4,242 flats and houses, including those in other districts, are ready for allotment while a work order has been issued for the construction of 1,500 flats in Kotri and work on three other colonies is under way. The minister said that the requests received from workers and labourers, pertaining to the 4,242 flats and houses, should be processed quickly and the process of allotment should be completed without further delays.

Ghani was informed that so far payments have been made for 431 cases of scholarships, 375 marriage grants, and 29 cases of deaths in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and Larkana. Ghani directed Labour Secretary Abdul Rasheed Solangi to inspect all labour colonies and schools operating under the Worker Welfare Board and submit a detailed report in this regard along with suggestions for improvement.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 9th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2096236/1-ghani-stresses-transparency-allotments-labourers/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 11th TO 17th 2019

OPPOSITION TO TABLE BILL ON WORKERS' SAFETY IN BALOCHISTAN

By Our Correspondent Published: November 17, 2019

QUETTA: Lamenting working conditions at provincial mines, two members of the Balochistan Assembly have said the opposition would table a bill on workers' safety after incorporating recommendations of the Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF).

Nasrullah Khan Zeeray of Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and Ahmed Nawaz Bangulzai of Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) said this during a debate on Mines Act, 1923 organised by the PWF on Saturday.

At the debate, a panel including the MPAs discussed workers' safety and precautionary measures for labourers working in Balochistan. The PWF National Coordinator Shaukat Ali Anjum and officials – Mama Salam and Abdul Kareem – were also part of the huddle.

Programme Officer Asad Mehmmod presented a comprehensive briefing on Mines Act, 1923 on the occasion. Highlighting the need for security of mine labourers, National Coordinator Anjum said workers' registration and safety have become imperative in view of mining incidents in Balochistan.

“Other provinces have adopted legislations over Mines Act, 1923 following 18th Constitutional Amendment. But Balochistan is yet to discuss the issue on floor of the house,” said Anjum.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 17th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2100966/1-opposition-table-bill-workers-safety-balochistan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 18th TO 24th 2019

PAKISTAN FAILING TO IMPROVE LABOUR RIGHTS DESPITE GSP+

Kalbe Ali Updated November 21, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The representatives of international bodies on Wednesday decried that Pakistan is failing to improve human rights and workers conditions despite availing the benefits of GSP+ facility provide by the European Union (EU).

Speaking at a national multi-stakeholder consultation on GSP+ organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, (Piler), EU Ambassador in Pakistan Androulla Kaminara said that Pakistan was among eight countries of world enjoying this facility.

“Pakistan entered the GSP+ scheme in 2014 which resulted in an increase in exports to European countries by over 50 per cent, with the textile sector being the main beneficiary,” Mrs Kaminara said. However, she noted that the situation of labour and human rights has not improved much.

“Over 3 million people are still living under the modern slavery in Pakistan and over 2m children are working as child labourers,” the EU ambassador said. “Similarly, unionisation rate of workers is very low at under 5pc,” she added.

However, she acknowledged the role of business associations for following with the demands of GSP + and assured that there will be no back tracking and EU would continue supporting Pakistan.

The GSP+ scheme is valid until 2023.

On the occasion, Country Director, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Ingrid Christensen said that child labour survey has not been carried out in for many years in Pakistan. ILO is working with the government of Pakistan over the matter, she added.

The last child labour survey was conducted in 1996 in Pakistan.

“Child labour is rampant in Pakistan as we have found everywhere that children are selling flowers and books on streets,” she highlighted.

Similarly she lamented that trade unions are facing interference in registration and there is lack of monitoring.

“One concern is lack of collective bargaining and dispute resolution mechanism in Pakistan,” the ILO country chief added.

While lauding the efforts of Pakistan for enactment of many simplified labour laws, she pointed out that implementation of labour laws remained a major challenge.

Labour inspections have been abolished in some jurisdictions in Pakistan and the respective provinces needed to clarify their positions over the decision, she added.

Published in Dawn, November 21st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1517943/pakistan-failing-to-improve-labour-rights-despite-gsp>

PUNJAB GOVT TO LAUNCH RS6.3B SOFT LOAN SCHEME FOR SKILLED WORKFORCE

By Rana Yasif Published: November 22, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government is planning to initiate a soft loan project of Rs6.3 billion under which students from technical institutions of public and private colleges would get funds for business purposes.

Punjab Minister for Industries, Commerce and Investment Mian Muhammad Aslam Iqbal revealed this in the Punjab Assembly while responding to a query of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N)

MPA Sohaib Ahmed Malik over the future of those students who are getting technical education from different institutions being run by TEVTA.

During the question hour session, the minister responding to a query of another MPA, revealed that the government is initiating a new 'Hunarmand programme' under which 13,000 people will be taught Chinese language free-of-cost.

The provincial minister, shedding light over technical education, claimed the loans ranging from Rs100,000 to Rs3 million, would be given to the people to run their businesses.

He said the government would give 80% capital while 20% would be included by the debtors from his own pockets. Similarly, the government would give capital up to 90% to women and the rest 10% would be included by the women from their own resources.

Operational charges of 7% will be issued to men while 6% to women. He said the previous government had not collected the data of those students who got education from said technical institutions.

The minister said the PTI's government started collecting the data of students who acquired technical training and education as no one knew whether they had left Pakistan or secured jobs in the country.

As PML-N's lawmaker Malik Muhammad Ahmed asked the trend of learning Chinese language is declining after the fee was imposed by the government claiming the imposition of the fee is tantamount to keeping at bay the poor people who wanted to learn the language.

He asked whether the government had a plan to lift imposition of the fee so the trend to learn the said language could be restored.

Aslam Iqbal replied that the government had initiated this programme free-of-cost but later the government started charging a fee following the non-seriousness of students.

He said Chinese language is necessary for the CPEC project and to understand or convey messages when Chinese visited Pakistan. However, he vowed that the government was issuing Rs2,000 per student per month for teaching Chinese language.

On this, Speaker Elahi intervened and said Rs1,000 should be fixed rather than charging Rs2,000. Iqbal said the government would act upon the instructions passed by the Speaker. At which Speaker Elahi said it was not directed just a suggestion and the government should follow what policy the government had for it.

Iqbal said the government's objective to impose a fee was merely to create seriousness amongst students as the students did not take it seriously. When they will impose a small fee on them they will show their seriousness, he maintained.

As the proceedings of the House started, PML-N's MPAs expressed their gloom over police officers' misconduct with them at the accountability court where they were not allowed to enter the court even though they showed their cards.

Punjab Minister for Law Basharat Raja made it clear that the government had established SOPs taking into confidence the MPAs of oppositions about how they will go to courts. But if they (PML-N's lawmakers) have the same objection and they deemed the problem is still there, he ensures the house that he holds a meeting with them where the police high-ups will also be called to address their (MPAs) issue.

In the last phase of proceedings, the opposition lawmakers protested strongly over the long speech delivered by Mian Aslam Iqbal on the general discussion on price control.

They claimed the minister normally gives his policy statement at which the MPAs from both sides delivered their speeches and give their suggestions and then the minister gives his windup speech.

But this was not in accordance with the rules that the minister was giving his windup speech before speaking the MPAs. Finally, the proceedings were adjourned by Friday (today) 9:00 am.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 22nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2104161/1-punjab-govt-launch-rs6-3b-soft-loan-scheme-skilled-workforce/>

DECEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 09th TO 15th 2019

FIRE TRAPS SLEEPING WORKERS IN DELHI FACTORY, KILLS 43

AFP December 09, 2019

NEW DELHI: At least 43 people were killed on Sunday in a devastating fire that ripped through a bag factory in the congested old quarter of the Indian capital New Delhi, with survivors describing the screams of scores of trapped workers who were sleeping inside.

The blaze was the worst in Delhi since 59 movie-goers died in a cinema in 1997, with the city's poor planning and enforcement of building and safety regulations often responsible for such deadly incidents.

Tearful relatives spoke of receiving desperate calls from factory workers begging to be freed from the inferno in the dark, poorly lit premises in the commercial hub of Sadar Bazar from around 5am.

One father who was trapped inside the four-storey structure made a desperate phone call to ask that his children be looked after.

"Monu, brother, I am going to die today," the man, named Musharaff said in the recording of a call played by the ABP Hindi language news channel.

"Please take care of my kids. I can't breathe. There are so many others here. Just can't breathe," he kept repeating in Hindi, eventually breaking down towards the end of the call.

Authorities do not yet know if Musharaff survived the blaze.

One survivor, Sabi Abbas, said he had just finished work and was about to go to sleep when he heard screams from the third floor.

“I rushed to the floor and saw the wires were dangling and on fire as acrid smoke filled up the corridor,” he said, adding that he ran out of the building with his wife and daughters.

Locals said the factory also made purses and jackets, and had just one entrance and 20 rooms on each floor that were connected by one internal stairway. “After the fire, people didn’t have any way to get out and I believe many were asleep and because of the smoke, they got suffocated,” a witness said. Others said they believed the fire started on the first floor, sparked by exposed wires, before spreading to an area used to store foam and plastic chairs.

The cause of the blaze is not yet known, but Delhi’s fire services director said that the site had been operating without the required fire safety clearances.

Published in Dawn, December 9th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1521183>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 16th TO 22nd 2019

FORMER MINISTER ACCUSED OF DEPRIVING WORKERS OF SALARIES

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated December 19, 2019

HYDERABAD: Labour leaders have urged the Sindh government to take notice of the labour department’s “indifferent attitude” towards 500 workers of a textile mill owned by a former Sindh labour minister. According to them, the mill management is now shifting machinery to Punjab clandestinely.

Addressing a joint press conference at the local press club here on Wednesday, veteran labour leaders Rana Mehmood Ali Khan, Shakeel Ahmed Shaikh and others said that the textile mill in Hyderabad SITE was owned by a former labour minister. The mill, they said, was closed since July 2017 “illegally” and 500 workers were deprived of their four months’ salaries and other dues.

They said that an action committee of the mill formed in 2018 filed complaints in 2018 before the additional director labour of Hyderabad region. Show-cause notices were issued after legal requirements and then a complaint was filed by the labour department against the owner in labour court-VI under Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2015 and warrants were issued against him, they added.

They said the former minister paid a fine of Rs25,000 to the court and conceded that the complaint against him was true.

They added that the court had also ordered payment of dues to factory workers, but still the mill owner did not clear dues or paid salaries to workers, thus committing contempt of court.

They said that under Sindh Terms and Standing Order 2015, the labour department was required to file another complaint before the labour court in case its decision was not implemented and the court was competent to impose a fine on a daily basis.

They said that such a fine would run in millions, but the labour department had not yet filed the second complaint.

They said additional director labour Syed Amjad Ali Shah had been repeatedly approached in this regard, but for inexplicable reasons he was not willing to file such complaint.

They said that such attitude was condemnable. Last night generators of the powerhouse worth Rs200 million had been shifted from the mill, and though the additional director was informed in time about shifting of the machinery, no action was taken.

They said that while workers were deprived of their salaries and dues, the machinery of the factory was being shifted to Punjab.

They said that additional director should file the second complaint before the court failing which the action committee would stage a sit-in in the second week of January 2020 outside the labour department office in Nasim Nagar.

Published in Dawn, December 19th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523016>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 23rd TO 29th 2019

SOUTH KOREA ENHANCES QUOTA FOR WORKERS

By RECORDER REPORT on December 25, 2019

South Korea has enhanced its quota for Pakistani workers from 1,000 to 1,100 annually, revealed the officials of Korean Embassy in end of the year meeting with a select group of journalists here on Tuesday.

The officials of embassy said that the South Korean government decided to enhance quota by 100 from 1,000 to 1,100 for skilled Pakistani labor from the next year.

Quota enhancement depends on reputation and performance of Pakistani skilled workers working with various multinational and local Korean companies there. "Unfortunately, overstaying and illegal workers are a biggest challenge for South Korean government which may lead to reduction in workers quota in future," an official hinted.

South Korea is a free religious country where Pakistani Muslim workers are around 2,000 in number and another 2,000 students are getting education out of 13,000 population of Pakistan living there.

Pakistani skilled workers may get three years work visa which is extendable for another two years upon fulfillment of visa requirements, the officials said.

In year 2020, various mega companies and agriculture expert are scheduled to arrive in Pakistan which helped strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries, the officials maintained.

“A Korean agriculture expert is expected next year to join Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in its efforts to introduce Korean technology and experience in the agriculture sector. We want Pakistan to get benefit of experience and technology to increase per yield production as 60 percent population's dependence is on agriculture income," the officials added.

A mega telecom company is also expected to visit Pakistan. Already some Korean companies are working in auto, energy and hydel sectors, etc, in Pakistan.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/25/556246/south-korea-enhances-quota-for-workers/>

HOME-BASED WORK THRIVES IN PAKISTAN, BUT NOT WORKERS: SPEAKERS

12/27/2019 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: To earn more profit margins, factory work is being diverted to the homework sector. Every year the number of home-based workers increases by at least five per cent in Pakistan. Whereas the home-based work thrives, the home-based workers are still among the poorest of the poor, said speakers at a press conference here on Thursday.

The press conference was organised by the Home-based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) at the Karachi Press Club on the completion of the first 10 years of their struggle.

The speakers said that 10 years ago, on Dec 30, 2009, the home-based women workers of Pakistan, writing a new history, had formed the first home-based women workers` federation of the country and started their struggle, which finally resulted in giving a legal identity to more than five million home-based workers of Sindh.

They said Sindh is the first province of South Asia, which on May 9, 2018 through passing the Sindh Home-based Workers Act 2018, became the pioneer in lawmaking for home-based workers.

Now the Rules of Business of this Act are in final phase and once they are made, the home-based workers of Sindh would get their due rights as other workers of the formal sector duly recognised by the labour laws.

The speakers said they feel themselves happy that after their 10-year struggle the home-based workers, especially women workers, are now organised and also playing their due role in pro-democracy campaigns, but the home-based workers of Sindh are not happy that even af ter the passage of one year, the Sindh Home Based Workers Act 2018 is yet to be implemented.

They said that the home-based workers are the lowest paid workers. As per an estimate there are more than 12 million home-based workers in Pakistan and their number is rising at a rate of five per cent a year.

However, their crucial role in the national economy is yet to be accepted and they are still deprived of their rights and social security privileges under the labour laws.

Home-based women workers face the cruelest exploitation because they even do not get wages equal to their male counterparts for the same work. As per an ILO report, the wage difference and violence on the basis of gender is on the rise. Women workers get 34pc less wages than the wages of male workers for the same work. As per a Global Wage Report for 2018-19, in Pakistan the 90pc of the lowest paid workers are women workers. As per another report, if corrective measures are not taken, it would take 100 years to bring wage parity and 200 years to bring gender equality in Pakistan.

They said that in value chain of every sector home-based women are being completely ignored. The textile-garment sector is the backbone of the national economy; however, the women workers belonging to this sector from cotton pickers to women working on machines in factories and in homes are working in conditions that are worse than slavery. This situation is against local laws and international standards, but the government, international institutions, multinational corporations and global brands are criminally ignoring it.

The home-based women workers have been raising voice against these injustices for years and it is the result of their struggle that now lawmaking is made in Germany to compel the international brands to give workers their due rights, while a debate has already been started in European parliament for this type of lawmaking.

In Pakistan the women home-based workers, 80pc of home-based workers, have taken 10 years to get their status recognised. Our rulers think that they would attain economic growth by not giving rights to workers, but no economic growth is possible without social justice. Pakistan has already ratified the ILO Convention 36 and also accepted GSP-plus. Now they are talking of a `Pakistan Accord` on the pattern of the Bangladesh Accord. However, despite this development, due rights to homebased workers is yet a distant dream.

The growing price hike has made it very difficult for women home-based workers to survive economically.

The speakers said that to commemorate the first 10 years of the struggle of the women home-based workers, a big gathering of women home-based workers is being held at the Arts Council on Dec 30 at 3pm, in which women homebased workers from different districts of Pakistan would participate and present cultural programmes to highlight their issues. A documentary in this regard would also be shown. A Comrade Shanta Award would be given to homebased women workers for their heroic struggle. Leaders and workers of different workers federations and human rights organisations would also attend the event to show solidarity. At the end of the conference the future line of action of the struggle of the women home-based workers would also be announced.

The speakers demanded that the government of Sindh announce the rules of the business of the act and take necessary steps for the registration of the home-based workers with social security and EOBI. It demanded starting the registration of home-based workers to issue them cards.

Those who spoke included Zehra Khan of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation Karachi, Saira Feroze of the United Home-Based Garments Workers Union Karachi, Shakeela Khan of the Home-Based Women Bangle Workers Union Hyderabad, Jameela Abdul Latif of the Home-Based Women Bangle

The Globalization Bulletin
Labor

Workers Union Hyderabad, Shabnam Azam of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation Gadap, Zahida Mukhtar of United Home-Based Garment Workers Union New Karachi Godhra Colony, Ainee of Zradavi Workers Gadap and Kosuar Nissa of Rilli and Topi Makers Shahpur Chakar.-PPI

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