



One Voice of Workers

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Volume 2, Issue 3

March 2009

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National Tripartite Labour Conference 2009

Lahore, Feb 16: The Government of Pakistan held National Tripartite Labour Conference on 16th February, 2009 at Islamabad which was attended by representatives of the Government, Employers and Workers.

The inaugural session of the Conference was addressed by Khawaja Nauman, Senior Vice President, Employers Federation of Pakistan in the absence of Mr. Ashfar W. Tabani, President of the Employers Federation who has recently undergone a surgery and could not attend the said Conference, Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah, Federal Minister for Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis, Government of Pakistan, one Member of the Ruling Party Ch. Manzoor Ahmad and Mr. Khurshid Ahmad while Ms. Sachiko Yamamoto, Director, ILO Office for Asia and Pacific Region also addressed the inaugural session. Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Prime Minister of Pakistan inaugurated the Conference and made inaugural address.

The Conference had following items on

its Agenda, (a) Industrial Relations Act, 2008, (b) Proposed Conditions of Service Act, 2009 (c) Proposed Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2009.

Mr. Khurshid Ahmad, General Secretary of Pakistan Workers Federation prior to the inaugural address of the Prime Minister, analyzed the economic, social, labour and political situation prevailing in the country and challenged confronting the Work of World and asked the Prime Minister of Pakistan to take the following steps:

Overcome terrorism which has been affecting the law and order situation by suicide bombing.

Overcome load shedding of Gas and Electricity to meet requirements of industry and agriculture.

Overcome the challenges of the International Financial Crisis and its impacts on Pakistan.

Check rising price hike and aggravating unemployment.

Abridge the irrational gap between the rich and poor in the society.

Amend the labour laws of the country in conformity with ILO Conventions ratified by the Government of Pakistan and take measures to enforce labour laws in the country in conformity with ILO Convention No.81 ratified by the Government of Pakistan.

Ensure safe working conditions for the workers and take affective measures to prevent them from accidents and occupational diseases.

Tackle the gender issues in the society.

Amend the Industrial Relations Act, 2008 in conformity with ILO Conventions Nos.87 and 98 ratified by the Government of Pakistan.

Ensure independence of judiciary and freedom of press and supremacy of Parliament.

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Forced Labour Termed Crime Against Humanity

Lahore: PWF has said the forced labour is a crime against humanity. The PWF office-bearers said it required political will to eliminate this crime in brick kiln industry by enforcing the provisions of Bounded Labour Act 1992 through independent labour inspection machinery. They said the bounded labour could be eliminated through education, economic and social uplift to the victims of the bonded labour by the state. These views were expressed by the office-bearers of PWF while addressing a conference "Elimination of Bounded Labour" organized by the PWF at Bakhitar Labour Hall, Lahore.

The inaugural session of the conference was also addressed by ILO Director

Area Office Islamabad Donglin Li. He declared the ILO has been striving to eliminate the evil of bounded labour with the cooperation of the government. He said the ILO has been publishing 'Global Report on Bounded Labour' this year.



Conference on "Elimination of Bounded Labour"

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Enforce National Security Of Men And Material For Safety Of Human Lives And Adopt "National Economic Self Reliance Policy"

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Lahore Feb 14: A Press Conference by Ch. Talib Nawaz President & Khurshid Ahmad, General Secretary, Pakistan Workers Federation, Along With Muhammad Yaqoob President, Pakistan Workers Confederation, Ch. Gulzar Ahmad General Secretary, All Pakistan Trade Unions Federation, Altaf Baloch President, Mutehida Labour Federation, Yousaf Baloch Chairman, National Trade Union Federation and Akbar Ali Khan Secretary General, Federal Organization of Employees of Banks And Financial Institutions

Through esteemed columns of National Press and Electronic Media, we strongly urge the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan to get enforced the national security of Men and Material for safety of human lives and adopt "National Economic Self Reliance Policy" and develop National infrastructure like Electricity, Gas, Communication and develop National Human Capital and promote appropriate technology in order to overcome the massive un-employment prevailing among work force and the youth, in these critical hour of nation. The high cost of infrastructure and oil prices and huge power and gas load shedding have been adding fuel to fire resulting closure of thousands of Mills by making its workers jobless and has been prov-

ing Social Atom Bomb in the Society. Whereas the prices of oil in International Market have been decreased 1/3rd in recent months while no relief has been provided to the National Industries and Public and cost of Transportation is still exorbitant as it was before.

We further demand that government in accordance with her constitutional obligations under taken under the Guaranteed Rights of the Workers enshrined in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and International obligations of Pakistan by ratifying ILO core conventions, it should amend the existing labour laws including Industrial Relations Act, 2008, Presidential Ordinance Special Powers (Removal from Service) 2002, Section-27(B) of the Banking Companies Ordinance, Maintenance and Defense Notification upon Railway Open line Workers, Workmen Compensation Act, 1934 as well as get enforced Labour Laws through "Independent Labour Inspection Machinery" including Journalists Wage Board Award in accordance with the ILO Convention No.81 ratified by the Government of Pakistan.

We also demand that Government should introduce agrarian reforms and

give land to landless peasants and not to accept unjust conditionality imposed by IMF which require reduction of expenditure on public infrastructure withdrawal of subsidies and enhancement of interest rate which would further aggravate the economic and financial crisis in the country.

We further urge the Government to ensure the payment of lawful dues of workers including wages, gratuity, pension in accordance with ILO convention No.192 by establishing Secured Fund for these lawful dues. We also urge the Govt. of Pakistan to raise the wages of workers commensurate with price hike as well as restoration of selection grade and move over in the National Pay Scales and allow up gradation to technical categories employed in the Public Sector alike Ministerial Staff. We rightly urge the proposals put forth by Pakistan Workers Confederation in the wider national interest should be incorporated in the recommendations of "National Tripartite Labour Conference" being held at Islamabad on 16th February, 2009.

We also appeal all patriotic forces to forge unity by defeating divisive forces based upon ethnic and religious sectarianism and uphold the Independence of Judiciary.

Union Leaders Fear Delay In Labour Policy

Karachi: The resignation tendered by Mian Raza Rabbani can affect the process of labour policy formulation, prominent labour leaders said.

Rabbani in his capacity as leader of ruling party in the Senate had the trust of labour unions and federations affiliated with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and was a true well-wisher of the working class, say labour leaders. A tripartite conference had made a clear announcement that the Labour Policy would be unveiled on May 1, but the process has been very slow on the part of labour ministry, as it has not even notified the names of representatives of different committees.

The tripartite conference had taken several decisions, but due to political uncertainty and developments, the process of formulation of the policy has been put on the back burner.

The recent resignation of PPP central leader Mian Raza Rabbani has seriously upset the workers and their representatives as they are well aware that Rabbani has been the only leader who kept fighting for the cause of workers. He remained in constant contact with the workers and played a very important part in the passage of Industrial Relations Act 2008 and scrapping of 'black labour laws'.

Rabbani has also pledged that he would assist workers in removing all controversial labour laws such as 27-B of the Banking Companies Act which had snatched the basic right of fighting cases in labour courts. But his resignation has caused serious resentment.

Another leader of Pakistan Labour Bureau and a central leader of the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agent) Union in Pakistan International Airlines Corpora-

tion (PIAC), Shaikh Majeed observed that Rabbani deserved to be appointed as Chairman as he very actively supported the working class and was well aware of the process to peruse and approach legislators for the passage of bills and acts dealing with the workers' affairs.

Shaikh Majeed pointed out that the party was taking up his matter and he might be appointed as Law Minister in near future. He said that workers would welcome this appointment because being a law minister, Rabbani would again be helpful in making labour laws.

Majeed also expressed deep shock, that the Labour Ministry was playing a very poor part in giving a proper shape to the process of formulation of Labour Policy.

Mr. Khurshid Ahmad urged the Prime Minister of Pakistan to tackle these issues with political will and rise to the occasion for leading the nation for overcoming the social and economic hardships of the poor strata of the society.

The Prime Minister in its inaugural address replied in detail the issues raised by the General Secretary and declared that Government has already taken some measures for improving the work force including Application of Old Age Benefits Scheme on establishments having 05 workers instead of 10, raised minimum wages of the workers and amended the Industrial Relations Ordinance, 2002. He further assured that the Government would continue to take measures for economic and social uplift of the down trodden and tackle the challenges being posed due to international financial crisis and load shedding and suicide bombing in the country and declared that medical facilities for the retired workers under the Social Security Scheme would be extended, compensation for the Coal Mines Workers who met fatal accidents in Balochistan would be raised and all the stakeholders including workers and employers representatives would be consulted prior to formulation of Federal Budget in order to incorporate their viewpoint in the budget and to review the labour laws in conformity with ILO Conventions. He sought cooperation of all sections of the society and assured that Government would continue to do for their welfare within the available resources despite the international and national economic difficulties.

The second Session of the Conference was held briefly and due to paucity of time, the proposed laws could not be discussed. However, the workers made a point that a Tripartite Standing Labour Committee would be constituted to make recommendations on the above laws in order to bring them in conformity with ILO Conventions ratified by the Government of Pakistan.

It may be a matter of interest to state that the workers organizations have been agitating seriously over the newly promulgated law on Industrial Relations i.e. Industrial Relations Act, 2008 on the following amongst other points:

Right of Collective Bargaining : The said law defines the definition of

"Settlement" in a way that the role of Elected Collective Bargaining Agent Trade Union has been diluted which may give rise to many controversies and would allow the individual contracts by the employers with industrial workers. For example, it empowers the employer to conclude an agreement with the an individual or group of the workers pertaining to his/their terms & conditions of service and, thereby, overriding the role of elected Collective Bargaining Agent Trade Union through collective bargaining which is in violation of ILO Convention No.98 and need to be amended.

Appointment of Chairman and Members of NIRC and Presiding Officers of Labour Courts:

The previous law is that the Chairman and Members of the National Industrial Relations Commission shall be appointed in consultation with the Chief Justice of Pakistan and Presiding Officers of the Labour Courts and are to be appointed in consultation with the Chief Justices of the Provincial High Courts whereas the new law amends this provision by conferring this power to the Executive Government. This amendment will affect the principle of Independence of Judiciary as the Chairman and Members of the National Industrial Relations Commission and Presiding Officers of the Labour Courts will lose the confidence of the litigant parties if not appointed from the judiciary.

Contract Labour: As a result of globalization of economy and deregulation and restructuring and free labour market, the contract labour is on rise in the industrial and commercial establishments in our country whereas the new law does not cover the Definition of "Contractor" meaning thereby that the Contract workers will be excluded from the right of Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining.

Holding of Nation-wide Referendum:

Previously, workers engaged in the nation-wise industrial establishments like national public utilities of WAPDA employing 1,50,000 workers in all over the country and Railways and Postal, etc. have the right of holding referendum for determination of Collective Bargaining Agent Trade Union within a period of three years whereas the Industrial Relations Act, 2008 reduces

the tenure of Collective Bargaining Agent from three years to two years which will make impossible for a Trade Union to make to look after the interests of the work force through collective bargaining due to paucity of time since it is difficult for a trade union to hold its internal elections within two years and also contest referendum within a period of two years. It entails a lot of expenditure and involves a lot of timing for travelling all over the country by representatives of such trade unions to contact the members for holding internal elections as well as for arranging referendum which leaves little time for the trade union to undertake collective bargaining with the employer. It will also affect the productivity of National Public Utility through consuming much more hours on rapid referendum and elections all over the country.

The new law also denies the right of formation of Trade Union in many sectors in violation of ILO Conventions Nos.11 and 87 ratified by the Government of Pakistan. Therefore, our organization has been agitating to the Government to get amended the said law. We are continuously putting pressure upon the Government for amending those laws and seeking cooperation of even some of other independent trade unions to voice collectively for amendment of the said law especially under the umbrella organization of Pakistan Workers Confederation whose headquarter is also located in Bukhtiar Labour Hall, Lahore.

It may also be a matter of interest for you that some attempts were made by the Ruling Party in the said Conference to bring their party men over and above the accredited representatives and delegates of the workers so that they may be able to protect the view point of the ruling party strongly in her favour. However, our Federation with the cooperation of accredited representatives of the workers delegates able to avert any rift among the workers despite this effort made by the ruling party and the Workers Group elected Mr. Khurshid Ahmad as Chairperson.

Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF) - Newsletter

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PWF Concerned About Judiciary on World Day for Social Justice

Lahore, Feb 21: The Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF) commemorated the 'World Day for Social Justice' at Bakhtiar Hall on Friday in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly session November 2008.

Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Workers' Federation General Secretary Khurshid Ahmed said ensuring the freedom of association and collective bargaining, safe and healthy conditions for working, discouragement of bonded and child labour and provision of the maximum social security to workers should be the prime agenda of any nation.

Pakistan Workers' Federation President Talib Nawaz said freedom of press and

independence of judiciary defined the level of social justice in any country.

He expressed concerns over the current state of judiciary in Pakistan, and said that the media had played an eminent role in spreading awareness in society.

International Labour Organization representative Chaudhry Safiullah said the ILO had been paying special attention to the provision of Decent Work for All. He further said that the ILO had adopted a declaration on the subject of Social Justice for Fair Globalisation to safeguard the rights of workers in the international scenario without discrimination. The federation passed a joint

resolution to condemn the killing of journalist Musa Khankel in Swat and urged the government to provide security to journalist. It also demanded the government control price hike of essential commodities and amend the Industrial Regulations Act 2008 in accordance with the ILO Convention No 87 and 98 ratified by the Government of Pakistan to abolish the feudalism through Agrarian Reforms.

The meeting also demanded restoration of all the workers to respectable jobs who had lost their jobs due to closure of mills. HRCP representative Mehboob Alam also attended the event along with walks civil society representatives.

PEPCO Management To Hold Meeting With Workers

Lahore Feb: The Federal Minister for Water and Power Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has advised the Management of PEPCO to hold a detailed meeting with representatives of Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Union and consider their demands including upgradation of the pay scales of technical staff. He said after a meeting held between the representatives of "Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union" CBA and the Minister at LESCO head-office here on Thursday. Fazal Ahmed, Managing Director (PEPCO), and Muhammad Akram Arain, Chief Executive, LESCO were also present while Khurshid Ahmed, General Secretary of the union alongwith other representatives of the union including Syed Sajjad Hussain Shah Addl. General Secretary, Malik

Noor Muhammad, Syed Zahid Hussain Shah, Ch. Muhammad Iqbal, Malik Muhammad Akbar, Sarfraz Bhatti, Hassan Munir Bhatti and Sher Bahadar Khan represented the workers. The minister also approved one month basic pay as honoraria to all the employees of the Lahore Electric Supply Company in recognition of their good performance. He also declared that "Productivity Scheme" would be introduced at Electricity Sub Divisional Level to encourage good performance of the staff with monetary incentive. Pervaiz Ashraf urged the workers to perform their duties to their best of ability for providing "Better Services" to the consumers. He further agreed to raise the payment of compensation from Rs.

two Lakh to Rs. Five Lakh in addition to Group Life Insurance, Welfare Fund and Family Pension to the dependents of the deceased workers who die during the performance of their official duties. Khurshid Ahmed, General Secretary of the union assured the Minister that electricity workers would continue to perform their duties diligently. He said that the proposed privatisation of LESCO should not be carried out as it is against public interest since privatisation had proved failure in case of Karachi Electric Supply Company instead of improving the system. The union thanked the decisions of the Federal Minister for acceptance of the genuine demands of the workers.