

DAWN

Labour conference opens

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Labour leaders from different parts of the country will gather on Friday morning at Sindh Labour Conference to discuss labour law violations, poor governance of state-run labour welfare institutions and weakening trade unions.

The three-day event being organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) will have Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch as the chief guest at the closing session.

Giving details of the Sindh Labour Conference at the press club on Thursday, senior trade union leader Habibuddin Junaidi and Piler representative Karamat Ali said the objective of the conference was to provide a platform to the stakeholders to discuss, brainstorm and share the issues being confronted by workers and to energise and strategize the 'fragmented' labour movement.

Mr Junaidi said working conditions for labourers in the country was deplorable, while only two per cent of them were registered in trade unions, and more than 80 per cent workers did not receive even the minimum wages fixed by the government. He said eight-hour working day was a thing of the past as at present many workers were compelled to work 12 to 16 hours a day without being paid the overtime allowance.

Mr Ali said Piler had already initiated a process of consultation with trade unions and workers organisations in view of the declining status of labour.

Dr Hafiz A. Pasha, Dr Kaiser Bengali, I.A. Rehman (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan), retired Justice Rashid A Razvi, Shafiq Ghauri (Sindh Labour Federation), Lateef Nizamani (Wapda Labour Union), Liaquat Sahi (State Bank of Pakistan Union), Shaikh Majeed (PIA Trade Union), Mirza Maqsood (Pakistan Steel Mills Union), Dr Asad Saeed, Dr Pervez Tahir and Dr Saba Gul Khattak are expected to speak on the occasion.



DAWN

Moot calls for provision of social security to all workers

By Bhagwandas

KARACHI: Speakers at a conference on Sunday called for provision of social security and rights to workers and trade unions according to international standards.

They demanded an end to the privatisation process and urged the government to make local laws in conformity with its commitments with international organisations.

They were speaking at the concluding session of the three-day Sindh Labour Conference organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research.

Balochistan chief minister Dr Abdul Malik, who was chief guest at the conference, announced holding of first tripartite labour conference after the 18th amendment in Quetta in the last week of October.

He said his party, the National Party, would fulfil all the commitments made to the people in its 2013 election manifesto.

He said he had ordered the government departments concerned to ensure that all labour laws were implemented in their letter and spirit and that stern action be taken against employers who were not providing mandatory facilities to their workers.

I.A. Rehman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, who presided over the moot, said the collective bargaining for the labourers was deplorable. The workers and peasants were excluded from many rights and their own trade union movement had weakened over the years, he said.

He asked the industrial workers to help their colleagues in the agricultural sector to form their own trade unions so that they could protect their rights as the number of unionised workers was decreasing with the passage of time.

Earlier, a former federal minister for finance and economic affairs, Dr Hafeez Pasha, said in his detailed speech laden with data that an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report said that only 1 per cent of the country's labour was covered under the trade union, while in India the number was 33pc and in Turkey

it was 55pc.

He said the ILO estimated that there were around two million bonded workers while his estimate was that the number was at least five times high. Similarly, the ILO figures indicated that three million children had to work to feed their families and they did not go to schools, he said.

Pointing out to poor implementation of labour laws, he said Pakistan might lose its status of GSP-Plus given by the European Union after two year review in 2016 and stressed the country had to take measures to implement the 27 international conventions, including the eight pertaining to the core labour rights.

He said efforts should be made to increase coverage of more workers under the Employees Old-age Benefit Institution which had assets of over Rs200 billion and were increasing every year. Pension of retired workers could easily be increased to Rs6,000 per month, he said.

He said that employment was not increasing in the formal sector, whereas the informal sector was expanding at a fast pace. About 80 per cent workforce in the urban areas was associated with the informal sector, he added.

A senior economist and adviser to the Balochistan chief minister, Kaiser Bengali, said that contrary to governments' promises in the past that proceeds from the privatisation would be used to repay loans only around 16pc of the proceeds had gone to loan repayments.

He said the government had mostly privatised the profit earning companies at throwaway prices while even the price of land and assets of the privatised companies were much higher than the prices they had fetched in the sell-off deals.

He said that many companies had been sold to foreign investors who were repatriating their profits from Pakistan instead of spending them on industrialisation in the country.

Habibuddin Junaidi, Lateef Ansari, Saeed Baloch, Ramzan Memon, Faisal Siddiqui, Aziz Memon, Javed Gill, Ayoub Baloch, Qamsoos Gul Khattak, Karamat Ali, Zulfiqar Shah and others also spoke at the conference during the three days.

MESSENGER

Monday, September 29, 2014

Labor conference demands abolition of privatization process

KARACHI, Sep 28: The two-day Sindh Conference, which concluded here on Sunday, demanded an end to the privatization process, provision of universal social security protection to all workers, equal right of the collective bargaining to all the labour, ensuring tripartite mechanism for making all labour laws and implementation of all the international labour conventions, which Pakistan has already ratified.

The Conference jointly organized by an Organising Committee initiated by Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research at Gulshan-e-Maymar here. Chief Minister of Balochistan

Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch was the chief guest and senior journalist I. A. Rahman presided over the last session of the conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Balochistan Chief Minister announced to hold the first-ever provincial tripartite labour conference after 18th Amendment in Quetta Balochistan by the last week of October. He nominated his Advisor Dr. Kaiser Bengali as a focal person to organize the provincial tripartite labour conference. He said his party, National Party, would fulfill all the commitments in its 2013 Election Manifesto.

He said Balochistan gov-

ernment was the first, which has supported the land reforms in the Supreme Court of Pakistan's case. He said he has asked his government departments to implement all the labour laws in the province.

Speaking on the occasion, I. A. Rahman of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) deplored that the situation of collective bargaining for labour is deplorable in Pakistan. The labour and peasants are excluded from many rights and their own trade unions movement has weakened over the years. He asked the industrial workers to help the agriculture and rural workers in

making their unions.

Earlier, in the morning the senior economist and former Federal Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs Dr. Hafeez A. Pasha said it is a sad that majority of the workers are unorganized in Pakistan. The ILO report indicated that only one percent of Pakistani labour is organized in the trade unions.

In India about 33 percent workers are registered in Trade Unions and in Turkey 55 percent workers are with trade unions. "It is shameful for us," he said adding that military governments in Pakistan had crushed the trade unions.

Labour Conference demands end of privatization process

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI—Balouchistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik said Balochistan government was the first, which had supported land reforms in Supreme Court of Pakistan's case. Government departments should implement labour laws in the province in letter and spirit. The first-ever provincial tripartite labour conference after 18th amendment would be held in Quetta in Balochistan in last week of October this current year. National Party would fulfil all the commitments made in its 2013 Election Manifesto.

He nominated his Advisor Dr Kaiser Bengali as a focal person to organize the provincial tripartite labour conference. He was speaking as Chief Guest at a 3-day Sindh Labour Conference, which was jointly organized by an Organising Committee initiated by Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research at Gulshan-e-Maymar Sunday. Senior journalist I. A. Rahman presided over the last session of the conference.

The 3-day Sindh Conference laid its de-

mands for an end of privatization process to provide universal social security protection to all workers and to provide equal right of the collective bargaining to all the labour, ensuring tripartite mechanism for making all labour laws and implement all the international labour conventions, which Pakistan has already ratified.

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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

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implementation of labour laws as well as the ILO Conventions. He indicated that Pakistan may lose the status of GSP-Plus by the European Union at the two year review in 2016. Pakistan has to take serious measures to implement the 27 international conventions including eight pertaining to Core Labour Rights. He said the main cause of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's removal of Land Reforms Act 1977, the first step taken by the Military government of General Ziaul Haq was to abrogate that land reforms law. He said inequality in land distribution has increased tremendously in Pakistan. Since mechanization of agriculture sector big landlords have become even stronger. He said over 13,000 zamindar families are occupying 8 million acres of land of Pakistan. He said due to bad governance in Employees Old age Benefits Institution (EOBI), this institution covers a small portion of the workers, despite the fact, it has assets of Rs. 200 billion and every year its reserves were increasing. There is a scope of increasing the pension of the retired workers to Rs. 6000 per month. Talking about the land reforms, he said the state land was distributed in the past to patronage the influential people on political grounds, the land was sanctioned to Army Generals and bureaucrats to appease them. Under the Land Reforms Act 1977 around 350,000 acres of land can be distributed among the landless peasants, he added. He said around 14 percent workers do not have living wages because they are unemployed or under-employed. "We have a lot of bonded labour. ILO estimates that there are about 2 million bonded workers in Pakistan. In my view the number of bonded workers is more than 5 times." Similarly, he said ILO figures indicate that 3 million children are doing job and they don't go to schools. He said it is a shocking fact that about 220 million people in Pakistan do not eat food for two times in Pakistan. Around 40 percent labour are doing job for 50 hours a week. Only 44 percent workers are getting minimum wages in Pakistan. The main problem in Pakistan is implementation of minimum wages law. He pointed out that employment rate in Pakistan is not increasing in the formal sector, where as there was a tremendous increase in the informal sector. About 80% labour force in urban areas is working in infor-

mal sector. Dr. Pasha said big landlords' income is more than Rs 6500 billion, but their income tax payment is less than Rs. 1 billion. Despite all resistance, he said he had introduced the agriculture income tax and removed Octroi tax in 1997. All big offices in Pakistan like Prime Minister, President, Army Chief, Corps Commanders, Supreme Court Judges are exempted from paying taxes. He said Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is a good programme of democratic govt., which was not introduced by the Military governments. "BISP's annual budget has been increased to Rs. 75 billion but I hope its amount be increased to Rs. 150 billion. Total 5.5 million families are benefitted from this programme." A large number of workers, members of trade unions and workers organisations attended the three-day conference. Another senior economist Dr. Kaiser Bengali in his presentation on Privatization said that the governments have spent only 16 percent of the privatization proceeds on the loan repayment. He pointed out that the government had mainly sold the profit earning corporations and those were sold at throw away prices. Unfortunately, after the privatization, these industries were closed down. Gandhara industry, Zealpak cement factory were the main examples, which before the privatization were earning profits, but within six months of the privatization, they showed losses and were ultimately closed down. He said the lands and assets of the privatized corporations were more than the prices, they paid in the privatization deals. The share price of Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB) was less than the total price of furniture in the bank, he added. He said the government had promised to spend the proceeds of the privatization on development schemes and pay off of foreign debts. Unfortunately, it did not happen. The percentage of budget on development expenditure was 16.6 in 1985-1992, but it was reduced to 1.9 percent in 1993-1999. He said most of the companies have been sold to foreign investors, who instead of spending their profits in Pakistan are repatriating their profits from Pakistan. A private company's aim is to increase profit, where as state's aim should be to increase the national income and improvement of living standard of the people.—RT

Sunday, September 28, 2014

REGIONAL TIMES

METRO KARACHI

Labour Party (UK) assures support to Pakistani workers

KARACHI: The Labour Party UK has assured its full support to the newly formed "Friends of PILER (FoP)," an international network to muster the international support for Pakistani workers. According to Karamat Ali, Executive Director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) the UK's Labour Party President Mr. Ed Miliband, MP, along with some other members of his kitchen cabinet like Dave Anderson, MP met with FoP team at the Durham

Miners' Gala on July 13 and assured his support to Pakistani labour through FoP. Mr. Miliband also invited the members of FoP to attend the Labour Party's annual conference to be held at Manchester by the end of September this year. Over 11,000 members of the Labour Party from the UK will attend the conference for sharing the wider experiences.

With over 500 fringe events, the event would be an opportunity to network and share ideas. At the Durham

Miners' Gala, which was attended by over 100,000 miners from England the FoP team also met with Mayor of Durham and a number of senior trade union leaders of the UK including veteran socialist leader Tony Benn.

The FoP initiative originated from the debate around the significance of linking local and regional networks with international movements and struggles calling for a pro-worker and equality based economic order. — Agency

THE NEWS

Tuesday, September 30, 2014

WORKERS CONFERENCE ENDS

Solidarity committee to finalise proposals for labour laws

By our correspondent

Karachi

A labour solidarity committee, comprising representatives of all federations and trade unions of Sindh, has been formed on the concluding day of the three-day provincial labour conference on Monday.

The committee would prepare recommendations for new labour laws or decide on adopting the federal laws delegated by the 18th amendment in the constitution.

The members of the organising committee, including Karamat Ali of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Habibuddin Junaidi, Dr Kaiser Bengali, Rehana Yasmeen, Jalil Shah and others, said during a press conference at the press club that the conference was attended by the labour leaders from different parts of Sindh as well as some key trade union leaders from Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The resolutions passed in the moot asked all the provincial governments to initiate the tripartite process before making or adopting the labour laws at the provincial levels, they said.

They also called for establishing the standing labour committees with equal representation from the government, employers and employees in each province as it was an essential requirement under the ILO convention 114.

Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, who was the chief guest at the closing

session of the conference, announced that his government would implement all the relevant recommendations and a tripartite labour conference would be held in Quetta by the end of October. For this purpose, he nominated his advisor Dr Kaiser Bengali as the focal point.

The conference demanded of the government to end gender discrimination and ensure provision of remunerations to women workers equal to their male colleagues.

The participants of the conference expressed serious concerns that all workers in Pakistan did not enjoy the right of association as given in the Constitution and Pakistan has ratified the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention 1949 (No. 98).

The organising committee demanded that appropriate measures must be taken so that every worker of the country could form and freely take part in a union at the unit level, sector wise or on geographic basis.

The Trade Unions Act 1926 had provided the right to every citizen of the United India except for Army personnel in the uniform, but that Act was later abolished by the Military government of Ayub Khan and later an Industrial Relations Act was enacted in 1969, which does not provide unionisation right to every worker and exclude the labour of agri-

culture, fishing and informal sectors, who constitute a large portion of the workforce of Pakistan.

After the 18th Amendment, the Punjab government has introduced Industrial Relations Act, which excludes the organisations with less than 50 workers. Similarly, the KPK and Balochistan have still not prepared the industrial relations law.

They said the conference expressed concern over the unabated arrest of fishermen by the navies and other security agencies of both India and Pakistan on violation of borders in the open sea. They said both the countries should stop this inhuman activity and allow the fishermen to leave if they cross the borders inadvertently. They asked the governments of both India and Pakistan to provide signs of demarcation in the open sea and sign a non-arrest of fishermen pact.

The conference demanded of the government to declare the agriculture sector as an industry and the agriculture workers should be provided the same facilities like the industrial labour.

The participants of the moot expressed concern over the performance of social welfare institutions like the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution, Employees Old age Benefit Institution (EOBI) and Workers Welfare Fund and presence of widespread corruption in these institutions. They demanded that all workers should be provided social

security facilities from these institutions.

They called for setting up a commission to probe into corruption in the EOBI, SESSI and WWF and suggest means how to make them provide benefits to all workers.

The privatisation policy was opposed and the moot demanded that the plan to privatise the nationalised corporations should be withdrawn.

The participants resolved to strongly resist the neo-liberal economic policies, dictated on the instructions from the IMF and the World Bank and said that due to these policies the economic conditions of the workers have deteriorated.

The organising committee members said the conference welcomed the provision of the GSP-plus status by the European Union to Pakistan.

But they pointed out that this facility was provided on the condition of implementation of 27 international conventions, including eight conventions pertaining to core labour rights. They urged the government to take measures to implement all these 27 conventions to fully reap the benefits of the GSP-plus.

The participants also demanded of the Sindh government to declare brick kilns as industry and workers of these units be registered in the social security institutions.

They insisted that the Sindh government should issue notification about the wages of brick kiln workers every year and ensure its implementation.

THE EXPRESS

Working for workers

Activists call for national labour union, improved labour rights

Three-day PILER conference sheds light on status of workers, unions and laws

● OUR CORRESPONDENT
KARACHI

Trade unionists and social activists called for a strong national labour union to improve the dismal state of labour rights in the country and protect trade unions on Friday.

Speaking at the three-day Sindh Labour Conference organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) at its office in Gulshan-e-Maymar, the participants shed light on the country's economic policies towards labour and the status of labourers, labour unions and labour laws after the 18th Amendment.

"The government policy of privatisation does not take

workers into consideration; instead it only benefits those who consulted with the government before it made its policy decisions," said economist Dr Pervez Tahir, criticising current economic policies and their effects on labour. He said that foreign investments began to decline when privatisation started. "In 1987, when the institutions were run by the government, 26% of the national income came from foreign investments," he claimed. "Now, after privatisation, the share of foreign investment in the economy is only 14%."

Meanwhile, Justice (ret'd) Rasheed A Rizvi alleged that political parties had failed to play their role in developing trade unions. He said that they had established their wings in existing trade unions, but never attempted to make unions functional

"The government policy of privatisation only benefits those who consulted with the govt before it made its policy decisions

Economist Dr Pervez Tahir

in the factories. "The lawyers' movement was successful because everyone put the interests of the judiciary above their own political affiliations," he said. "Until and unless we start prioritising the interests of the people, nothing can be achieved."

He said that after the 18th Amendment, the Sindh government merely adopted the Industrial Relations Act of 2008 with the addition of the word "Sindh" in it. This created problems for workers employed in national or-

ganisations, such as Pakistan Railways and banks.

Piler chief executive Karamat Ali spoke about the bleak condition of the country's trade unions, with less than 1% of workers being registered with a union. "The Trade Unions Act 1926 gave all workers the right to form trade unions prior to 1947 but Ayub Khan abolished it and the Trade Disputes Act, replacing them with the Industrial Relations Act 1969," he explained. "This deprived many workers of the right of unionisation, and with later amendments, more and more were excluded from this right." He emphasised the need to struggle for protecting unions and giving the security of at least minimum wages to the workers, calling for the formation of a national union.

"If the workers are united, they will bring a revolution

in the country," said singer and activist Jawad Ahmed, expressing his wishes for changing the country's political environment. "I dream of making a political party of peasants and labourers, where they would be the ones ruling Pakistan."

Save the Children provincial advocacy manager Iqbal Detho said that while the number of children working in the worst conditions had gone down from 30 million, last year's International Labour Organisation report indicated that 12 million children were still engaged in such labour.

Meanwhile, trade unionist Shafiq Chauri called for the simplification of 78 laws dealing with labour, suggesting that they should be condensed into six laws as per the recommendation of a commission headed by Justice Shafiur Rehman.

PILER, trade unions to hold 'Sindh Labour Conference'

Staff Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) in collaboration with trade unions announced on Thursday, to bring together more than 200 delegates from 19 labour federation, 31 labour union, 12 NGOs and the political parties from the four provinces, in three-days 'Sindh Labour Conference' at PILER Centre, Karachi.

Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch, Chief Minister Balochistan will be the chief guest at the closing session of the conference, starting from Friday September 26. The large number of delegates would speak

on in the conference on Labour Legislation, Informal Sector and Vulnerability, Labour in Agriculture, Labour Welfare and State Institutions, Occupational Health and Safety, International Trade and Labour Rights, Privatisation and Way Forward for the Labour Movement.

The announcement was jointly made by the senior trade union leader and member of the Organising Committee of the Sindh Conference Habibuddin Junaidi and Chief Executive of PILER Karamat Ali, in a press conference at Karachi Press Club.

Habibuddin Junaidi said "the fragmented labour organizations

and the ineffectiveness of the government have created a vacuum due to which the workers rights are not represented well; the Conference aims to fill this gape, and to energize the weakened labour movement in the country." The objective of the conference is to facilitate a platform for labour and concerned stakeholders to discuss, brainstorm and share the issues confronted by the labour, he added.

This conference will bring together the trade unions, civil society and the government to create collaboration among them and open the ways for constructive initiatives, Junaidi said that "the

conference will not limit to industrial worker, the rural farmers and thousands others working informally are also targeted in the conference." He added that the working class in Pakistan face deplorable conditions where 80 percent of the workers do not receive minimum wages and mostly are forced to work 12 to 16 hours a day without payment of overtimes.

He said the privatisation plans of the current government were threats to the workers in state-owned institutions which fear widespread lay off as it was witnessed in the past. The current reforms under the pressure from

International Monetary Fund and World Bank would bring about the worst results.

Karamat Ali said "Pakistan has ratified many international labour conventions but later these conventions were amended the way that they are now being used against the workers, according to a report by a monetary mission of ILO the labour laws in the country actually exempts 75 percent of the workers from their basic rights." He added that the conference would be initiating consultation over the labour laws, poor governance of the state-run labour welfare institutions and the weakening of trade unions.

Provinces asked to adopt all laws on labour

RACHHI: Speakers at their Conference on Friday concluded that all the laws related to labour should be adopted by the provinces after 18th Amendment to Constitution, labour is a subject of provinces. They recommended to evolve a mechanism to implement the minimum wages.

The speakers were presenting their papers and presentations at the first day of one-day of Sindh Labour Conference organized by Human Institute of Labour Education and Research (HILER) in collaboration with number of trade unions and organizations here. In his presentation on "Current Economic Policies: Implications for Labour" the senior economist Pervaiz Tahir said that the economic policies of the present government have been formulated without any consultation with the labour. The government announced to reinstate privatization programme which is harmful for labour. They have introduced the "divestment" for those organizations, which are earning profits. For other organizations which are put for privatization, they call the new owners "strategic partners" who will own 26 of the assets."

Dr. Tahir said the Finance Minister in his budget speech had assured that workers' interests would be protected in privatization policy, but no mechanism was suggested except announced to increase minimum wages from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 in his budget speech. But there is no mechanism in the government to implement the minimum wages, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive of PILER Karamat Ali said for implementation of the labour and other laws in a company or industry, presence of a trade union is a must. He said Dr. Ijaz Pasha had told him that in Pakistan, less than one percent of the workers are registered in the trade unions. He mentioned that in Punjab the provincial assembly had passed the Industrial Relations Act which allows workers to form a trade union in the establishments where 50 or more employees work. "It is a violation of Constitution



as it guarantees every citizens right of association," he added.

Karamat Ali said even before the independence the labour had more rights than the present era. The Trade Unions Act 1926 had allowed all workers to form trade unions except for those with uniform in the Army, even civilian employees of Army were allowed. The Military government of Ayub Khan abolished the Trade Unions act in 1959, along with Trade Disputes Act. After 10 years the famous Industrial Relations Act was introduced in 1969 which dealt with both trade unions registration and dispute resolution. But that act had excluded many workers. The following amendments in the act deprived more workers from the right of unionization. Currently the workers are not actively taking part in trade union movement. Even the trade unions in an organization are divided despite the fact a minimal number of workers are registered in the trade unions. He suggested to form a unified confederation of the all the trade unions to bring all workers at a platform.

Justice (Retd.) Rasheed A. Razvi said that trade union movement has lost its grounds in Pakistan, where as in other countries workers movements have become stronger. He said that after 18th Amendment the Industrial Relations Acts were adopted by provincial government in a hurry. The Sindh Government even adopted the Industrial Relations Act of 2008 with a single line amendment by putting a word of "Sindh" in it. This created problems for the workers who are employed in the national level organizations like Pakistan Railways and banks.

He said Shah Mahmood Qureshi, has been opposing the land reforms in the Supreme Court's petition and his party is talking about rights of poor. He said only 5 percent workers are covered under the social security schemes.

Razvi underlined the need to increase awareness among the trade union leaders about labour laws. He said in a case Sindh High Court had allowed over 4500 workers of KESC to take part in the referendum for Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA), even though they were employed on contract basis. General Secretary of All Pakistan Workers Confederation Khurshid Ahmed said that any change in the conditions of workers take place with a great struggle or a movement.

He said he was ready to Ms. Zeenat Shaukat, of PILER, speaking on Labour Rights and the Role of Trade Unions said social security to the workers is inadequate and a large majority of workers are not getting these facilities. She pointed out that in private sector organizations the owners report less number of their employees so that they would not pay benefits to less numbers. For example, she said total registered workers with Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (SESSI) is 680,000, whereas the total number of workers in the province exceeds 14.1 million.

She said Pakistan Economic Survey provides Social Security Net details. If one study, he can find that in the list of the schemes for Social Security Net roads and highway and law and order are also included, that means the government provides money for these subjects in the name



of poverty eradication. The government spends around 12 percent of the total GDP for poor. She said even though subsidies are provided for the poor but they are actually spent on middle class or upper class people. These subsidies are paid on account of petroleum and for energy sector. Even the amount for subsidies is decreasing with the passage of time. Only 0.28 percent of the total GDP of Rs. 24 trillion is spent on subsidies.

Ms. Shaukat said 64 percent of the population is living in rural areas, but 60 percent of them do not own land. Healthcare and education situation is poor. Industrial sector, transport and other sectors have been provided incentives in the current budget and tax liabilities on them has been reduced, but no incentive has been provided to marginalized sections of the society. The spending on social sector is decreasing, for example, she pointed out that for rural development the government spent Rs. 30 billion last year and in the current it has allocated Rs. 30 billion.

Singer Jawad Ahmed said if the workers are united, they would bring a revolution in the country.

Lawyer Ali Palh while talking about the enforcement of the laws after 18th amendment, said that provincial governments have to adopt the labour laws through their respective assemblies. In his opinion the majority of legislators are big landlords or industrialists, so they would not make pro-labour laws. He suggested that all the new laws should be made with the help of the civil society and selected technocrats. He said workers rights were curtailed during

all Martial Laws. All the democratic governments right from ZA Bhutto made pro-employer laws.

Senior trade unions leader Shafeeq Ghauri said in the past six labour policies were made, but only one policy of 1972 was workers friendly. He suggested that the labour laws should be made simple and easily understandable. Present labour laws are actually those, which were introduced by the British government. "We are only making some amendments in the British era."

Justice Shafiqur Rehman Commission had provided valuable recommendations and those recommendations should be kept in mind while making all the new labour laws. He said over 70 laws relating to labour should be converted into six laws. A Labour Code may be formed for all six laws, in which the same definition should be provided for a worker, employer etc. "For the Health and Safety, we need to pay attention on our safety laws, which are essential to be implemented for benefits to exports under GSP-Plus."

A tripartite Labour Standing Committee be constituted for formation and implementation of labour laws. Committee should monitor laws. Under the ILO Convention and Article 17 of the Constitution, every citizen should have a right of formation or taking part in the trade union activities. A tripartite health and safety council be established to supervise the factory inspection process. At plant level, a bipartite committee be formed on health and safety.

Malecha Hussain of Mehargarh speaking on "The

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Sindh Labour Conference concludes

Balochistan to hold first tripartite conference

By Haroon Ishaq

KARACHI: Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch announced holding the first-ever provincial tripartite labour conference after the 18th Amendment in Quetta by the last week of October, as recommendation made on the last day of the three-day Sindh Labour Conference, that ended on Sunday.

The conference was jointly held by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) in collaboration with labour unions, in Gulshan-e-Maymar. Workers' unity, judicial and land reforms and imposition of international standards were discussed during the conference. Abdul Malik Baloch was the chief guest, while many renowned personalities from worker unions, civil society and political parties along with legal and economic experts were among the speakers.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdul Malik said, "By the struggle of six decade, still we could not unite the nation and the worker."

He added that their election manifesto was focused on labour rights but due to the coalition government many agendas were still not possible to implement.

He said that his was the only party that, in the Supreme Court, supported the land reforms. "We will ensure implementation of the recommendation of this conference in Balochistan," he said. He added, "We had a cap of elder progressive

heads but the new generation did not have enough guidance. The spirit of workers' rights and progressive struggle should be transferred to the new generation."

The last day's session was presided over by IA Rahman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), who said, "Workers had more rights fifty years ago than they have today. With the passage of time, the ruling class is exempting the rights one by one."

He said that it was the basic right as well the duty of the working class to monitor the state machinery.

He criticised the slogan of "Naya Pakistan", saying that the rights of workers were not represented anywhere in the so-called new Pakistan. "While everyone is talking about the constitution, there are certain articles which no one is ready to mention." Recalling Article 3 and Article 38 of the constitution, he said that it was enshrined therein that it was the duty of state to end all type of exploitation, and that the state should provide social security.

He said that after 60 years in 2010, education was - for the first time - accepted as a basic right of the citizens, while the rights to employment, social security and health were not formally accepted as basic rights of the citizens by law.

On the third day, PILER Director Karamat Ali summarised the nine sessions of the three-day conference and put forward key recommendations of all sessions, which were later

unanimously passed by the delegates.

"The only power in the hands of workers is organisation. Without organisation, none of the objectives of the workers is possible to achieve," he said.

Summarising the three-day conference, it was recommended, and passed by the conference, that labour laws should be the same everywhere in all the federating units of the state. "The land reforms should be act upon immediately. There should be proper safety and health measures for workers," he said.

It was also recommended that a workers' coordination committee should be constituted to organise workers and bring them all together on a single platform. "The committee, after considering the recommendations of the conference, should then get them implemented."

It was also recommended that labour conferences like the Sindh Labour Conference should be arranged in all other provinces, while a joint federal-level conference should also be held.

The participants of the conference suggested that all provincial governments should immediately hold the provincial tripartite conferences, bringing together the labours and employers.

The organising committee of the Sindh Labour Conference also announced holding a press conference today (Monday) at the Karachi Press Club regarding the outcomes of the three-day conference.

Sindh Labour Conference calls for standing labour committees

Says committees in each province should have equal representation from govt, employers, employees

Staff Report

KARACHI: Sindh Labour Conference called for establishing the Standing Labour Committees with equal representation from the government, employers and employees in each province, as it is an essential requirement under International Labour Organisation's convention 114.

The announcement was made jointly by the organising committee of Sindh Labour Conference including Karamat Ali Director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Habibuddin Junaidi of All Pakistan Trade Union Organisation and Dr Kaiser Bengali adviser to chief minister

Balochistan at a press conference at Karachi Press Club.

A Labour Solidarity Committee comprising representatives of all federations and trade unions of Sindh was announced on Monday to prepare recommendations for new labour laws.

The decision of the solidarity committee was made on the last day of the three-day Sindh Labour Conference held in Karachi from September 26 to 28.

Chief Minister of Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch announced on the last day to hold tripartite Labour Conference in Quetta and nominated his adviser Dr Kaiser Bengali as focal person.

During the press conference member of the organising commit-

tee described the minutes and the recommendations of the conference. The conference demanded the government to end gender discrimination and ensure provision of remunerations to women workers equal to their male colleagues.

It demanded appropriate measures be taken so every worker of the country can form and freely take part in a union at the unit level, sector wise or on geographic basis.

The current Industrial Relations Act does not provide unionisation right to every worker and exclude the labour sectors other than industries, which comprises majority of the workforce.

The conference concerned over the arrest of fishermen by navies of

India and Pakistan and asked the countries to allow the fishermen to leave if they cross the borders inadvertently.

It recommended making the demarcation into the open sea and signing a non-arrest treaty of fishermen pact. The conference demanded the government to declare agriculture sector as industries and the agriculture workers should be provided the same facilities like industrial labour.

It demanded all workers should be provided social security facilities from these institutions. They called for setting up high level Commission to probe into corruption in Employees Oldage Benefits Institution, Sindh Employees Social Security

Institution and World Wildlife Fund and suggest means how to make their provide benefits to all workers.

The conference opposed the privatisation policy of the present government and demanded the plan to privatise the nationalised corporations should be withdrawn.

It welcomed the provision of Generalised System of Preference plus status to Pakistan by European Union, which is provided on the condition of implementation of 27 international conventions including eight Conventions pertaining to Core Labour Rights.

Sindh government should declare brick kiln as industry and workers of these units be registered in social security institutions.

Bleak working conditions

'Industrial tragedies likely to keep occurring'

Conference stresses need for occupational health and safety laws, implementation

● OUR CORRESPONDENT
KARACHI

Two years ago, 259 workers were killed in a garments factory in Baldia in the worst industrial fire in Pakistan's history. However, the causes behind the workers' deaths remain, with other similar incidents likely to occur in the future.

Trade unionists, social activists and lawyers expressed their concerns about the lack of action taken to redress the dangerous conditions of the country's factory on Saturday, the second day of the three-day Sindh Labour Conference organised by Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) at their office in Gulshan-e-Maymar.

"In the Baldia tragedy, it

was not the fire that killed the workers but the actions and inaction of the people in charge of their safety," said lawyer Faisal Siddiqui, comparing the incident to New York's Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire that occurred in 1911 and claimed 146 lives. He said that both incidents happened in similar circumstances, with the owners of both the factories giving nearly the same statements about the closure of factory doors at the time of the fires, trapping workers inside.

"People died here because the building was constructed in violation of by-laws," he said. "It was not even regis-

Dr Bengali went on to assert that the landlords with large holdings had no interest in development

tered with the labour department, so the department did not bother to inspect it."

Siddiqui highlighted the need for enforcing laws that deal with labourers, calling for pressure from international buyers to ensure the implementation of health and safety regulations. "Even if just Section 35 of the decades-old Factories Act of 1934 is implemented, many incidents can be avoided," he asserted.

Security consultant Naeem Sadiq said that 98 per cent of the factories had no health and safety system in place, with their workers having no choice but to risk their lives every day. "People do not go to work to get injured," he said, stressing the necessity for preventive measures for occupational health and safety. "Incidents like this happen every day in Pakistan, people die while working every day, and the reason for this is the

SAFETY FIRST

98%

of factories have no health and safety system, with workers having no choice but to risk their lives every day, according to security consultant Naeem Sadiq

absence of legislation for occupational health and safety standards in the country; we still rely on the 1934 Factories Act, which does not have any such standards."

Economist Dr Kaiser Bengali said that the same land reforms could not work in every region of the country, because landownership follows different patterns in different regions; instead, each province should have separate land reforms, he

suggested. "In Sindh and Naseerabad, Balochistan, there is traditional agribusiness, where the feudal lords exploit the tenants," he explained, showing data from a survey of various districts of Pakistan. "Meanwhile, South Punjab has corporate farming where the peasants do not live on the landlord's farms, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa mostly has small landowners, possessing one or two acres of land."

Dr Bengali went on to assert that the landlords with large holdings had no interest in development. He further called for an end to tenancy in the agricultural sector. "Tenancy and sharecropping create dependency, leaving peasants socially and politically dependent on landlords," he said. "Removing tenancy will eliminate this relationship, giving them freedom to work and vote as they please."