

LABOUR AND LIBERTY

CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN LABOUR WELFARE, RGNUL, PUNJAB.



NEWS SNIPPETS

CALL FOR SUPPORT TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN BERMUDA

On account of Union's May Day/International Workers' Day and long-standing demand, one of Bermuda's biggest unions has appealed to the public to support the implementation of unemployment insurance, healthcare changes and a living wage and also emphasized on how inequalities have magnified during COVID-19.

QATAR'S LABOUR MINISTRY CELEBRATES WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

The event was held in Doha in cooperation with the International Labor Organization Office. The event aimed to highlight the role of the Ministry of Administrative Development, in developing the framework of safe practices and necessary services at work sites. In the video conference, two sessions were conducted to discuss the concept of enhancing the collection and analysis of OSH data in Qatar, and practices for protecting workers from the effects of COVID-19.



NATIONAL NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Recently, the issue about provisions for ensuring the sustenance of migrant labourers reached the Apex Court, reaching the Hon'ble 2 Judge Bench consisting of Hon'ble Justice Ashok Bhushan & M.R. Shah. The 2 Judge Bench questioned the Centre regarding how it intended to take food to crores of migrant labourers who had no access to ration cards. The centre mentioned its flagship scheme- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. However, this is not the first intervention by the Apex Court in issues concerning Migrant Labourers.

Several Public Interest Litigations ('PIL') have been filed in the Supreme Court, wherein concerns were expressed over the conditions of migrant labourers. In *Harsh Mander v. Union of India* (2020 SCC OnLine SC 376), the petitioners sought immediate payment of wages to the migrant labourers, and ensuring other measures for their welfare, by the government & concerned authorities. The bench dismissed the petition, stating that it could not interfere with government efforts during the lockdown.

In *Ficus Pax Private Limited v. Union of India*, (2020) 4 SCC 810), the court took a lenient view towards payment of wages, disregarding a compulsory order of the government regarding payment of wages, instead directing the parties to enter in negotiation proceedings for payment. However, the court did take into consideration the gravity of the situation involving migrant labourers, and made directions for migrants, when in the writ petition entitled *Re: Problems & Miseries of Migrant Labourers*, (2021 SCC OnLine SC 410) the court stipulated the following directions to alleviate and reduce the problems being faced by the migrant labourers –

- The court directed states to transfer all stranded labourers to their native place by either train or bus, within 15 days of the order.
- Direction to ensure that no migrant is charged under Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act, (2005) which lays down punishment for obstruction of official authorities.
- Direction to ensure no migrant labourer is obstructed to travel by police officials, etc., and charges framed against migrant labourers under the Disaster Management Act must be revoked.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND UPDATES

BANGLADESH

On April 24, 2013, thousands of garment workers in Bangladesh entered the visibly crumbling, eight-story Rana Plaza retail and apparel manufacturing complex out of which they worked. Despite having alerted supervisors to the structural cracks in the walls and receiving police mandates to evacuate the building after it had been deemed unsafe, workers were forced to complete orders. When Rana Plaza collapsed, 1,100 people died. Thousands more were injured.

It was the deadliest, garnering global attention and galvanizing a slew of grassroots, citizen-fuelled movements calling for widespread labour rights reform, improved health and safety regulations, and consumer awareness. Which pushed 220 foreign brands signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza disaster, which promises to engage global trade unions in working toward a safer and healthier garment and textile industry, the legal agreement is set to expire this May.

AUSTRALIA

The Australian government signalled it would consider tighter restrictions as part of a forthcoming review of the Modern Slavery Act. The Australian government has left the door open to toughening up the nation's laws against modern slavery amid concerns about human rights abuses in China's Xinjiang region. Officials also revealed at a Senate hearing on Tuesday that the government was in regular discussions "with all China-facing businesses" and had used those conversations to highlight the risks of forced labour in supply chains from Xinjiang.

Recently Canada, and USA had banned import of cotton based products from China, UK soon followed the suit. This ban was imposed on the imports related to Uighur camps. There are concerns that these productions are using forced labour from internment camps in Xinjiang. Uighurs are the principal ethnic group in Xinjiang, a huge region of China that borders Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to experts and human rights groups, at least one million Uighurs have been detained in recent years in political re-education camps.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND UPDATES

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the difficult economic and social realities for many working people in the United States and has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities. Low-wage workers, who are disproportionately women, migrants, and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, have largely borne the brunt of the pandemic's economic fallout.

Weaknesses and deficiencies in US labor law have made the situation worse. Workers face major obstacles to organize, unionize, and collectively bargain for fair wages, decent benefits, and safe working conditions. The US House of Representatives have passed The Protecting the Right to Organize Act (the PRO Act) H.R.842, S.420 with a bipartisan vote. If approved by the Senate, it would significantly strengthen the ability of workers in the private sector to form unions and engage in collective bargaining for better working conditions and fair wages. If enacted into law, the PRO Act would be the most comprehensive worker empowerment legislation since the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935.

CANADA

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector and represents 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy. The union advocates for all working people and their rights, fights for equality and social justice in Canada and abroad, and strives to create progressive change for a better future

Unifor is asking the Ontario government to introduce permanent, employer-paid sick leave that meets the needs of workers. The existing law is lacking in tackling the issue of Covid 19.

Unifor advocates for universal paid sick days to be enshrined in labour law in Ontario that includes:

- 7 permanent paid sick days;
- 14 additional paid sick days during a declared public health emergency;
- Universality (i.e. it applies to all workers, regardless of status);
- A prohibition on sick notes;
- Flexible (i.e. not just for short-term illness; more akin to "personal emergency" days);
- Employer-paid;
- No administrative burden





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