

PRESS RELEASE

May Day 2017: Rural and urban workers on May Day show unity; resolve to continue united struggle

KARACHI, May 1: Like other parts of the world, the workers of Sindh were united on this May Day as a large number of agriculture workers from rural areas and industrial labourers of Karachi jointly organized a labour rally from Mazar of Quaid-e-Azam, which culminated into a big gathering of workers at Karachi Press Club on Monday.

On the occasion, the labour and peasants' leaders addressed to thousands of workers, male and female. Senior politician and head of Pakistan Awami Tahrik Rasool Bux Palejo especially attended the labour gathering. President of Supreme Court Bar Association Justice (Retd.) Rasheed A. Razvi was the chief guest on the occasion.



The labour movement of Sindh declared to continue the joint struggle for their rights of association and collective bargaining. Read out by Ms. Soonh Gopang, the declaration pointed out that currently only one percent workers are members of trade unions out of over 60 million workers in Pakistan. Introduction of contract system in

all the government and private sector establishments have discouraged formation of the trade unions thus labourers are exploited and excluded.

It was a unanimous demand of the workers for making a separate law for the trade unions on the same pattern of Trade Union Act 1926, which was adopted by Pakistan after the independence, but the Military rulers scrapped that law in 1959.

A large number of peasant women from different districts of Sindh joined the labour rally and then the labour meeting. Women workers demanded to provide equal wages and removal of discrimination from every aspect of life. It was resolved to increase the number of women in trade unions and in the office bearers.

In the declaration, it was determined to establish a workers alliance for achieving all constitutional and labour rights. The meeting opposed privatization of the public sector industries. The contract system including third-party employment system should be ended, which is exploitative and creates insecurity among the workers. There is no right of unionisation and collective bargaining to agriculture workers,

the declaration said. Sindh Tenancy Act 1950 needs to be amended and under this law, Hari Courts should be established. The meeting decried shortage of both irrigation and drinking water in Sindh and demanded the government to implement the Water Accord 1991 in its letter and spirit.



The gathering underlined the need for massive electoral reforms in the country to provide representation to the workers in the legislative assemblies and local government system.

Secretary General of Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ) Faheem Siddiqui read out the set of resolutions on the

occasion. The resolutions demanded the government to ratify all labour conventions of International Labour Organisation (ILO).

President of Supreme Court Bar Association Justice (Retd.) Rasheed A. Razvi, in his speech as chief guest appreciated participation of a large number of women workers in the labour day events. He deplored that there is no change in the working condition of labourers in Pakistan despite passage of 70 years. He said in the current system of the governance, the problems of workers cannot be resolved. All the rulers, despite being military, politicians and religious leaders, are united against the workers, he added.

Without a unity of workers these problems of workers cannot be solved in Pakistan, he said adding that currently the workers are divided in their ranks.

Executive Director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) Karamat Ali in his welcome remarks said that Chicago's workers had struggled for eight-hour work, but today this right is not available to workers in Pakistan. Minimum wages are fixed at Rs. 14,000 per month, but no labourer is receiving wages at this rate anywhere in Pakistan. He pointed out that Pakistan is the fourth in industrial accidents as majority of workers are working in difficult situations.

He said all this is because only one percent workers are organized in the unions. In such a situation the labour laws are not implemented anywhere in industry of service sectors. He said workers cannot be effectively united unless 35 percent of them are united in the trade unions.

Ali said earlier, Trade Union Act 1926 was available for registration of trade unions in Pakistan but it was removed by the military rulers, so workers are not able to get themselves organized. Currently only 750 collective bargaining has happened in Pakistan, he added.

Liaqat Sahi of State Bank Workers Union said that third-party contract system has caused insecurity



system among workers. Article 27 of the Constitution ensures to provide employment on contract system. We condemn violation of this Article of the Constitution and would challenge this violation in the court, he added.

Arif Junejo, President of Sindhi Mazdoor Tahrik said that capitalists are exploiting the rights of

workers. He said workers will wage a united movement against capitalists.

Hoorun Nisa Palejo of Sindhiani Tehrik said women workers are also united and they would continue their struggle for rights. She said a large number of women are working in agriculture sector, but they are not considered as workers.



Asad Iqbal Butt, Vice Chairman of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said there should be only one demand of the workers' that they should be provided appointment letters.

Ms. Farhat Perveen, Executive Director of National Organisation of Working Communities said the employers do not provide minimum

wages to them. "We demand to make a law for providing right to peasants and agriculture workers. We demand to restore Trade Unions Act 1926."

Ghulam Mehboob of PC Hotel Workers Union said he is leading a struggle of PC workers, who were removed from their service. He resolved to continue his struggle till his death.

Raheel Iqbal of Export Processing Zone Labour Union said that 350 industries are located in the zone in Karachi, where they don't allow formation of trade unions. In 1980 a black law was imposed and the zone was exempted of all labour laws.



Muqadar Zaman of Railway Workers Union said there is a need to for unity of workers.

Those who also spoke on the occasion included Hasan Mansoor, President of Karachi Union of Journaliss, Abdul Sattar Gopang from Awami Mazdoor Tehrik, Zahid Sharif of National Students Federation, Mahnaz

Rahman of Aurat Foundation, Habibuddin Junaidi of Sindh Labour Solidarity Committee, Saeed Baloch of Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Naveed Shah of KPT Labour Union, Rehana Yasmin of Sindh Hosiery Garments Workers General Union, Ahmed Naeem Qureshi from Pakistan Mazdoor Muttahida Mahaz, Abdul Rauf of Muttahid Labor Federation Abdul Rauf, Mohammad Khalil of Sindhi Hari Tahrik, Majid Memon, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, Gul Mohammad Afridi,

Members of Sindhiani Tahrik presented tableaus and songs on the occasion.

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