

Media Update

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ILO

Press Release

ILO supported Trade Unions in AJK to develop plan for stronger role

Mirpur Thursday 23rd February 2017: The International Labour Organization (ILO) organized a capacity building workshop for the existing Trade Unions of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) in Mirpur in collaboration with Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF). Mr Zahoor Awan, General Secretary, PWF, facilitated the workshop and guided the participants on promoting trade union movement in AJK on sustainable basis. The workshop discussed issues including situation of Trade Unions & collective bargaining in AJK, challenges faced by workers in AJK, prospects for formation of a State-level Federation of Trade Unions, capacity of trade union leadership, sustainability of trade unions and alliance of AJK Trade Union Federation with national (Pakistan-based) and international trade bodies.

More than 60 delegates from eleven (11) trade unions of AJK participated in the workshop. The Department of Labour AJK also contributed towards organization of this workshop.

With 4.6 million population in AJK, the Labour Force Participation rate stands at 22.8%. As per Government records, there are 1,970 industrial units and six small and micro-industrial estates in 10 Districts of AJK.

While inaugurating the workshop, Mr Saad Gilani, Senior Programme Officer ILO explained that the Federal Tripartite Consultative Committee (FTCC) for Decent Work in Pakistan held in January 2016, decided that the special regions including Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) should receive further attention in terms of labour related issues. Subsequently, the Department of Labour AJK and ILO started joint interventions starting with a

dialogue on 'Future of Work' and a detailed 'Situation Analysis of Labour Administration in AJK' study. The Situation Analysis Study specifically highlighted the weak structure of trade union movement in AJK, among other things, and recommended for its strengthening. This led to organization of this first ever formal workshop for the trade unions in AJK. The Study also identified the need for further capacity development to achieve a functional and effective Labour Administration System.

The existing trade unions in AJK only function at Plant-level with no representative structure at District or State level. This led to weak voice and capacity of Trade Unions. In late 2016, the Government of AJK has notified a 'State Tripartite Consultative Committee (STCC)' to formally engage with trade unions and employers and chart out a process for promoting decent work in the State.

The workshop helped Trade Union representatives understand the international standards on 'Freedom of Association & Collective Bargaining' in context of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. Subsequently, the participants identified key challenges faced by workers in AJK – majority of which related to the 'State-level' (58%) followed by Plant-level (22%) and Institution-level (20%). This became a foundation for development of an Action Plan to strengthen trade unions at plant-level, as well as strengthen trade union movement at District and State level – through formation of Federation. Issues related to trade union leadership capacities, promoting trade unions in private sector, institutional matters, funding/donation, and linkages with international trade union movement were part of the action plan.

The trade union representatives of AJK were very keen to have this workshop in AJK and requested for more such opportunities of mutual learning and capacity development. Participants thanked ILO, Pakistan Workers' Federation and Department of Labour AJK for organizing this workshop and expressed commitment to work together in future – to strengthen trade union movement in AJK for a strong labour administration system and effective tripartism.

For more details, please contact:

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