

Summary Record of Discussions of the Hon'ble Labour Minister Shri Oscar Fernandes with the State Labour Ministers and State Level Officials

February 20, 2009

1. After the General Session of first day of 42nd Session of Indian Labour Conference on 20.2.2009, a meeting with the Labour Ministers and Senior Officers of State Governments was held under the chairmanship of Minister of State (IC) for Labour & Employment.
2. Ms. Sudha Pillai, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment while welcoming the guest, underlined that discussion with state government will focus on four important issues namely (a) Impact of economic meltdown on labour and steps contemplated by the state governments to counter the same; (b) implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY); (c) issues relating to construction workers and implementation of Construction Workers Act and (d) Skill development.
3. Initiating the discussion Shri Oscar Fernandes, Hon'ble Minister of Labour and Employment pointed out that friends from trade unions highlighted in the just concluded plenary session that many companies are laying off workers due to economic meltdown without following due procedures. He said that there is an overarching perception that labour laws were not implemented properly in the country. To improve the implementation machinery, he informed that the Ministry is in the process of developing a format for monitoring every three months different aspects of implementation of factory laws.
4. On RSBY, Shri Fernandes informed the house that it is a flagship scheme of the Ministry, which has now been extended to all the districts of the country. He said that in some states the scheme was being implemented successfully while in others the scheme is in very nascent stage of implementation. Regarding construction workers, the Hon'ble Minister said that some states have been implementing the Act and collecting the cess and has a good distribution mechanism while in many others states the implementation of the act is very poor. As regards to skill development Shri Fernandes said that it is a Herculean task and our efforts should be towards promoting multi-skill development. He mentioned that as a first step towards this Rs.160 crores have been sanctioned for the development of ITIs and 400 ITIs have been upgraded. He concluded his discussion by saying that all the State Governments should make effort to initiate steps to alleviate the conditions of unorganized workers. Thereafter he requested the representative of the state government to share their views on the four agenda point.

Chattisgarh

5. The Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Chattisgarh pointed out that the economic meltdown did not have much impact on the State. But he said that due to lack of alternative jobs, migration has been a perennial issue which the State Government is confronting and NREGS to a large extent has helped the State Government to stop the migration. On the issue of RSBY and construction workers the Hon'ble Minister said that the state government is in the process of initiating to implement these two acts.

Maharashtra

6. The Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Maharashtra, informed that because of global melt-down lakhs of workers have been affected and the government is trying to generate employment by expanding activities in the area of infrastructure development. On RSBY, he said that implementation has already been started and the state is also collecting cess and distributing the same to construction workers through various scheme.

Bihar

7. The Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Bihar said that economic melt-down has affected labour very adversely as many of them were returning from different states as return migrants. On the issue of RSBY and construction workers, the Minister said that the government has launched RSBY and also collecting cess under BOCW Act.

Kerala

8. The Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Kerala informed that more than 27 lakh people from Kerala are working abroad and if they are affected by the impact of global economic meltdown then it would affect Kerala's economy adversely. He also mentioned that in the wake of the current crisis, many traditional industries had become sick and factories have been closed down. For instance, there is continuous decline in cashew nut export after the global melt-down. He also mentioned that Kerala had taken a number of steps to enhance skill development of workers and for covering workers under RSBY.

Delhi

9. The Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Delhi, informed that due to global meltdown and closure and displacement of industries from urban areas to outskirts of the capital, there had been adverse impact on employment which had resulted in unemployment of a sizeable number of workers. On RSBY, he said that Government has already launched the scheme and as on 31st March 2008, 3070 workers have received benefit under the scheme.

10. With regard to Construction Workers Welfare Fund, the Minister said that though cess is collected, but no distributional scheme has been evolved owing to administrative problem. He also mentioned that the Delhi Government has initiated several steps for upgrading workers skills.

Manipur

11. Describing the problems of Manipur, the Hon'ble Minister of Labour mentioned that Manipur is a landlocked state and the state is blighted by regular bands, insurgency and blockades. All this has impacted the economy of the State very adversely.

12. He informed that Manipur Cabinet has cleared the RSBY and soon the programme will be launched in the state. With regard to construction workers, the Hon'ble Minister said that rules have been framed and 56 contractors had been registered. On skill development, the Hon'ble Minister said that several ITS have

been funded by the government of Manipur and technical staff are being employed on contractual basis. He said that efforts were on to provide job oriented courses.

Haryana

13. The representative of the Government of Haryana informed that in respect of skill development 19 ITIs had already been covered by programme for up- gradation and another 30 ITIs were likely to be covered. He also mentioned that special effort is being made by the government to provide training to unemployed youth. Further, he mentioned that Haryana was the first state to introduce RSBY and as of now around 30 lakh workers have been brought under the coverage of the programme. With regards to construction workers, he mentioned that Welfare Board has been set up and half a dozen schemes had been introduced to distribute the collected cess of Rs. 80 crores.

Orissa

14. The representative of Orissa government said that due to economic melt-down, the Birla Tyre Company had been closed down and another 130 industries are declared as sick units. On skill development not much serious effort have been undertaken by the state government.

Rajasthan

15. The representative of Rajasthan government said that the economic slowdown has affected the tourism and handicraft sector, and impact is negligible in case of other sectors. With regard to skill development it was mentioned that to impart motor driving skills driving training schools were set up under Rajasthan Mission of Livelihood. Further, it was mentioned that Mobile repair shops had also been set up. The representative informed that nothing had been done so far towards implementation of BOCW Act.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

16. The Islands being a agricultural economy, there is no perceptible impact of economic meltdown and tourism has not been affected. The construction workers Welfare Board has been set up and rules had been framed. Further, efforts are on to make one ITI as Centre of Excellence.

Madhya Pradesh

17. The representative of Madhya Pradesh Government informed that the economic slowdown has hardly affected the labourer of the state. With regard to construction workers, it was mentioned that a great deal of work had been done and the implementation of Welfare Fund is properly done.

Punjab

18. The representative of Punjab Government mentioned that the economic meltdown has made considerable adverse impact on employment and economy. He informed that welfare board for Construction Workers has been constituted and cess is being collected and the state is also implementing the RSBY.

Andhra Pradesh

19. The representative of Andhra Pradesh noted that the economic melt-down has affected the automobile industry severely. With regard to RSBY, the delegate mentioned that the government has not launched the programme as of now. The representative also informed that the state government has constituted a welfare board for construction workers and under various schemes cess collected is being distributed.

Gujarat

20. According to the Gujarat government representative, the major impact of economic meltdown has been on diamond industries as nearly 400 units have been closed down rendering 4 lakh workers unemployed. On skill development it was informed that the government is currently running 165 ITIs and 30 more are likely to be added in near future. On construction sector, the representative mentioned that the Wage Board is in operation and efforts are presently underway to set-up a Construction Development Skill Centre.

Tamil Nadu

21. It was reported by the delegate of the Tamil Nadu Government that economic melt-down has not much impact on employment in the state. However, schemes such as Rs. 1 per kg. Rice (Annapurna) and NREGS had helped in reducing any adverse impact of economic melt-down. The representative also stated that Construction Workers Welfare Board is in place and reported implementation of RSBY is very slow. He also informed that special job *melas* are organised for employment seeking workers.

Puducherry

22. Hon'ble Minister of Labour, Puducherry mentioned that global melt-down did not have much impact on the economy of the state. But still, it should be ensured that globalization, liberalization and privatization, should not affect the social security of individual workers. He mentioned that Pondicherry has constituted Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board and till now 25,905 workers have been enrolled as beneficiaries. With regard to skill development, he informed that the Government of Puducherry has upgraded 1396 Industrial Training Institutes and identified industry partners for the skill development of the workers.

Assam

23. It was reported by the delegate from Assam that economic melt-down has affected both Tea and Oil Industry. It was also reported that some progress has been made in respect of setting up of construction workers welfare board and collection of cess.

Chandigarh

24. It was reported by the delegate from Chandigarh, no retrenchment or lay off has happened because of economic slowdown.

West Bengal

25. It was reported by the Hon'ble Minister of Labour that economic meltdown has adversely affected export industry. He said that several steps such subsidized rice, oil, dal, etc are provided to poor families. On RSBY, the Minister said that the scheme is operational in two districts and efforts are underway to extend the scheme to all districts. He also said that the construction Workers Welfare Board is doing well in the State and the Government is undertaking various efforts to upgrade skills of the workers.

Uttar Pradesh

26. The delegate from U.P mentioned that due to economic melt down, export related sectors like apparel and metal have been affected. In respect of construction workers, the delegate said that the rules had been notified and steps are underway for collection of cess.

Uttarakhand

27. The delegate from the State said there is no serious impact of economic melt down on employment. With regard to RSBY he mentioned that it is implemented in two districts in the State. On construction workers act he mentioned that cess is collected and steps are underway to provide benefit to the construction workers. With regard to skill development, he said that 106 ITIs are presently running in various parts of the state.

Goa

28. The delegate from Goa said that economic meltdown has affected tourism industry. He also said that the RSBY has recently started in the state and 2 ITIs have been upgraded under skill development initiative.

Mizoram

29. The delegate from Mizoram informed that there is no visible impact of economic meltdown on economy and employment. He also said that RSBY is on the process of being implemented and one it is out of three has been upgraded as Centre of Excellence

The meeting with a vote of thanks to the Chair.
