

Heavy cost for low wages

Inspite of trade unions and labour laws, women are still being harassed in garment factories

ADITI SONI

Bangalore—The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill, 2006 holds no importance in garment industries in Bangalore. From verbal abuse to physical torture, everyday some female or the other is the victim of discrimination.

Cases in the past like suicides and miscarriages because women were not given the permission to leave during labour pain, are evident in the fact that women at workplaces are facing so many hardships.

Statistics available with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) say that the garment industry provides direct employment to over 35 million people. It contributes to 17 per cent of the country's exports. Though it is a matter of much joy for India, these 6 lakh women working in factories are forced to bear the pain in fear of losing their jobs.

According to the Garment and Textile Workers' Union (GATWU), 85 per cent of the workers are women from rural areas around the city and from far flung areas across Karnataka and neighboring states. "Male supervisors and co-workers

make it really difficult for women to even utter a word. It's really sad to see women working overtime and still getting wages less than men," said Rani, leader of All India Democratic Women Association.

But Pramila Nesargi, Ex Women Rights Chairman and presently a legal advisor to these employees, had entirely a different point of view. "It's wrong to blame the garment industries for everything. Out of six lakh women working, it's hardly 10 suicidal cases that come up every year. So it makes no sense to generalize the situation. Such working conditions can be seen in IT industries too".

Shivanna, Secretary, All India Garment and Textile Workers Union said that the fear factor forces women not to come out and complaint to anyone about the kind of treatment they are getting. "Most of the time, women never come up and complaint in fear of losing their jobs and hence the

inside picture remains hidden," he said.

Leela Scottish Lace factory, which was recently involved in a

experiences in the past " said Jyothi, Senior Welfare officer in Leela Scottish factory.

"It is just that even we have some

According to her, no matter how ill the worker is, she has to come, sit overtime, finish her work and then keep her mouth shut when it comes to the salary. Though the government has stated 110 rupees for skilled labour and 98 rupees per day for unskilled, till date, in six years she has never got more than Rs.55 perday..

"India is now becoming a liberalized economy. The factories think there is no need to implement labour laws. Hard earned rights of workers make no difference to anyone. Profit is the only motto today," said K Bimla, a leader of All India Democratic Women Association.

Regarding the implementation of labour laws, Secretary of Labour Ministry Mr. Nath (name changed) said that the ministry is doing its best to cater to the problems of workers. According to them, as soon as the case comes, they try to solve it, punish people whenever needed and solve it as soon as possible. "We deal with the cases not with men or women as our perspective, but rather as stated by the WorkmanAct", he said. If the complicated, they send it to higher authorities like Additional Commissioner.



Women working overtime in garment industries with less wages.

Pic by Google

controversy because the police beat up women workers, agreed that Labour Laws are fully implemented there. "From wages to working conditions, we make sure that everything is taken care off. We have separate committees for sexual harassment, grievances, health and safety, and canteen. We have never had any bad bad

higher authorities for whom we have to meet with deadlines. At times we even shout at our employees to make them work fast," said Ravi.K.Menon, General Manager, Leela Scottish Pvt Ltd.

Geetha, a factory worker, who refused to name her garment factory, said that women are not at all respected in such places.

Pic(k) of the week



The Janus-faced globalisation: On one hand where India is boasting about globalisation, the reality remains that few are wearing Levis and Reebok, while the multitude of the population still shiver in cold with nothing to cover themselves.

pic by Aditi Soni

Plastic plastic everywhere...

Bangalore reels under the weight of tonnes of plastic waste when authorities look at it the other way.

RITIKA KUMAR

Bangalore—Bangalore city is burdened with 250 tonnes of plastic waste everyday and the authorities are busy passing the buck to each other.

Mr M.N. Jayaprakash, Senior Environmental officer of Karnataka State Pollution Control board (KSPCB) said that the reason behind this problem is that manufactured plastic in the city has a density of less than five microns, which cannot be recycled.

According to the Plastic Manufacture, Sales and Usage Rules, 1999, manufacturing of plastic of a density of less than 20 microns is banned in the city. "We have banned nine industries from 2002 - 2006, which produced this such type of plastic." He said that the problem continues, as this thin type of plastic is coming from the neighboring cities and states

"This is under BBMP jurisdiction

to keep prevent it. As per our responsibility we have banned the use of polythene bags in Bannerghata Park, Cubbon Park and Lal Bagh."

The Deputy Commissioner of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara

Manufacturing of plastic of less than 20 microns density is banned in the city

Palike (BBMP) however was clueless, as he has been appointed recently. Interestingly, B.E. Govindaraju, head of the Waste Management Department, has also been designated recently and therefore he too had no information.

Putturaju, Public Relation officer

(PRO) BBMP, said, "As the officials are newly appointed, they are still understanding the nature of the work."

"BBMP is responsible to dispose off the garbage. We cannot control the coming of plastic from other areas," he added. However he added, "We are planning to get special compressing machines. These machines would squeeze tonnes of plastic into a small mass of kilograms," Putturaju said. He added that the BBMP is also planning to regularize congested areas like the city market by allotting vacant space to them, so that the waste can be segregated into biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.

On one hand, KSPCB see recycling plastic as a practical solution, but on the other the PRO at BBMP, said, "we do not encourage recycling plastic as the end product is chemically harmful for the users."

Neglected lakes of Kengeri-a matter of concern for residents

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA

Bangalore—Hosikere and Dubasipalaya lakes of Kengeri area are in bad shape; Lake Development Authority of Karnataka (LDA) is yet to take it under its jurisdiction for up gradation. Adding to it, the repeated complaints of the local residents regarding this matter before LDA goes unheard. K.R.Sudhir, the ex-councilor of this area said that both these lakes are plagued with problems. "The

Hosikere Lake is now filled up with Hyacinth. Encroachers are intruding into the space and the water level is falling down", he added. He informed that though the bore well water supply is done from the water of this lake and also it plays a vital role in maintaining the water table in this area, still LDA is apathetical in its approach to take over this lake under its fold. He also said that the residents have given three to four written complains before the

LDA to take up these two lakes for up gradation. "Everyone is passing the buck. When we go to Forest dept., they say that it's the responsibility of the LDA.

Dhananjaya, a local resident said that their repeated complains before LDA don't get a favourable response. "Immersion of idols and encroachment are the two factors which cause major problems", he added.

D.S.Umesh, the Assistant Chief Engineer of LDA said that these

two lakes are presently maintained by the Forest Department and LDA has no plans to take it under its own fold.

"There are 2700 lakes in Karnataka and you are talking about only two lakes. LDA is facing the financial crunch to take all lakes for up gradation. We have take decisions according to priorities", he added. Answering to a question that whether Hosikere and Dubasipalaya lakes are in their priority list or not, he informed that

all lakes were in their priority list. But, he informed that there were no plans to take these two lakes under the up gradation project for next one year. Regarding the complaints given by the local residents, he said that they have not received any complaints from the Kengeri.

M.Krishnamurthy, the Range Forest Officer said that these two lakes were maintained properly. "We don't receive any complaints from the Kengeri people", he added.