Pakistani union wins big victory for workers' wages

Workers building a World Bank-funded dam in Tarbela, Pakistan will receive additional wages, thanks to the efforts of a BWI-affiliated trade union federation in the country.

According to the Pakistan Federation of Building and Wood Workers (PFBWW), the country's labour department earlier this month ordered Sinohydro Corporation, the company tasked to build the Tarbela Dam Project, to provide its 650 workers additional wages amounting to PKR 70 million (USD 444,870) for working during holidays. This was after PFBWW and the site-level Awami Labour Union (ALU) complained that the said workers were asked to work during the provincial government's implementation of a COVID-19 lockdown.

PFBWW explained that the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa declared as public holidays the lockdown period from 24 March until the end of May 2020. However, Sinohydro's workers who continued to work during the lockdown received wages not compliant with the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Factories Act, which requires employers to pay its workers three times their wages for working on holidays.

PFBWW General Secretary Aslam Adil called the labour department's ruling as "a major victory" for the workers, whom he said continued to work during the lockdown last year and were deprived of visiting or returning to their families.

"This is a major victory for the workers and the union. We are thankful to the labour department for finding merit in our submission and awarding additional wages to the workers as mandated by the law. Pakistan's construction industry is increasingly viewed as an important component in the country's economic recovery efforts. Thus, it is important that while pursuing growth, workers' rights are not compromised. We must be recognised as an equal partner in the road to recovery," Adil said.

BWI
54 route des Acacias
CH-1227 Carouge GE
Switzerland

TEL +41 22 827 37 77
FAX +41 22 827 37 70
info(at)bwint.org