

APFUTU Raises Concerns Over Labour Laws in Meeting with NA Speaker

Islamabad: The General Secretary of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU), Comrade Zia Syed, met with Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, to discuss recent developments in the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) 2012 and broader labour policy issues.

During the meeting, Zia Syed highlighted growing concerns among workers regarding recent changes to the IRA 2012. He stressed that the government must ensure a balance between the Constitution of Pakistan, the core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) ratified by Pakistan, and the obligations under the GSP Plus agreement.

According to Syed, these frameworks are designed to safeguard workers' rights; however, their current implementation lacks harmony and fails to adequately protect labour interests.

He further criticized the existing labour code, stating that it includes several provisions that are detrimental to workers and do not align with international labour standards.

The meeting concluded with a call for the government to review and reform labour laws to ensure stronger protection and fair treatment for workers across the country.

Christian Labour Organisations Participate in Tripartite Labour Conference for the First Time

Islamabad Christian labour organisations from across Pakistan, including Vision and the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), marked their first-ever participation in a Tripartite Labour Conference held in Islamabad.

During the conference proceedings, representatives of both Christian labour organisations highlighted their efforts to build connections with international Christian workers' bodies. They disclosed that applications for affiliation had been submitted to several such organisations; however, no responses have yet been received.

Speaking at the session, GFTU representatives noted that while the federation has established working relationships with a number of international labour organisations including the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the International Labour Network of Solidarity and Struggles (ILNSS), and GSEE Greece it currently lacks formal engagement with international Christian labour networks.



TRIPARTITE LABOUR CONFERENCE HELD IN ISLAMABAD AFTER 18 YEARS

Islamabad: The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development convened a tripartite labour conference in Islamabad after a gap of 18 years, bringing together key stakeholders from the government, employers, and workers' organizations.

The three-day conference was attended by Chaudhry Salik Hussain Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Union (EU), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), the Employers Federation of Pakistan, and several trade union bodies. Among the prominent labour representatives were President Comrade Samina Irfan and General Secretary Comrade Zia Syed of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU).

Participants from various government departments, trade unions, federations, and employers' associations took part in detailed discussions on a wide range of issues. These included ILO conventions ratified by Pakistan, EU trade relations, GSP Plus status, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, labour laws, and trade union activities.

The conference aimed to strengthen cooperation among tripartite stakeholders and improve labour standards in the country. Participants emphasized the importance of dialogue in addressing workers' issues and promoting fair labour practices.

Stakeholders unanimously agreed that such tripartite conferences should be held regularly without delay to provide a platform for all parties to engage on key labour matters and work collectively for the betterment of workers and the country.

On the sidelines of the conference, Comrade Zia Syed, along with delegations from other trade union federations, met with the federal minister and raised pressing issues faced by workers, urging immediate government attention.

Labour Day and the Harsh Reality of Workers in Pakistan



By Comrade Zia Syed

Every year on May 1st, Pakistan celebrates Labour Day with speeches and slogans in support of workers. But for millions of labourers across the country, the day passes like any other marked by hardship, low wages, and insecurity.

The Constitution of Pakistan clearly grants workers the right to form unions under Article 17. It also prohibits forced labour (Article 11) and promises equality (Article 25). On paper, everything exists. In reality, very little works.

Pakistan has signed dozens of international labour conventions and committed under GSP+ to protect workers' rights. Courts have also issued judgments in favour of labour. Yet, on the ground, workers continue to struggle for even basic rights.

Union membership is shrinking. Employers resist independent unions and often create their own "pocket unions" to protect business interests. Labour inspections are weak or absent. Most workers, especially in the informal sector, remain completely unprotected.

There was a time when strong labour leaders stood with workers and influenced policy. Leaders like Pirzada Imtiaz Syed Gujrati played a crucial role in shaping labour laws, especially for vulnerable sectors such as brick kilns and small industries. Governments once listened to such voices.

Today, that connection is broken.

Recent labour reforms, including changes to the Industrial Relations Act and the Punjab Labour Code 2026, have created serious concerns. Trade unions claim these laws were passed without consultation and do not reflect ground realities. Instead of strengthening workers' rights, many believe these laws make unionization and collective bargaining more difficult.

Workers are now facing increasing job insecurity. The right to strike is restricted. Getting union recognition has become harder. At the same time, employers appear to receive greater protection under the law.

Economic pressures have made the situation worse. Rising inflation, high taxes, and poor implementation of wage laws have reduced workers' purchasing power. The shift from piece-rate work to minimum wage has been poorly managed, leaving many skilled workers uncertain about their future.

Another major issue is awareness. Labour laws are mostly in English, and many workers do not even know their rights. In the past, unions helped bridge this gap but with weaker unions, workers are more isolated than ever.

Perhaps most disappointing is the lack of recognition for those who dedicated their lives to labour rights. Pakistan has not properly acknowledged leaders like Pirzada Imtiaz Syed Gujrati, who made lasting contributions to workers' welfare.

Labour Day should not just be about speeches. It should be about action.

The government must engage with trade unions, ensure proper implementation of labour laws, make laws accessible in Urdu, and develop policies based on real conditions not theoretical models.

Until then, the promise of workers' rights in Pakistan will remain unfulfilled.

TUIPAW to Hold Asia-Pacific International Conference in Pakistan in 2026



The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), through its public sector wing, the Trade Union International of Public & Allied Workers, has announced plans to organize its Asia-Pacific international conference in Pakistan in August or September 2026. This will mark the first time TUIPAW hosts a major regional event in the country.

The conference aims to bring together workers, trade unions, and social movements from across the Asia-Pacific region to confront growing challenges posed by governments and corporate interests. Key objectives include strengthening international solidarity, promoting more coordinated and assertive union actions, and reinforcing the role of the working class in struggles against privatization, job cuts, and downsizing issues that continue to impact government employees and workers throughout Asia.

The exact dates and venue for the Asia-Pacific conference will be announced once regional security and stability conditions are fully assessed.

ILNSS to Hold First Asia-Pacific International Conference in 2026

South Asia: The International Labour Network of Solidarity & Struggles (ILNSS) has announced plans to hold its first Asia-Pacific international conference in October or November 2026, to be hosted in a Southeast Asian country Pakistan. This marks the first time ILNSS will organize an event in the region.

The conference aims to unite workers and social movements against attacks from governments and corporate interests worldwide. Its objectives include promoting union actions of a combative and internationalist nature, strengthening the working class in the fight against capital and governments, and fostering international solidarity.

Participants will also focus on building anti-capitalist, self-managing, democratic, and environmentally conscious unionism. The event will address global challenges including chauvinism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression.

ILNSS holds international meetings every two years, collectively updating a manifesto developed by nearly 200 affiliated trade union organizations and movements. The upcoming Asia-Pacific conference will continue this tradition, offering a platform for collaboration and strategic planning among workers' organizations.

The exact dates and venue for the conference in the Asia region will be announced once the regional security and peace situation is confirmed.

APFUTU Files Court Case to Reclaim Educational Institutions in Punjab

Punjab, Pakistan The newly elected head of APFUTU, Comrade Zia Syed, has initiated legal proceedings against religious figures Mr. and Mrs. Syed Shifa Ullah Shah Bukhari over the alleged illegal takeover of two major educational institutions in the districts of Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat.

According to APFUTU sources, the institutions were allegedly brought under control through forged documents and with the backing of influential political authorities, including a provincial minister. Comrade Zia Syed has submitted all relevant documentation before the local court, requesting that the institutions and their associated land be returned to their rightful owners and beneficiaries.

APFUTU maintains that the case represents a broader issue within Pakistan, where disputes over property ownership often involve allegations of falsified documentation and misuse of influence. The organisation noted that many such cases remain pending in courts, with original owners continuing to struggle for justice and legal protection.

The disputed institutions, described as among the largest in the region, have reportedly been under contested control since 2021. APFUTU leadership emphasized that the case is not only about reclaiming property but also about upholding transparency, justice, and the rule of law.

“This is a crucial case between truth and falsehood,” said Comrade Zia Syed. “APFUTU is committed to pursuing justice and ensuring that rightful ownership is restored.”

The organisation reaffirmed its resolve to continue the legal battle and advocate for the rights of affected stakeholders.

IndustriALL HRDD Conference Concludes in Lahore

A two-day Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) conference (20262029), organized by IndustriALL Global Union, successfully concluded in Lahore, bringing together affiliates from across Pakistan.

The conference focused on the concept of Human Rights Due Diligence, its global significance, and the critical role of trade unions. Speakers emphasized that effective worker participation is essential for the successful implementation of HRDD and that trade unions must play a central role in the process. Briefings were also given on new policy developments by the European Union and OECD, along with discussions on identifying human rights risks, remediation mechanisms, and responsible business conduct.

The role of trade unions in ensuring workers' rights within HRDD processes was discussed in depth, including promoting gender equality, ensuring transparency in supply chains, conducting risk mapping, and safeguarding fundamental labour rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Punjab Minister for Commerce & Industry Visits APFUTU Head Office



Sialkot: Punjab Minister for Commerce and Industry, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, visited the head office of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU), where he met with the federation's Head, Comrade Zia Syed.

During the meeting, the Minister appreciated the federation's longstanding efforts in combating child labour, bonded labour, forced labour, and modern-day slavery. He praised APFUTU as a leading organization working tirelessly for the rights of underprivileged and marginalized workers.

The Minister congratulated Comrade Zia Syed on his recent appointment as General Secretary of the federation following the latest congress, as well as his transition from Acting General Secretary to General Secretary.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain also shared the government's vision for expanding technical education across Punjab. He highlighted the increasing demand for skilled labour in European countries and the Gulf region, emphasizing the need to increase student enrollment in technical training institutes to meet international labour market requirements.

He expressed hope that the new leadership of APFUTU would actively support this initiative and continue working in close collaboration with the government to promote workers' welfare and skill development.



APFUTU Delegation Meets Punjab Labour Minister, Submits Charter of Demands

Lahore: The General Secretary of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU), Comrade Zia Syed, led a delegation to meet Punjab Labour Minister Mansha Ullah Butt and submitted a charter of demands ahead of May Day 2026.

The APFUTU delegation included prominent union representatives Comrade Fiaz Ahmad Gondal, Muhammad Naveed Shaikh, and Zulfiqar Ali. The meeting focused on key labour issues affecting workers across the province.

During the discussion, union leaders raised concerns over advance payments (peshgi) to workers, the implementation of minimum wage laws, and the need to move towards a living wage. They also highlighted widespread violations of labour laws in Punjab and expressed strong reservations about the proposed labour code.

Comrade Zia Syed questioned the role of international consultants in drafting labour policies without adequate understanding of local conditions and ground realities faced by workers. He emphasized that such critical legislation should be developed in consultation with trade unions and other domestic stakeholders.

The delegation also pointed to the rising cost of living, increased taxes, and high utility bills, stating that these factors are placing an additional burden on workers in the province.

In response, the provincial labour minister assured the delegation of his willingness to engage with all stakeholders to address workers' concerns and work towards improving labour conditions in Punjab.



APFUTU Reports International Solidarity Efforts to Executive Committee

Sialkot: The President of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU), Comrade Samina Irfan, presented a report on international solidarity activities during a recent executive committee meeting.



She informed members that during the first three months of 2026, APFUTU sent solidarity messages to workers' organizations in Venezuela, Cuba, and Kuwait, reflecting the federation's ongoing engagement with trade unions in these countries.

Comrade Samina Irfan emphasized that maintaining international solidarity remains a key priority for APFUTU, as it strengthens the global labor movement and promotes mutual support among workers' organizations worldwide.

She also expressed concern over recent international developments, condemning attacks that resulted in the deaths of schoolchildren in Iran, and reiterated the federation's stance on protecting human rights and opposing violence against civilians.

APFUTU Reports Flood Relief Operations and International Solidarity to Executive Committee



Sialkot: The President of the All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions (APFUTU), Comrade Samina

Irfan, presented a report on flood relief efforts and international solidarity during a recent executive committee meeting.

Comrade Samina stated that in 2025, severe floods caused by heavy rains and water released from India's rivers affected large areas of Pakistan. APFUTU provided assistance to a total of 13,849 families, distributing medicine, food, books, and winter clothing. She emphasized that due to climate change, Pakistan faces increasingly severe floods each year, and while the government and other charitable organizations provide support, APFUTU remains committed to standing with affected communities during these crises.

Highlighting international solidarity, Comrade Samina noted that UNIFOR Canada provided assistance to 537 families last year, representing a significant show of support. The APFUTU executive committee formally extended thanks to the UNIFOR leadership for their contributions and solidarity.