

Corporate Social Responsibility towards Occupational Health Interests of workers- A Myth

The supporters of imperialist neo-liberal capitalist economic policies have been incessantly touting about the so-called virtues of the corporate responsibility and corporate social responsibility in order to make swallow the bitter pill of imperialist corporatisation, with such lofty slogans and opinions.

However the fact remains that the so-called corporate responsibility towards its workers or the C.S.R towards the society is nothing but a myth invented to hood-wink people.

The episode of Hindustan Unilever LTD at Kodaikanal exposes this myth.

Around 591 workers of its Kodaikanal thermometer plant have been fighting for a compensation from the HUL management, who were adversely affected to the exposure of toxic mercury at the work place. They suffered various health set-backs related to mercury exposure. Their legal battle for compensation has taken 15 yrs, leading to an out-side court settlement of the Madras High Court. The workers who fell ill after working in the thermometer factory received little government support. And the judicial system could not find time to settle the dispute even after 15 yrs of the dispute.

But it was the public outcry of the environmental activists and their aggressive campaign in India and abroad, particularly the sensational video by rapper Sofia Ashraf which went viral in social media, has forced the HUL management to make an out of court settlement with its workers, exclusively to lessen a harsh indictment from the Madras high court and heavy penalty for soil remediation in Kodaikanal., and purely in order to obtain leniency from the courts towards its liability of soil remediation, for having damaged the Kodaikanal's fragile forest and aquatic ecosystems.

The pollution issue of Kodaikanal arose from the open sale of 5.3 tonnes of mercury contaminated scrap from the HUL factory to a dealer, a several tones of scrap was moved by the HUL Company from its yard in 2001.

Despite the occurrence of Bhopal UCIL carbide environmental disaster, the rulers in policy making pay low priority to occupational health concern of worker or to the menacing problem of environmental pollution in disastrous proportions; to the advantage and furtherance of the interests of the big-capital.

This is how the myth of corporate responsibility and C.S.R is blown up. Now the question of environmental remediation and the standards to be adopted at Kodaikanal still remains to be answered!

The Migrated Laboureres of AP in confinement at Delhi

The rural distress caused by the crises in agricultural sector, besides the draught conditions have forced many an agricultural families in A.P, to migrate to distant places as manual unskilled labour. Among such families are 18 families 50 people of Podili and Konatla mandals of Prakasam districts of A.P, were taken to Delhi as workers in the construction sector as helpers in masonry work and were forced to work for 17 hours a day viz from 5.00 A.M to 9.00 P.M every day, and they are not being paid with wages from 3 months when asked for wages these workers are being physically attacked and beaten by the Contractors cum Maistry who took them to the area of Nerella near Delhi.

With the intervention of an activist of an NGO, these indentured labourers were saved from the clutches of the Contractor cum Maistry.

Such is the plight of labourers in the unorganized sector of our neo-liberalised India under the policies of imperialist globalization, under the 'development' of foreign capital.
