

Bio-Metric Attendance: An attempt to enslave the workers

WORKERS ! UNITE AT ONCE UNDER ONE BANNER

Comrade workers of Eastern Coalfields Limited,

Despite severe protest by the workers and unions, the Jhanjhra Area Management is implementing an anti-worker *biometric attendance system* i.e. an attendance system by way of biometric scanning of eyes and the whole face. Apart from this biometric attendance system, there is also a hurried move to install CCTV inside the mines and offices and thereafter, provide the workers GPRS-enabled caps so that the management can keep the workers and employees under continuous strict surveillance. Alcohol detection machine is being installed, too. These moves have cast a shadow of suspicion on the intention of the Management that was further strengthened by the front page news published on 30th August 2014 in the Bangla daily "*Samvad*". It seems that the central government and the management are both hand in glove against workers and hatching a conspiracy against them. The management claims that all these measures are being taken considering the welfare of the workers. This further strengthens the doubts. When the management, contrary to its character, is seen acting in the workers benefit, then the doubt is further cemented. It is well known that the concern shown by the Jackals for sheep is not out of any love or sympathy and the real intention is something else. The dictatorial and undemocratic stance taken by management is further confirming to this. Let's see why it is necessary for the workers to oppose the biometric attendance and CCTV installation.

First, via this system of attendance, the bio-metric machine will scan our faces and eyes and keep them online on computer/internet. This fact *in itself* is illegal, dangerous and worth pondering. Why? Firstly, because the scanned photograph can be, intentionally or unintentionally, misused by any agency (the one that will be privy or have access to the data.). For instance, if any terrorist organization gains access to this data, then it can be used with catastrophic repercussion. We would like to raise the question: in such an eventuality, who will be responsible? The situation accentuates in case of female workers and employees. It will cast severe question mark on their integrity and respect. Keeping these things in mind only, in a similar instance i.e. *Adhaar Card* (Unique Identification System) the Supreme Court gave a verdict, in which, it categorically said that forcibly implementing the biometric identification infringes on the fundamental right of privacy. It is a well established covenant world over that without permission no one, not even the Government, can keep physical identification of a person. The constitution of India, as is well known, prohibits any agency/management/institution, what so ever it may be, from keeping such data as physical identification of a person under its control and access without one's due permission

Second Fact, we do not know, nor the Management has informed us on the radiations emitted by the scanning machine, but, on the other hand, the workers will have to undergo scanning of their faces and eyes twice a day. Very Strange! Who knows what will be the impact of it on our eyes and faces!! Whether management has undertaken concrete scientific investigation about it, we do not know this, too. We demand to know who will be responsible for the possible long term deadly after-effects of the Scanning Machine's radiation.

Third Fact Apart from the above, let's see how it will have impact on the extra time involved for the attendance of the worker. Let's assume that there are 100 workers standing in front of the machine to punch-in their attendance, if one worker takes minimum of 30 seconds (though in reality it may take much more), then for the last worker it will take extra 50 minutes to punch-in his/her attendance. That means he/she will have to leave for the work 50 minutes before the schedule. Same will be the case for punch-out. Who will be responsible for this wastage of time and who will compensate for this loss?

Fourth Fact the confidence of workers is vital. In case of the machine malfunctioning or it being out of order, or if it fails to record attendance even after saying "thank you" i.e. in case of false recording of attendance, and hence in case of *attendance dispute* arising there from, what proof will the worker have in his possession to claim that he was present?

Fifth Fact similarly what will happen for driller, dresser, explosive carrier and short firer? As is evident from the design of things appearing through biometric, pressure on them to enhance workload is bound to increase.

Sixth As is becoming as clear as day light from the above facts, it is ludicrous as to why the management is wasting at all a fortune as big as thousands of lakhs or crores of rupees on installing the biometric system. It has been clarified above that there is no worth, as is being claimed over board by the management, in installing this machine; on the contrary, it is anti-workers, dangerous and one that will fuel unnecessary debate and unrest. Actually the main *behind the curtain* intention of the ECL managements is to have total control over the life of workers that is simply excessive and unnecessary. The way Jhanjhra management is after this lays weight to suspicion.

Seventh One of the arguments given by management is that it will increase production. The motive of installing CCTV inside the mines and offices, too, has to be seen in this light. In reality, the intention of the management is to increase the production *by way of excessively* pressurising the workers. The truth, however, is that precondition of increasing production is that workers must have a joyful family life. It is vital that the worker gets the necessary 8 hours of leisure, their homes are clean and healthy, they get proper transport and there are such safety measures as are necessary to make the mines safe for the workers so that they work without *safety related* strains in their mind, and as a result, they are able to work without any pressure or duress. But the management seldom thinks of bringing these qualitative changes in their lives. On the contrary, the management by all means tries to deprive the workers the fruits of gigantic leap hitherto taken in the field of labour-productivity and always does whatever it can to to convert the workers into an appendage of machine i.e. aims at turning the *human* worker just into an animal. Moreover, they want to control every breath of workers to increase the production. This anti-worker stance of management is evident everywhere. The management hitherto has not been able to even provide clean drinking water to the homes of the workers. Electricity supply is simply pathetic and the workers quarters are such that one cannot even use gas cylinder. The state of cleanliness of their colonies is an open secret. Under such inhuman conditions, how can workers increase production?

Brothers ! The attitude of the management is becoming bad to worse. The experience of the movement against biometric in Jhanjhra explains that ECL management is not ready to listen to the workers, to say the least. Perhaps they think, however they behave and whatever they order, the workers will follow their diktat. The management needs to be told that they should not live in this delusion. The history of working class is witness to this fact that the workers have always resisted the dictatorial attitude of the owners and managers of capital. Today the workers of entire coal belt and particularly that of Jhanjhra will have to unite against this dictatorial attitude of the management. The most militant union of the coal belt — Khan Mazdoor Karmachari Union (*IFTU-Sarwahara*) [Mine Workers Employee Union (IFTU-Sarwahara)] appeals to all of you that if we do not agree to our being treated as and turned into animals, then the only path left for us is that of struggle. Comrade workers! Come and unite under one flag and commence a new struggle. We are convinced that if all the workers of ECL unite into one entity, then we are more than capable to forcibly bring this anti-worker *obstinate, intransigent and stubborn* management to negotiation table and force it to accept a roll back of these measures as well as all other such anti-workers measures, policies and diktats hitherto taken.

**With Revolutionary Greetings,
Central Committee,
Khan MazdoorKarmachari Union (KMKU)
IFTU (Sarwahra)**