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MYANMAR'S COUP D'ETATABSTRACT

And It's Effect on Labour Class

*Authored By - Maanavi Gupta
& Ishika Sharma*

ABSTRACT

Present study is based on the effect of military coup over labourers of Myanmar. And it elaborate also on the topic that How the coup has impacted the loss of job of labourers and the working hours of the Labour. It has also highlighted the condition of women labourers in that scenario. Sectors such as construction and garment which are the major driving force of Myanmar employment had also suffered a critical hit due to the coup d'état. This research paper also analyses the military activities of junta troop which lead to civil resistance. And its effect on employment and labour class.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, we can see that Myanmar has experience a drastic growth within its labour movement and various labour related activities promoting social activism, making workers aware of their rights and workers solidarity in garment factories. But recently in Myanmar, the military seized power and arrested dozens of civil leaders. Which led to military coup in Myanmar.

According to BRITANNICA, **coup d'état**, also called **coup**, the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group¹. Similar like this happened in Myanmar, On Before dawn February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military seize control of the government and overthrew the government. The military has arrested NLD leader Aung San SuuKi President U Win Myint and Cabinet minister. Consequently, nationwide, political demonstrations and workers strike over the military takeover has been dealt with violence, intimidation and harassment by the security personnel. The political crisis has wrecked the economy and due to Covid 19 the recovery of economy was at halt. The World Bank has also downgraded the Myanmar's GDP

¹[BRITANNICA], [coup d'etat | Definition, Examples, & Facts | Britannica] , [12/09/2022]

from 5.9% to -10%, the reason behind this drastic falling of GDP are the demonstration, workers strike, and military actions, as well as mobility restrictions, and ongoing disruption of key services, banking, logistics, and internet services. The Military Coup has rapid impact on the working hours of the employees and also employment losses. The three hardest hit Sector are construction, garments, and tourism and hospitality.

HISTORY OF LABOUR RELATION

In the past, State was administering Labour relation in an authoritarian manner, labour unions were unlawful, and labour leaders were sent to prison and exiled themselves to Thailand. In the starting of 2011 the military government provided semi government veil to the government. Since 2012 workers movement started and protested against the military influence, and voice, the dissatisfaction with their wages and benefits in the garment and footwear industry, which lead to numerous strikes in the nation. Many of the strikes are in non-union factories and a successful strike is often the impetus to build a factory union.

The National League of Democracy did not priorities labourers rights. Since the military era, labour Minister was not replaced. All the progress that has been done in worker's wages and working condition of labourers was forced by strikes. The legislature ignores the union proposal for statutory changes in the labour policies. And in addition, COVID-19 has given employers significant power and leverage in dismissing workers and targeting union leaders with overt animus.

Thousands of workers lost their job due to decreased demand for garments by Western brands. And since the pandemic, the labour movement has been institutional weakened.

LOSS OF JOB DUE TO MILITARY COUP.

According to ILO, Myanmar's labour market conditions are deteriorating since the military took power in February. Employment contracted are 6 percent in the second quarter of 2021 as compare to the fourth quarter of 2020 which denotes 1.2 million job losses. In the first half of 2021, estimated 14% of working hours were lost which is equal to loss of job of 2.2 million full-time workers.

“Myanmar was already facing economic stress with jobs and livelihoods under threat as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However the estimates show a serious and rapid deterioration in employment in the first half of this year on a scale that could drive many in Myanmar into deep poverty,” said Mr Donglin Li, ILO Myanmar Liaison Officer/Representative.²

The employment in construction, garments and tourism and hospitality faces the 35%, 31% and 25% decrease respectively in the employment.

IMPACT ON THE WORKING HOURS OF THE EMPLOYEES.

Due to the military coup, overall numbers of working hours are affected. The hours worked in an economy decreases not only when workers lose their jobs and work zero hours but also when workers that remain in employment work for few hours.

Main source of Income for millions of workers in Myanmar is the labour income and hence these worker cannot afford to be without work for a longer period of time. Consequently, at the same time the circumstances since February 1, 2021, have forced or incentivized a large share of these workers to reduced their working hours, which led to associated income loss and consequently affecting the labour market which was already under sever strain due to Covid 19 pandemic.

This brief estimates that 14 per cent of total working hours were lost between the fourth quarter 2020 and the second quarter 2021 (figure 1). While the number of weekly hours worked was 787 million in the fourth quarter 2020, the number dropped to 706 million in the first quarter 2021 and further to 680 million in the second quarter 2021, indicating a continuous deterioration in labour market conditions since the military takeover. The overall contraction in working hours during this period is equivalent to the working time of 2.2 million full-time workers, assuming a 48- hour work week.³

²[International labourorganisation] ILO assessment: ILO estimates reveal heavy job losses in the first half of 2021 in Myanmar, [12/09/2022]

³[international labourorganisation], wcms_814681.pdf, [12/09/2022]

The condition of labour union was deteriorating day by day. Trade union and workers were against coup join the national protest to restore their semi democratic government. Most of the trade union leaders, are presumably hiding out of cautious and safe houses. The current president of confederation of trade union of Myanmar was exiled to Thailand for a decade. The military has begun to impose restrictions against the public gathering, including curfews and limits to gathering.

IMPACT ON WOMEN WORKERS

The coup d'état which began on the 1st day of February has considerably changed or reshaped the political arena for gender equality struggles norms in Myanmar. In the past last few decades the political norms for the women political activities in Myanmar and participation for the same has grown increasingly diverse and stronger. The presence of many international organizations and donors such as United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda and etc enhanced the visibility of gender and equality concern on public policies. The military turnover has abruptly quashed the going activities and has placed many social workers who work for the benefit of human rights and defenders of female politician at the risk of the arrest, violence and even death to their families.⁴

In phrases of each working-hour and employment losses, women are anticipated to be impacted greater than men for the reason of the military takeover. Female workers experienced working-hour losses of 15 per cent among the fourth quarter 2020 and the second quarter 2021, compared to twelve per cent for male workers. During the identical period, 580,000 women are anticipated to have lost employment, with the employment loss of greater than 7 per cent, as compared to much less than 6 per cent for men.

IMPACT ON OTHER KEY SECTORS

Due to the coup d'état while the overall impact on the employment hours and the job loss has been extensive these has led to much more detrimental state of many sectors and enterprises among them leading to a huge impact on Myanmar's economy. Industrial and urban sector concerned enterprise have suffered a major hit due to the military demonstration, work

⁴Anonymous. (2021a). "We are hard to ignore now": Women's participation in Myanmar's resistance movement from February - March 2021. On file with authors.

stoppage, violence and death.⁵ Furthermore the stagnation of foreign direct investment has aggravated the work situation in many sectors.⁶

Construction, which was a key sector for job advent within the current years leading up to the pandemic, has been the maximum impacted industry.⁷ Between the fourth quarter 2020 and the second quarter 2021, employment within the sector reduced in size by an estimated 35 per cent (about 400,000) and work hours reduced by sixty-four per cent. The construction enterprises have suffered from a crumble in overseas investments and the suspension of major constructing and the world-over-financed infrastructure projects.⁸

The other paramount sectors which have been affected due to this political environment are the garment enterprises. The garment sector was the main department which provide for the export oriented growth during Myanmar's post-2011 political and economic transition.⁹ From the year 2012-2019 the value of the garment export of Myanmar increased five times more amounting to 28% of its total export regime.¹⁰ Not only had that Myanmar gained the preferential access to the European market under the EBA scheme which was the main driving force for its garment export success. In the consequence of the success in Myanmar garment sector The garment industries has served as the country's fastest growing source for decent work opportunities. Its ascent highlights the essential livelihood and monetary mobilization possibilities afforded by Myanmar's starting period, especially for the younger women constituting about ninety percent of Myanmar's garment workers, a maximum of them rural-to-city migrants.

⁵ S. Mahtani and A. Nachemson, "As Myanmar unravels after military coup, people flee cities for rural backwaters", Washington Post, 15 April 2021; H. Thein and M. Gillan, "How the coup is destroying Myanmar's economy," East Asia Forum, 23 June 2021; "Thousands flee Myanmar industrial zone amid fears of more bloodshed", Reuters, 17 March 2021.

⁶ There was no reported foreign investment of permitted projects in April 2021. Source: Myanmar Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

⁷ From 2015 to 2019, employment in construction grew by 20 per cent compared to overall employment growth of just 1.1 per cent. Source: ILO estimates from Myanmar Labour Force Survey and ILO, ILOSTAT Database.

⁸ Y. Muramatsu, "Myanmar coup grinds cross-border infrastructure projects to halt", Nikkei Asia, 3 March 2021; "Myanmar's economy in freefall under military regime", The Irrawaddy, 22 April 2021.

⁹ Squeezed From Two Sides: Myanmar Garment Workers Caught Between Covid and the Coup March 31, 2022 By Meghan Sullivan Squeezed From Two Sides: Myanmar Garment Workers Caught Between Covid and the Coup | Center for Strategic and International Studies (csis.org)

¹⁰ CSIS NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ASIA Squeezed From Two Sides: Myanmar Garment Workers Caught Between Covid and the Coup March 31, 2022 By Meghan Sullivan Squeezed From Two Sides: Myanmar Garment Workers Caught Between Covid and the Coup | Center for Strategic and International Studies (csis.org)

Due to the coup d'état the Myanmar garment sector has been hit by a tremendous supply and demand shock. Many global brands and franchise including H&M and Primark ceased working in Myanmar from February in light of the military activities. This caused a great decrease in global demand, which led to a shortage in the cash flow. Even the transportation disruption caused due to revolts was a great factor which exacerbated the closure of factories and their layoff.¹¹

Consequently, it was estimated by the Federation of General Workers in Myanmar that one in three garment factories have been set to shutter their doorways in 2021. Additionally, the price of the kyat dropped precipitously following the coup, reaching a historic low in September 2021. This similarly decreased the buying power of garment workers, whose wages had already eroded from the effect of Covid-19.¹²

Not only these instances but the coup also created a political pressure and an environment of uncertainty and unreliability that placed all the sectors in a difficult position as the weight of political activities was heavier than that of economic security consideration. For many workers commuting to work place became a major concern as the route to their offices required navigation through the conflict zone or military check points which were governed by military law.¹³

Moreover, labor unions have emerged at the vanguard of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which inspires employees to forgo income-earning possibilities to take part in general strikes. These unions' outspoken complaint of the junta has rendered garment employees' targets of manufacturing facility raids and arrests via way of means of protection forces trying to quash anti-coup resistance.¹⁴

Here it is the laborers who have to bear the consequences from the fallout from the junta's reaction to anti-coup exertions activism. Following the emergence of the CDM, the junta outlawed 16 exertions businesses and arrested distinguished union leaders. These actions have led to cut the union abilities to monitor the situation and advocate for sensible conditions.

¹¹ Employment in Myanmar since the military takeover: A rapid impact assessment ILO brief
wcms_814681[1].pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ E. Paton, "Myanmar's Defiant Garment Workers Demand That Fashion Pay Attention", The New York Times, 12 March 2021.

¹⁴ Myanmar's garment exports to the world recorded a six-fold increase in terms of value from 2015 to 2019. Source: ILO calculations based on UNCTADstat

CURRENT CIVIL REISITANCE

The coup has led to a civil disobedience movement all over the country. Many bankers, railroad workers, and medical doctors have joined the motion. Inthe beginning, the individuals joined in a celebratory atmosphere. Even police officials have joined the mantra of “get out dictators.” Some protestors preserve up the 3 finger salute, taken from the Hunger Games movie. Others bang on pots, to pressure out the evil spirits. The protests had been peaceful, although the army has these days killed people. A home boycott motion referred to as the "Stop Buying Junta Business" marketing campaign additionally emerged. Even truck drivers have joined the protest and slowed shipping of imports, trapping cargo boxes to 30 percentage of the volume. Only important food, medicine, and fabrics for garment factories are being introduced without interruption.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The coup d'état which began in the morning of 1st February 2021 and the political crisis which came as an affect to that has inflate the severe impact of COVID-19. Myanmar has quickly diverged from a predicted monetary and jobs recuperation to a scenario of monetary paralysis and endured labor marketplace deterioration. Employment developments in the course of the primary 1/2 of 2021 imply widespread losses ineach employment and work hours that have negatively affected tens of thousands and thousands ofpeople and women in particular.

All the enterprise in every sector have had been impacted with construction, garments, tourism and hospitality being the hardest hit. While the fast evaluation offers indicative insights into the labour marketplace situation, the estimates certainly screen a deepening of pre-current deficits in respectable work in Myanmar.

¹⁵ MYANMAR The Future of Labor Relations in Myanmar: After the Coup d'Etat By: Richard Fincher, Cornell ILR and Workplace Resolutions, Phoenix May 02, 2021 MYANMAR The Future of Labor Relations in Myanmar: After the Coup d'Etat (americanbar.org)