

Does Labour Day matter to daily wage labourers?

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It was 1886 when company workers in Chicago used to work for 12 to 14 hours. George Engel was one of the labourers who did printing work for the company. He felt the company workers were working like machines, and their bodies needed rest.

On May 1, thousands of workers went on strike with George to demand an 8-hour shift. This peaceful protest was happening all over the city, but unfortunately, on May 4, during a rally at Haymarket Square, the police beat up the workers. In retaliation, someone threw a bomb, and many policemen and workers lost their lives.


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A worker is working in the brick field, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh | PC: Priyanshu Shekhar

George was not present at this rally, but 7 more people were called for a hearing along with him, and George was sentenced to death for fighting for the interests of the workers. In his hearing, George said, â??If I must die for speaking the truth and seeking justice, I accept it.â?•

George was hanged that year. His sacrifice led to protests for labour rights all over the world.

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Women are working in the brick field | PC: Priyanshu Shekhar

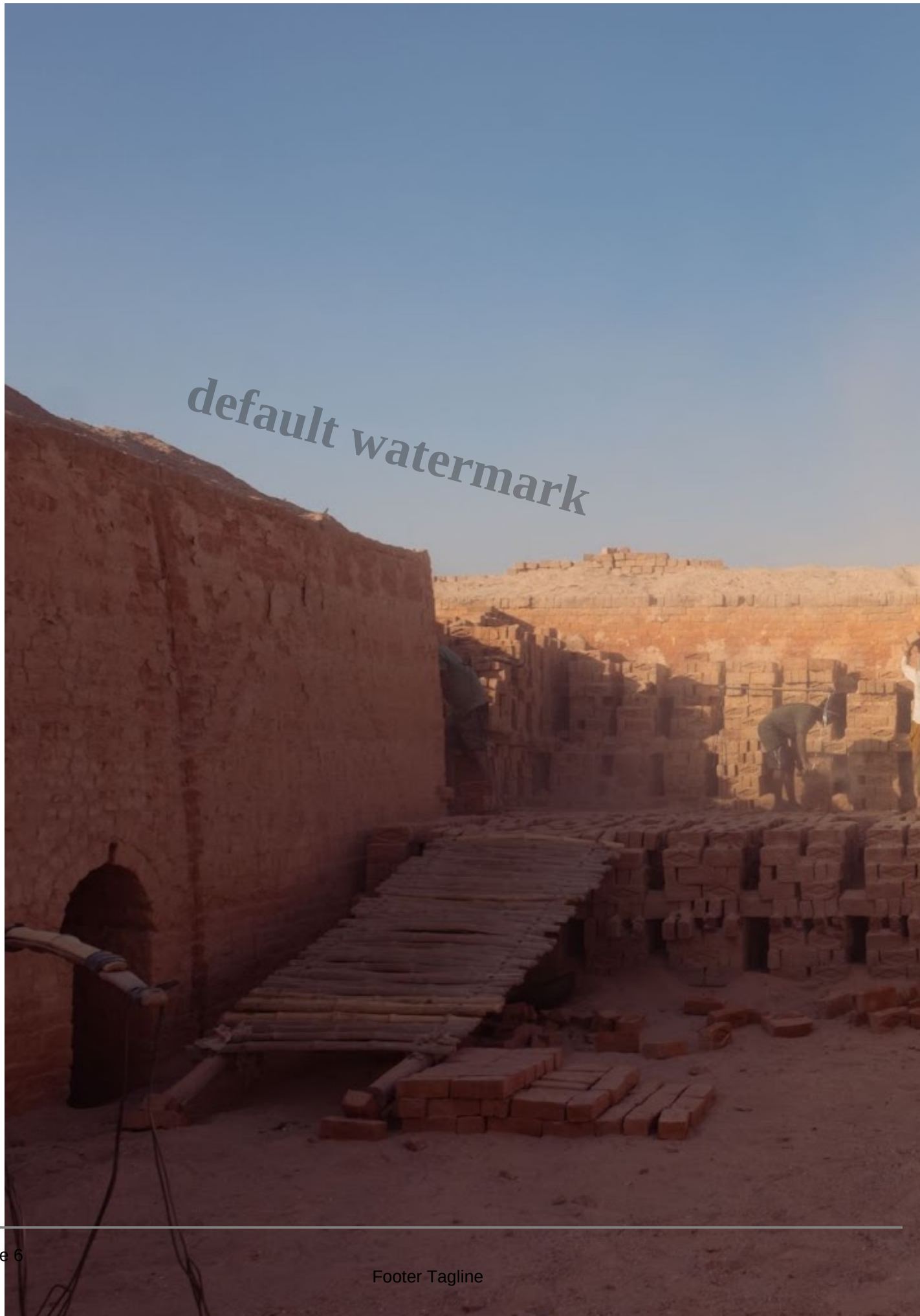
But the question remains in India: Is safety, fair working hours and compensation of the labour force being taken seriously? According to government data from 2023, 3 workers die in factories every day. How much attention should be paid to whether there is a proper arrangement of water at the working sites?

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), an estimated 22.58 million occupational injuries, 18970 deaths, and 2.09 million disability-added life years (DALYs) are caused every year only due to heatwaves.

There is nothing for private labourers in our country, they have no job security, they are fired from work for small mistakes, because there is no shortage of labourers in this country, in many places the workers do not even get minimum daily wage payment, the preamble of our constitution declare us a â??social democraticâ??. But we are socialist in name only.

In 2023, Rampal Singh had a fall while working at a construction site in Noida (Uttar Pradesh) and died. But the employer refused to take any responsibility. His family did not get any compensation, nor did they get justice. This is just one case; many such cases die under the files kept in the police stations of the country, just like the victims of these cases.

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A wide landscape of the brick field | PC: Priyanshu Shekhar

The government should undertake initiatives to fulfill the safety and basic needs of the daily wage labourers, and introduce penalties when the safety standards are not met. The funny thing is that on Labour Day, schools, colleges, and offices are closed, but the labourers for whom we honour this day often still toil. World Labour Day is not only a day to remember those who fought for us, but is also an alarm to check all those rules that protect the rights of workers.

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Category

1. Uncategorized

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