

**LEGAL PROTECTION OF CLIMATE-EXPOSED WORKERS IN THE AGE OF
EXTREME HEAT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LABOUR LAW AND CLIMATE
JUSTICE IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Notable changes have been observed due to the changing climate in the workplace. The health, livelihood, and dignity of millions of Indian workers particularly those working in the unorganized and outdoor sectors are at risk due to rising temperatures. India's labour law framework lacks climate resilience, as demonstrated by the record-breaking heatwaves of 2024 and 2025. Current laws that do not address heat stress, hydration, or required rest periods during extreme weather events include the Factories Act of 1948 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code of 2020.

This article explores the legal void surrounding workers exposed to climate change. It analyses statutory gaps, assesses the promise of humane working conditions under Articles 21 and 42 of the constitution, and compares Indian law to global best practices like the ILO Convention 155 and Qatar's ban on midday work. It makes the case supported by comparative policy and human rights jurisprudence that the current framework ignores workers' urgently needed protections because it views climate hazards as "environmental" rather than "labour" issues. Protecting workers from climate extremes is no longer optional, it is central to ensuring constitutional rights, social justice, and sustainable development in the world's fastest-warming labour market.

Keywords: Climate Change, Labour Law, Heat Stress, Occupational Safety, Unorganized Sector, Constitutional Rights, ILO Convention 155, Sustainable Development

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, climate change has evolved from a distant environmental concern to a serious practical challenge. One of the world's largest labour groups resides in India, and the country's most vulnerable citizens are increasingly suffering from the devastating effects of extreme heat. An increase in heat-related illnesses, lost productivity, and even fatalities has resulted from heatwaves being longer, more frequent, and more intense. In 2022 alone, India lost 191 billion potential labour hours due to heat exposure.² By 2025, record-breaking temperatures above 45°C were reported across northern states, forcing temporary shutdowns of construction sites and pushing delivery workers into life-threatening conditions.

The crisis is the most intense for external and informal workers: construction workers, sanitary workers, road sellers, distribution agents for traffic police and gaming economy. For them, heat exposure is not a timely threat, but a daily struggle to survive. Unlike factory workers or salaried personnels, they do not have the legal right to compensation for payment climate holidays, protective equipment, rest or heat -related diseases. Lack of awareness in the legal system is the best way to portray systemic inequalities in India's labour market.

According to this article, an important blind gap in the Indian Labor laws is the lack of clear legal protection for workers encountering climate change. The current paradigm ignores climate - inspired threats because it is machine -centred and factory -focused. Moreover, it violates the constitutional guarantees of equality, reasonable working conditions, and life. India risks maintaining a system where people should decide between maintaining their health and earning life's stay until the working laws are updated to reflect the reality of a warming climate.

CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF WORKER PROTECTION

The Indian Constitution provides not merely a moral aspiration but a juridical foundation for the protection of workers against climate-induced risks. The constitutional promise of dignity, health, and equality becomes particularly significant when one considers that climate change has transformed extreme heat from a natural inconvenience into a structural workplace hazard.

² Seema Prasad, In India, 191 Billion Potential Labour Hours Were Lost Due to Heat Exposure in 2022: Lancet, *Down to Earth* (Nov. 17, 2023), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/in-india-191-billion-potential-labour-hours-were-lost-due-to-heat-exposure-in-2022-lancet-92619> (accessed Aug. 8, 2025).

Article 21 – Right to Life and Health

Article 21³ has been judicially expanded into a fertile source of socio-economic rights. In *Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory of Delhi*,⁴ the Court held that the right to life “includes the right to live with human dignity and all that goes along with it.” This includes the right to health, safe working conditions, and protection from occupational hazards.

In *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India*⁵, Justice P.N. Bhagwati emphasised that the State carries a positive duty to ensure humane working conditions, remarking:

“The right to live with human dignity derives its life breath from the Directive Principles of State Policy.”

Working below a burning temperature of 45–48 ° C without shade, water, or effectively breaks the stripes to this dignity. In 2022, India lost approximately 191 billion potential working hours due to exposure to heat, a number showing the scale that Article 21 rights have been incomplete.

Article 14 – Equality before Law

Not everyone is affected similarly by extreme heat. Unlike office employees and air-conditioned businesses, road sellers, construction workers, sanitary workers and delivery agents for gig economy, there are inconsistent exposures to climate threats. The absence of climate -specific protection is therefore the result of systemic inequality, contrary to the spirit of Article⁶.

The Court in *E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu*⁷, stressed that “equality is a dynamic concept with many aspects and dimensions, and it cannot be cribbed, cabined and confined within traditional limits.” The neglect of outdoor workers vis-à-vis their indoor counterparts reflects precisely the kind of inequality Article 14 seeks to redress.

Article 23 – Prohibition of Forced Labour

Article 23⁸, while traditionally invoked against bonded labour, also prohibits economic compulsion that drives individuals into inhuman conditions. In *People's Union for Democratic*

³ India Const. art. 21 (“No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.”).

⁴ *Francis Coralie Mullin v. Administrator, Union Territory*, (1981) 2 SCR 516 (India).

⁵ *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India*, AIR 1984 SC 802 (India).

⁶ India Const. art. 14 (“The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.”).

⁷ *E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu*, AIR 1974 SC 555, 1974 SCR (2) 348 (India).

⁸ India Const. art. 23 (“Traffic in human beings and begar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.”).

*Rights v. Union of India*⁹, the Court held that if a person is forced to provide labour due to poverty or lack of alternatives, it falls within the definition of “forced labour.”

When workers are forced to choose between starvation and working through extreme heat, often without even minimum hydration or rest, the condition mirrors forced labour. As one construction worker, Yogendra Tundre, told *Reuters* during the 2022 Delhi heatwave¹⁰:

“There is too much heat and if we won’t work, what will we eat?”

The harsh dilemma that countless casual labourers suffer on a daily basis is revealed by his statements, which go beyond personal suffering. For them, labour is a matter of survival rather than choice because they must constantly choose between surviving the extreme heat and hunger. This dilemma is centred around Article 23 of the Constitution. The Constitution acknowledged that there are several forms of compulsion when it forbade forced labour. An employee is enslaved no longer just through a grasp's whip or a series of bondage, however additionally with the aid of the unseen force of poverty, which forces them to tolerate working occasions that threaten their very lives. In this way, financial problem may generate as tons coercion as physical pressure.

Extreme heat has been a commonplace workplace threat, which contributes to this inequity. Ignoring the truth that choice vanishes when survival is at danger is equivalent to dismissing such hard work as "voluntary." A labourer receives stuck in a scenario that the Constitution itself aimed to take away while he's compelled to choose between famine and heatstroke.

Article 42 – Directive Principle of Humane Work Conditions

Article 42¹¹ asks the State to “make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work.” True, it is placed among the Directive Principles and is not directly enforceable in court. Yet, our constitutional history shows that these principles are not dead letters; they are living values that shape how Fundamental Rights are read and applied. The Supreme Court itself has often turned to them as guiding lights, ensuring that the Constitution speaks to the real struggles of people.

⁹ *People’s Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, (1982) SC 1473 (India).

¹⁰ Sunil Kataria, Poor Workers Bear the Brunt of India’s Heatwave, *Reuters* (May 16, 2022),

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/poor-workers-bear-brunt-indias-heatwave-2022-05-16> (accessed Aug. 9, 2025).

¹¹ *India Const.* art. 42 (“The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.”).

In *M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu*¹², the Court reminded us that humane work conditions must reach the most vulnerable, including children forced into hazardous industries. The principle is simple but profound: dignity at work is not a privilege; it is a minimum that every worker deserves.

The meaning of “humane conditions” must expand to meet the challenges of climate change in present time. What does it mean to talk of humane work when construction workers are laying bricks in 45°C heat, or sanitation staff sweep the streets at noon under a blazing sun, without shade, water, or rest? Without climate-sensitive protections, Article 42 risks becoming an empty promise.

Humane work in the 21st century must include rest breaks during heatwaves, shaded cooling shelters, access to drinking water, and even paid leave on days when temperatures reach dangerous extremes. These are not luxuries but basic safeguards for survival.

Article 42 might not create a felony right by itself; however, it contains an ethical and constitutional force. It reminds the State that leaving people to fall apart in the heat isn't just a monetary failure, however a betrayal of constitutional values. If we take Article 42 seriously, then adapting labour law to climate realities is not optional, it is the only way to honor the spirit of justice and dignity embedded in our Constitution.

Each clause is important on its own, but taken as a whole, they form a constitutional requirement that cannot be disregarded. Protecting employees from excessive heat and climate threats is required by the constitution and is neither a question of state generosity nor policy preference. It is a violation of the right to life, an increase of inequality, a tolerance of forced labour, and a rejection of the constitutional ideal of humane labour to leave workers unprotected in the face of rising temperatures.

Thus, the climate issue is also a constitutional crisis. In addition to being a human tragedy, every instance of a construction worker fainting on a blistering job site, a street vendor having to sell the goods in the blazing sun, or a sanitation worker experiencing unbearable heat without any relief is evidence of constitutional neglect. As the Supreme Court observed in *E.P. Royappa case*, equality is a “dynamic concept”, and arbitrariness is its antithesis. If the State extends meaningful protections only to those who can afford private insulation while leaving the poor to

¹² *M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu*, (1996) 6 SCC 756 (India).

their fate, such arbitrariness becomes a direct violation of Article 14 and the broader constitutional promise.

The framers never intended the Constitution to be static. Its provisions were deliberately infused with breadth and vision, so that future generations could respond to new forms of injustice. Just as the industrial hazards of the 20th century compelled the creation of workplace protections, the environmental hazards of the 21st must compel the recognition of climate-sensitive labour rights. This is not an expansion beyond the Constitution, but its faithful unfolding in new conditions of life.

Ultimately, a Republic that allows its poorest citizens to bear the costs of a warming planet betrays its own foundations. To protect climate-exposed workers is to honor the Constitution's deepest commitments: to life, dignity, equality, and humane labour. To neglect them is not merely an administrative lapse but a constitutional dereliction. The message is unambiguous: *climate adaptation in labour law is not a question of charity, but of constitutional duty and failing to act is failing the Constitution itself.*

THE CURRENT LABOUR LAW FRAMEWORK: GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

Despite their seeming exhaustiveness, India's labour laws were developed during the industrial era and are not equipped to deal with the risks posed by the contemporary climate. Although they are one of the main causes of illness and mortality between outdoor workers today, excessive heat in the legal community is still unimaginable. However, many countries with similar conditions have begun to change their work rules, highlighting India's deficient response.

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020

The Code¹³ consolidates safety laws across industries, covering chemical, mechanical, and biological hazards. But it remains silent on climate risks. Heatwaves are not classified as occupational hazards, leaving millions vulnerable.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also explicitly recognized heat stress as one of the most severe climate-related labour risks in its 2019 report *Working on a Warmer Planet*¹⁴, urging member states to integrate climate into occupational safety standards.

¹³ *The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code*, No. 37 of 2020, Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Sec. 1 (Sept. 28, 2020).

¹⁴ Int'l Labour Org., *Working on a Warmer Planet: The Impact of Heat Stress on Labour Productivity and Decent Work* (2019), https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_711919/lang--en/index.htm (accessed Aug. 10, 2025).

India's inaction, therefore, is not a neutral omission, it places the country behind the global consensus. More worryingly, it reflects an outdated imagination of workplace safety that still views hazards as accidents within factories, rather than slow, systemic dangers produced by climate change. If labour law is meant to evolve with the realities of work, then the failure to classify heat as a workplace hazard is not just a legislative gap, but a profound disconnects between law and lived experience.

Factories Act, 1948

The Factories Act¹⁵, was groundbreaking for its era. For example, Section 13 mandates that factories maintain proper temperature control and sufficient ventilation within enclosed workspaces. This was a progressive clause in 1948 that sought to shield industrial workers from the stifling heat of poorly ventilated workplace areas. Yet, its vision was limited by the context of its time. The law remains entirely inward-looking, designed only for the traditional industrial unit. Outdoor labour, sanitation workers, delivery riders, street vendors, traffic police, and construction workers are arguably those most at risk in today's climate who remain outside its protective umbrella.

This limitation exposes the factory-centric bias of India's labour law framework. At a time when more than 90% of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector, and a growing proportion of employment involves outdoor or gig-based work, the fact that legal protections stop at the factory gate is profoundly exclusionary. The very workers who endure the harshest exposure to heat are the ones rendered invisible by this outdated statute.

Countries that experience similar weather extremes, on the other hand, have already started to modify their laws. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, both heavily dependent on migrant and outdoor workers, have introduced legally binding *midday work bans*¹⁶. During the hottest summer months in Qatar, it is illegal to work outside between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.; also, workplaces must have hydration stations, covered rest rooms, and medical supplies on hand. Penalties for employers who violate the law demonstrate that heat protection is a fundamental labour right and not an option. Despite experiencing more severe and prolonged heatwaves in recent years, India lacks a comparable measure. Despite the lived realities of delivery agents

¹⁵ *The Factories Act*, No. 63 of 1948, India Code.

¹⁶ Deeplata Garde, After UAE, Bahrain, Qatar & 2 More GCC Countries Have BANNED Outdoor Work in Summer, *Curly Tales* (June 16, 2025), <https://curlytales.com/after-uae-bahrain-qatar-2-more-gcc-countries-have-banned-outdoor-work-in-summer/> (accessed Aug. 17, 2025).

pedalling through 45°C afternoons or construction workers toiling outdoors, the law still views workers as factory hands from the middle of the 20th century. The Factories Act's absence of climate-adaptive protections shows a lack of legislation as well as a general reluctance to update labour rules considering current threats.

Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996

The Building and Other Construction Workers Act¹⁷, was created to protect one of the most vulnerable groups of workers i.e. construction workers. It set up welfare boards, made registration compulsory, and introduced a cess fund to provide benefits such as housing, maternity aid, accident insurance, and pensions. On paper, it looked like a safety net for workers who build India's cities but rarely share in their growth.

However, the Act says little about climate-related risks. Construction is almost always outdoor work, where exposure to extreme heat is unavoidable. Yet the law does not require employers to provide shaded shelters, hydration points, rest breaks during heat alerts, or flexible work timings in hot weather. It treats only sudden accidents as dangers, ignoring the slow and daily damage caused by heat stress.

Other countries show that better is possible. Nepal's *Labour Rules, 2018* recognize "hazardous work environments" and put the duty on employers to adapt to them. Qatar goes further by linking construction permits to heat safety by banning outdoor work in the hottest hours and requiring shaded rest spaces and water facilities. By contrast, India's law still views construction safety in narrow terms, focusing on scaffolding or helmets, while leaving climate exposure out of the picture.

This difference is especially concerning because thousands of crores are collected annually through the Acts cess, but a large portion of that money is wasted. Preventive measures such as first-aid kits, cooling shelters, and heat safety awareness receive very little funding. As a result, there is a difference between what the law states and what employees go through. If the Act is not up to date keeping in mind the realities of the climate change, it could become outdated and useless for the individuals it was created to protect.

¹⁷ *The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, No. 27 of 1996, India Code.*

Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 & Code on Social Security, 2020

The unorganized sector, which employs close to 90% of India's workforce, remains the least protected under labour law. The *Act*¹⁸, *and later the Code on Social Security*¹⁹, were intended to extend welfare benefits to this vast majority. They created schemes for pensions, maternity aid, and insurance, and more recently, platforms such as *E-Shram* to register and identify workers.

Yet these frameworks stop short of addressing climate-related vulnerabilities. Neither statute recognises heatstroke, dehydration, or other heat-induced illnesses as *occupational diseases*. This means that workers who collapse while working in 45°C heat cannot claim medical compensation, wage replacement, or insurance cover even though their illness is clearly linked to working conditions. In practice, the law offers registration and welfare "on paper," but little by way of climate-sensitive protection.

By contrast, legal systems elsewhere are beginning to move forward. The European Union has gradually expanded the definition of "occupational disease" to include not only physical injuries but also mental health risks like stress and burnout and is now opening discussions on environmental hazards. Even Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan (2023–2050) identifies heat stress as a serious threat to labour productivity and calls for its integration into social security schemes.

India's approach, therefore, lags both global consensus and regional neighbours. Workers are acknowledged for statistical and welfare purposes, but their greatest vulnerability i.e. exposure to extreme climate is kept legally invisible. Unless occupational health frameworks are updated to recognize heat as a compensable hazard, social security for unorganised workers will remain symbolic rather than substantive.

Minimum Wages Act, 1948

The *Act*²⁰ was meant to guarantee wage fairness and prevent exploitation by ensuring that workers receive at least a basic floor of pay. However, it does not account for variations in risk or working conditions. A worker toiling under the scorching sun is legally entitled to the same wage as someone working in a shaded or climate-controlled environment. This silence on hazard pay or climate allowance effectively ignores the added physical and health risks borne by outdoor workers.

¹⁸ *The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act*, No. 33 of 2008, India Code.

¹⁹ *The Code on Social Security*, No. 36 of 2020, Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Sec. 1 (Sept. 29, 2020).

²⁰ *The Minimum Wages Act*, No. 11 of 1948, India Code.

On the other hand, several countries have adjusted their wage and labour laws to take climate change into account. In the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, employers are required to either reduce working hours or increase allowances during the hottest summer months; licensing and inspection are tied to the application of these rules. Businesses who fail to provide outdoor workers with shade, water, and rest intervals during heat waves risk fines, according to recommendations set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration²¹ (OSHA) in the United States. These actions demonstrate an understanding that safe working conditions and fair pay are inextricably linked.

India's failure to recognize hazard-linked wages creates a troubling paradox. Employers face no financial incentive to adapt workplaces or reduce risk, while workers are forced to absorb the double burden of poverty and danger. In effect, the law rewards inaction on safety and penalizes only the workers those are least able to bear the cost. Unless wage law evolves to reflect the risks of climate-exposed labour, the principle of "fair wages" will remain incomplete.

What emerges is clear: India's labour laws are factory-centric, static, and blind to climate realities. They imagine the worker as a factory hand of the 1940s, surrounded by machines, rather than the delivery rider, construction worker, or vendor braving 45°C heat in today's economy. Other nations whether Qatar with its mid-day bans, UAE with its hazard allowances, Bangladesh with climate-adaptation plans, or the ILO with global guidelines are already recognising heat as a workplace hazard. India, however, continues to treat it as "weather" rather than "work."

This is more than a legal oversight. It is a form of structural neglect where millions of climate-exposed workers remain invisible to the law. Their illnesses are not "occupational," their exhaustion is not "compensable," and their deaths are not "avoidable" within the current framework. If India's labour laws are to remain meaningful, they must evolve from being factory-era statutes to climate-era safeguards. Recognition of climate hazards as occupational risks is not only urgent but it is the only way to honour constitutional promises of dignity, equality, and humane work.

²¹ Occupational Safety & Health Admin. (OSHA), U.S. Dep't of Labor, *Heat Illness Prevention Campaign* (2021), <https://www.osha.gov/heat> (accessed Aug. 19, 2025).

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND LABOUR RIGHTS

A fundamental issue of climate justice, the plight of heat-exposed workers is not merely a result of inadequate regulation. Workers are not all equally affected by extreme heat. Those who are already poor, unorganized, and socially marginalized are the ones that suffer the most. A street vendor or construction worker must endure the worst of the rising temperatures, while a salaried office worker in an air-conditioned setting can continue with little disruption.

Even more glaringly unfair is the situation for gig economy workers. The algorithmic management systems that oversee delivery agents working on digital marketplaces punish tardiness and reward speed. This means that during peak summer afternoons, when the risk of heatstroke is highest, they are often under the greatest pressure to keep working without any entitlements to rest, insurance, or protective gear. Similarly, sanitation workers, waste pickers, and traffic police cannot choose when to work; their exposure is part of the very services society depends upon. Yet, they remain almost invisible in India's labour law framework.

This imbalance reflects a deeper environmental injustice. Those who contribute the least to carbon emissions like the poor, the informal, and the powerless are the ones paying the highest price. They suffer most of the climatic burden mostly caused by urbanization, industrialization, and global energy systems from which they receive little benefit. In this sense, labour law reform is not only about protecting health and safety; it is about redistributing climate risks more fairly. To treat climate-exposed workers with dignity is to recognise that climate justice and labour rights are inseparable. Protecting them is no longer optional welfare, it is a constitutional and moral imperative.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

Moving beyond limited benefits to a system of labour laws that are climate sensitive is necessary to protect workers in India from climate change. The following changes are both necessary and doable:

Recognise Heat as an Occupational Hazard

Dehydration, heat stress, and climate related illness should be expressly mentioned as occupational hazards in the 2020 Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code. rather than describing heat as a "natural" or unavoidable situation, this would make the companies legally responsible for prevention and compensation

Mandatory Workplace Heat Action Plans

Every employer in heat-exposed sectors like construction, delivery, sanitation, agriculture must be required to prepare Heat Action Plans. These should include shaded rest shelters, drinking water stations, first-aid units, and compulsory rest breaks during peak hours. Just as fire safety drills became routine after industrial accidents, heat safety must be institutionalized.

Climate Leave

Paid leave should be made available during government-declared red-alert heatwaves. Workers should not be forced into the cruel choice between hunger and heatstroke. Climate leave would act as a humane safeguard, especially for daily-wage and informal workers.

Insurance and Compensation

Heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke, kidney damage, or cardiac stress must be covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act and the Code on Social Security. Families of workers who die due to heat exposure should receive compensation at par with workplace accidents.

Gig Worker Protections

Companies that provide digital platforms are accountable for the climate risks that their delivery agents take. To avoid penalizing employees for slowing down during periods of intense heat, algorithmic targets need to be modified. Every gig agreement should include emergency insurance, required cooling breaks, and heat-safety bonuses.

Adopt International Best Practices

India should learn from global examples. In Qatar and the UAE, outdoor work is banned during the hottest hours of the day, with enforcement linked to permits and penalties. A similar midday work ban during Indian summers could prevent thousands of heat-related hospitalisations and deaths.

Green Labour Law Framework

Climate change must move from the margins to the centre of labour law. Workplace safety standards can include environmental sustainability through measures like energy-efficient cooling, heat-resistant clothing, urban tree cover near work sites, and company commitments to reduce emissions. Environmental and labour rights may no longer be viewed as distinct domains.

CONCLUSION

India's labour laws were developed for factories and mechanical hazards in the industrial age, but the damage caused by excessive heat in the 21st century is quite severe. Due to climate change, heat has become a deadly threat in the workplace that affects workers outside and exposed to the

weather. However, the current legal system failed to seriously provide protection to these workers. Articles 21 and 42 in the Constitution, which guarantee life, health and worthy employment rights, require changed labour law that includes climate flexibility and protect human dignity.

Protecting climate-exposed workers is not merely aspirational; it is a legal, constitutional, and moral imperative. Failure to act perpetuates a silent epidemic of heat-related illness and death among construction labourers, street vendors, agricultural workers, and gig economy participants. Recognizing extreme heat as a formal occupational hazard, mandating structured rest breaks, instituting climate leave, ensuring access to hydration and cooling facilities, and adopting international best practices are urgent steps toward a “green labour law” which is a framework that harmonises social justice, human rights, and climate adaptation. Justice P. N. Bhagwati, in *Bandhua Mukti Morcha*, observed that “the right to live with dignity... cannot be ensured unless workers are protected from exploitation.” In a warming India, failure to shield workers from climate extremes is itself a profound form of exploitation, hidden yet deadly. Legislative and policy action is no longer optional; it is a constitutional obligation. Protecting workers from climate hazards is the measure of our commitment to human dignity, social equity, and ethical governance. The time to act is now before neglect transforms into irreparable loss.