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# Free Trade Zone Solidarity

## சுதந்திர வர்த்தக வலய ஒத்துழைப்பு

September 25, 2021  
The Director  
Department of Fiscal Policy,  
Ministry of Finance,  
The Secretariat,  
Colombo 01.

Dear Madam/Sir,

### **National Budget 2022 Proposals from Free Trade Zone Workers**

We are writing this letter as a Free Trade Zone Worker's Confederacy organizations representing workers of Free Trade Zones in Sri Lanka Specially focusing on Biyagama, Katunayake, Koggala, Seethawaka and Wathupitiwala Zones.

Garment Industry has been the Sri Lanka's largest gross export earner and even at present. Considering the income of merchandise exports, the textiles and garments has been grown in increasing rate which was 312.7 million U.S. Dollar in march, 2020 to 467.2 million U.S. Dollar in march 2021, within over one year and the significant change was 49.4 percent (Central Bank Sri Lanka, 2020). However, the workers who toil in this industry to earn the much-needed foreign exchange for the country t has been suffering multiple forms of issues with their minimum wage, health and safety. Especially during the pandemic, manufactures have continued to benefit from huge profits, cutting costs at the expense of worker's health, employment security and income. The COVID -19 pandemic has had devastating effects on the wellbeing, health and rights of Sri Lankan's about 300,000 garment workers, further exacerbating the situation of these precariously employed women. Apparel manufactures have responded to covid-19 crisis with wage cuts and elimination of various allowances and the imposition of increased working hours and productivity targets.

Workers have to face many infrastructure issues including sustainable water, electricity and transportation accessibilities mostly Biyagama, Katunayake and Wathupitiwala are the strictly following provisions.

Therefore we propose following to be considered for year 2020 national budget.

#### ***01) Increasing the Minimum Wage***

National Minimum Wage policy of Sri Lanka has failed to overcome with the issues of workers and we request to increase the minimum wage to LKR 26,000 per month for Free Trade Zone workers.

***02) Extending Relief Provided by the Government to Free Trade Zone Workers***

Workers are not qualified for the grants delivered by the government, therefore we request to government relief packages, particularly during this COVID -19 context, must be provided to the workers in free trade zones as well.

***03) Increasing Quarantine facilities for Workers.***

Many have reported numerous virus outbreaks within their factories and living environs. Further these workers face a plethora of issues during isolation, high cost for PCR and antigen testing. Therefore we request to; Make an allocation build an isolated COVID -19 treatment center for Free Trade Zone workers in Katunayake, Biyagama, Wathupitiwala, Seethawaka and Kokgala and Allow workers for free PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests packages.

***04) Development of Basic Infrastructure Facilities in Katunayake, Biyagama, Wathupitiwala, Kokgala and Seethakawaka.***

Our workers mostly have face strict infrastructure issues of their boarding places and we request to allow budget allocations for them as attached following, especially in Biyagama, Katunayaka, Wathupitiwala, Seethakawa and Kokgala.

Finally we request to consider these proposals from a worker perspective, as it will benefit workers who immensely contribute with their labor to earn the much-needed foreign exchange for the country during the crucial time. Therefore we request for a meeting to further discuss and present our proposal.

Thank You.

**Signatories :** Commercial and Industrial Worker's Union.

Textile Garments and Clothing Worker's Union.

Shramabhimani Kendraya Organization.

Dabindu Collective.

Stand Up Movement.

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