

[Preface]

Gaze at Safety from the Perspective of Civil Rights

Special Labor Safety Investigation Board of Coal-fired Thermal Power Plant
for Fact Finding and Prevention of Reoccurrence for Fatal Accident of the
Late Kim Yong-gyun
Ji-hyeong Kim / Chairperson

We have faith.
We have a faith, firmly believing the world we're living in
is bound to improve.
We hereby plant a root of such unwavering faith.

The workplace was under complete darkness.

I still have a vivid memory of the experience when I first visited and looked
around the Taean Thermal Power Plant.

The worksite was under complete darkness.

It was beyond my imagination.

All members of the board were with heavy hearts.

The board began its operation with such heavy hearts.

However, the light shines even brighter under darkness.

Perhaps, our hearts yearning to shch lights were that much desperate.

What was it that led to this horrible situation?

The 'Accident of the late Kim Yong-gyun' was a symbolic incident that

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exposed almost all endemic elements of labor safety issues in Korea.

There had been countless fatalities prior to this particular accident.

The statistics indicating that Korea is ranked at No.1 in occupational mortality rate amongst OECD nations has somehow become an ominous norm, now.

What led us to this terrible situation?

It is a question posed to our society as well as to our board.

No one had any malicious intentions for sure.

It was caused by our negligence and ignorance.

But what was the difference between those two?

What is truly important is the fact that we all need to reflect ourselves and make rectifications accordingly.

We all now need to engage in actions in specific and concrete manner.

We need to take a good look at them with the eyes of civil rights.

Life and physical wellbeing is invaluable to all of us.

They are even more valuable to those who just have to engage in labors in order to make a living.

Does the safety and health at workplaces merely mean personal benefits to workers?

The answer to the question above is, of course, no.

If workplaces are not safe or not healthy, production activities for goods and services are bound to suffer negative impacts.

And subsequent negative outcomes will only come back to haunt our society.

Hence, safe and healthy workplaces represent not only social assets but also social values.

They are foundation to open up better tomorrows.

It is why safety and health at workplaces must be dealt with under the name of civil rights.

Civil rights are the rights that need to be duly protected and respected for everyone.

A society where civil rights are respected is a valuable society.

It is the reason why we highly value human-oriented society.

And it is the reason why we should never take the issue of civil rights lightly.

It is also the reason why we should never shy away from the issue of civil rights as if it were something to be allergic.

It is because civil right issues concern all of us.

Who should protect them?

Civil rights used to be something to be appreciated only if the state does not interfere with them passively.

That was then, this is different, now.

The state is obligated to respect and protect individual civil rights.

Civil right violation must not be committed even between individuals.

This issue has been evolving in an aggressive manner.

The workers' rights to labor safety also must be protected and respected under the realm of civil rights.

The state needs to take the initiative, and business owners more than anyone else should be strongly willing to do so.

Our society and community must go along with them.

How valuable it may be, it would be meaningless if society-wide consensus is not formed.

Safety and health at workplaces is not just a labor-management issue but an investment for the future.

Procurement of social safety net is a core value that our society and community need to secure.

It is for today's generation to hand down a sustainable society to the future generations.

We all need to work together to own significant social assets.

Safety for others is the safety for my own.

Some might say that the safety is a matter of costs.

This issue needs to be viewed from the perspective of business enterprises

which are to pay for the safety costs.

It should be more carefully examined when considering the fact that business enterprises are supposed to aim at maximizing profits.

Such idea must not be entirely wrong.

However, opposite views may also be examined when reminding ourselves of the fact that civil rights are universal rights which must be protected for everyone for the purpose of securing dignity and value of every single human being.

True meaning of the right to safe labor begins from the idea where the safety for others as well as for ourselves must be equally valued.

It means that we all need to value someone else's safety as much as we care about our own safety.

As long as we do not view our own safety as a matter of costs, we should also not treat someone else's safety as a matter of costs, either.

All the costs spent to ensure labor safety for someone must be viewed as costs that just have to be rightfully spent.

From such perspective, such costs will no longer be deemed as expenses or costs.

The demands for the expenditure for labor safety do not necessarily demand business enterprises to give up on pursuing profits.

Since business enterprises are to earn benefits from social relationships, they will be able to share such benefits with shareholders as well as workers, subcontractors, consumers and local communities related to their business activities.

And governmental supports also need to be properly implemented.

Paradigm shift needs to be made in a vast spectrum.

Improvement of statutes and systems has to be made in order to secure labor safety and health.

Every single one of them must be carefully examined.

Knowing what changes need to be made but doing nothing is not better than a shameful crime.

Since it is a concern for all of us, we all need to work together to

take care of it.

What do we need to overcome tragic situations surrounding workplace safety?

We need to verify causes and identify problems.

But it is not meant to pour out our rage, hatred or resentment.

Blaming someone else's fault is not a solution.

We need to reconcile with wrongdoings, move on from the past and find a way to build better future.

That should be the right way to resolve past problems wisely.

We all need to work together hand in hand.

Reconciliation cannot be achieved by a single person.

We put together our efforts in the most sincere way possible.

This report is originated from the 'Fatal Accident of the Late Kim Yong-gyun.'

But this report does not rely on a single accident.

This report aims to go through every issue related to safety and health at workplaces based on a critical mind discussed previously.

The board made utmost efforts to thoroughly understand the core elements of problems.

The board paid close attention to details in order not to overlook significant issues which may seem trivial at first.

All members of the board stopped their personal businesses for this very purpose.

And they invested all of their capabilities to the board.

What made them to exert such tremendous efforts?

It was because of their firm belief that they could make this world we're living in a better place to live.

This report has been carefully prepared based on their hard work for that very purpose.

We, the board, sincerely hope for the following:

The board is not here to claim that our suggestion is the only solution available.

The board does not believe this type of problems can be corrected overnight.

The board is fully aware of the fact that these problems have been prolonged for a long period of time and they are quite complicated entangling with each other in reality.

No one is naïve enough to think those problems can be rectified through one simple solution overnight.

Based on countless debates and discussions for the past 5 months, the board is hereby attempting to offer a proposal which the board believes the best pathway that we need to take and the best remedy for labor safety.

Of course, there could be different ideas contracting the judgment and determination made by the board.

The board is not about to profess such different ideas are incorrect.

What the board truly aims at is, however, that the proposal prepared based on a long and hard contemplation of the board would serve as a stepping stone to accelerate further discussions in order to take one step closer to labor safety.

The board hereby publishes this report with a sincere hope of all members yearning for true labor safety of this society.

We truly hope our prayer would be answered.

Thank you.