Nurul Quader's efforts, it is impossible to step into a department store in US and not find at least half a dozen varieties of garments labelled "Made in Bangladesh."

All of this, however, is the bright side, the happy side of the story. The garments have brought us money, employed our otherwise unemployable workforce and given us a new avenue of economic growth. On the darker side, the industry has also given birth to the evils of exploitation, poor working conditions and profit maximisation in the wake of development. When people see a thirty-dollar price tag on a shirt made in Bangladesh and sold in a US store, few realise that the average garment worker in the home country is paid less than this sum for a whole month. When people buy a designer outfit made in Bangladesh in an upscale, air-conditioned department store here in US, few people realise that the workers behind this garment toiled night and day cooped up in hot and airless buildings with minimal sanitary facilities. People here rarely read or know about hundreds of workers who perished in factories housed in poorly constructed buildings in the past years in Bangladesh.

Our success in garments happened because the eager entrepreneurs who hung on to the coat tails of Nurul Quader were successful in creating a niche market for their products. It happened because our labour was cheap, and our price was right. It also happened, at least in the formative years, because the importing countries gave us a break with some favourable treatment. It also happened because our manufactures met the standards. But the cheap labour that ushered hundreds of entrepreneurs into this new industry has also been our bane.

