

Workers' rights

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those workers who may lose their jobs due to redundancy. It is a must to ensure Social Safety Net for all. Only if we can do this, will it be possible to attain our development goals.

As Bangladesh is determined to be a middle income country by the year 2021, we need long term and short term planning, which will change the country's existing development structure. The government has already approved 7th Five Year Plan. To implement it, we need technological development. But we also need to transform our manpower into human resources. Side by side, we need adequate work opportunities, decent workplace conditions, standard wages, OHS provision for workers, development of living standards, and social security. Together, all these can build a better future for Bangladesh.

For this, we must nurture our existing work force. We need to organise the informal sector workers by arranging suitable and upgraded vocational training. Entrepreneurs, investors, and owners should play a vital role like the government in this regard. Workers should be brought under the protection of identity cards. In recent times, we have seen that workers without identification have to go through immense suffering and harassment at the hands of different law enforcing agencies that spelt disaster for lives and livelihood. The Minimum Wage Board needs to be revised for reasons like price hikes, rising house rent, and rising salaries of government employees. Although there is provision for forming the Wage Board after five years, in the Labour Act, it is also mentioned that it can be reviewed, if necessary, after three. It is a matter of deep concern that growing inequality is widening the difference between the poor and the rich, the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer. We must

turn this situation around.

For the sake of sustainable development, we have to go forward. We need to build educated, modern, and world class manpower. This skilled manpower will not only be the part of the country's domestic economy, but it also will strengthen the economy through remittance. In this regard, we need to make

ing agriculture sector and initiate alternative training for excess/surplus workers. For individual development, increase of family income, and national development, we need to transform our manpower into human resources. Last but not least, we need to develop youth workers through vocational training, ensuring their

scenario here is everything but. Trade unions are not treated with respect. Not only equal distribution, but effective participation of trade unions must also be ensured for the better industrial relations. The relations between factory owners and workers have improved over the years, but they have not reached the expected level. However,

ber of workers in the informal sector will be benefited by this scheme. Under this scheme, enlisted workers will be provided financial support from the Workers' Welfare Foundation.

But there remain glaring gaps in the Labour Law. It focuses only on establishments, largely ignoring informal sectors and agriculture, where huge numbers of workers work. Trade unions demanded a National Minimum Wage to combat inequality, but it was not included in the amendment of the Labour Law in 2013. Compensation for workplace accidents is not adequate, workers get only four months of maternal leave whereas government employees get six. Besides, no directions are given against recruiting temporary workers for permanent positions, whereas outsourcing and contractual works have been legalised.

It is now necessary to reduce the gap between different parties, while negotiation should be supported by information. Short term-long term concern should be separated, good governance should be ensured, and the legal system should be reviewed for better results. We need a permanent tripartite consultative mechanism to build sound relations between employers and employees. The consultative council will be an authority and its recommendations have to be accepted by the policymakers and other stakeholders. Besides, a rights based approach is of the essence in labour law, industrial relations, and social dialogue.

Finally, we look forward to a better and prosperous Bangladesh that has fulfilled development targets, where sound industrial relations will be ensured, workers' rights will be secured, and exploitation will be eradicated.

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a dynamic bridge between agricultural and industrial work. We have to ensure trained and modern labour forces for agriculture, forest, fisheries, and livestock sectors. We need to arrange trainings for those factories which are going to shut down due to lack of technological expertise and automation. We need to modernise the exist-

skills are recognised and certified, which are critical for formalising their jobs.

Social dialogue is an integral part of industrial relations—it is the foundation of mitigating and reducing disputes. However, social dialogue depends on the equal dignity, recognition, and capacity of all parties. The

90 percent of cases at the labour courts in Bangladesh can be solved at the sectoral and factory levels with better social dialogue.

The government has recently drafted the Provident Fund Scheme for Informal Sector Workers of 2016, which seems to be a positive step for informal sector workers. A large num-

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