



How to deal with compulsive dodgers



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NO STRINGS ATTACHED

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Most of us would like to think that we are sincere human beings, who always mean what they say and say what they mean, and make promises which they have every intention of keeping.

Most of us also tend to lie to ourselves.

If this sounds a tad harsh, think harder. How many times have you promised someone that you will meet and catch up with them, that you will come back early from work, that you will deliver the report ASAP (as in, by today), will NEVER leave the toothpaste tube uncapped, or will definitely not miss your column next Friday, and then royally failed in delivering? Brutal, isn't it, when you really get honest with yourself?

While the person on the receiving end of this failure might not accept this argument, the truth is often you really did have good intentions, but somehow faced all kinds of crises that come in the way: a flood of emails you just had to answer right there and then; the cap rolled off and before you could catch it, an overzealous mouse just grabbed it and ran off into the abyss of the drainpipes; your brain was too fried from too many meetings. Oh, just admit it: YOU FORGOT or JUST DIDN'T FEEL LIKE IT! Admit it, no matter what the consequences. It will, as they say, set you free.

Unfortunately, there are those among us who take this game of bluffing as a sport or an art form and give ardent reassurances with absolutely no intention of following through with them.

Officials of many public institutions have mastered this art. And this is where the phrase "kalke ashen" ("come back tomorrow") was born, and where it is used for almost anything that needs to be done in a jiffy. Be it a passport, driver's licence, a letter from the land office, a correction on a voter ID card or fitness certificate – there is always that "kalke ashen" refrain.

you go round and round in circles with their artful circumvention. You ask your tailor if he can deliver your order on Sunday, the only blouse that matches the saree you will wear for a wedding on Monday, and he emphatically reassures, "Ji, apa." Of course, you are settling yourself into a trap, because there is no way that he will deliver that blessed garment on the day he agreed he would; it goes against any well-established tailor's code of behaviour. So, the whole of Sunday will pass until it's evening, when the panic will set in and you will call the tailor and ask hysterically, "Amar blouse koi?" ("Where is my blouse?") In

honeyed tones, he will inform you that it is still in the "factory" – that is, the work space where the actual sewing takes place – and he will definitely have it ready the next day, "in the morning" but actually in the afternoon! It won't matter how loudly you scream into the phone, telling him how he has ruined your life and if you had known he would betray you like this you would have never given him this task. The tailor has developed a strange immunity against these tirades from so many of his customers that it's all white noise to him now. Which is why he will placidly say, "Achha apa, dekhi ki kora jay." ("Okay apa, I'll see what can be done.")

Tailors, no doubt, are the kings of this psychological masquerade, but there are other equally adept contenders. Contractors, masons, plumbers, electricians – any service without which life will come to a standstill. The roof may collapse, the bedroom may get flooded, and you may get electrocuted, but these individuals will still be experts at dodging their clients. At the time of the negotiation, the alacrity with which they will agree to the time frame you set will leave you in a tizzy of joy or relief, depending on the circumstance. But once the deal is made, everything changes. Like marriage, one of the contracting parties will be left anxiously waiting for the other to show up, while the latter will flit around and save the entire world before coming home to the job they are supposed to do.

When those in important positions give instructions to their employees to get something done, they often make the mistake of believing that it will happen just because they said so. They forget to follow up. And if the instructions were given to someone who in turn needed to give instructions to another person, chances are that the first person forgot to follow up, too, and the second person plainly forgot (or thought it could wait till after a longish lunch), leading to an inevitable explosion. No wonder most bosses experience high blood pressure.

As irritating as it may be, the only way around these dodgers is to micromanage and nag them (every day) into compliance, while developing an extraordinary level of tolerance for irresponsible behaviour.

10 YEARS AFTER THE RANA PLAZA DISASTER

Let it not fade from public memory

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Ten years have passed since the Rana Plaza disaster shook the global garment industry to its core, claiming the lives of over 1,100 workers and leaving thousands injured. The tragedy, along with the Tazreen Fashion factory fire just months earlier, exposed the dire state of the ready-made garments (RMG) industry in Bangladesh – poor factory safety, unequal power relations and practices in the global fashion supply chain, and gaps in worker rights. In the aftermath of this catastrophe, various initiatives were launched to address the systemic issues plaguing the industry. Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), in collaboration with the Accountability Research Center of the American University, comprehensively reviewed the progress made in factory safety and workers' protection and highlighted issues and areas for further improvement, which are required to build an RMG industry that is fit for middle-income, 21st century Bangladesh.

The Rana Plaza disaster has been extensively documented by policymakers, academic researchers, trade unions, and activists. Yet, the tragedy seems to be fading from public memory, particularly among younger workers. The physical site of Rana Plaza now stands as an empty plot scattered with debris, marked only by a sombre statue erected by workers. Unfortunately, younger workers and new migrants to the area seem to be unaware of the historical significance of the event that unfolded at this location just a decade ago. Although the government initially promised to

Worker Safety, which implemented extensive training and monitoring programmes.

At the global level, foreign governments pledged funding and implemented legal protection measures such as mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence (mHRDD) to safeguard the rights of workers in the global supply chain. The Bangladesh government has taken on more responsibility for factory regulation and workers' rights through efforts such as the

While building safety has been a prominent concern following incidents like the Rana Plaza collapse, there has been a narrow focus on the physical safety, health, and well-being of workers. The underlying processes and internal relationships that create risks for workers' health on the factory floor have been largely ignored. Addressing these underlying factors will involve labour law reform, strengthening workers' rights and unions, and improving working conditions.

amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act, strengthening of factory inspections, institution of mandatory revision of minimum wage for RMG workers every five years, adoption of the National Occupational Safety and Health Policy, and formation of a cabinet committee on the RMG sector. These measures demonstrate a commitment to increasing transparency and oversight in the industry.

There have been significant changes at the factory level, too.



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hand over the Rana Plaza land to workers so that they could construct a hospital or another memorial, those promises remain forgotten. Still, worker advocates continue to pursue them. The absence of official commemorations, other major stakeholders' lack of recognition of the anniversary of the tragedy, and limited reference of Rana Plaza in national policy documents raise concerns about the collective memory and commitment to bring about structural changes in our RMG industry.

As mentioned earlier, many initiatives were taken in Bangladesh following the collapse to improve the industry. There was the Sustainability Compact, which claimed its success in terms of an improved legislative environment and freedom of association. We also had the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, the largest initiative, which made significant progress in promoting workers' representation and participation in the global supply chain and holding brands accountable, and the Alliance for Bangladesh

and can fully exercise their right to organise and mobilise. Trade unions must be permitted to represent and promote the interests of workers, and workers' voices must inform public policy, particularly around industrial development, social protection, and human rights.

Finally, to ensure workers' right to a decent livelihood, social security in the form of unemployment, health, and accident and injury insurances must be guaranteed by actors in the global supply chain as well as by the state.

This article is based on the report "Ten Years After Rana Plaza: Remembering, Learning, and Moving Forward." An exhibition titled "10 Years after Rana Plaza" is taking place from July 21-29 at Drik Gallery, displaying photographs and stories of survivors and their families, by World Press Photo award-winning photojournalist Ismail Ferdous. It is an immersive experience, intended to provide a space for quiet and sombre reflection about the disaster.

