

**SOCIAL COMPLIANCE**



**round table**  
গোল টেবিল বৈঠক

Second Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010  
Dhaka Sheraton Hotel

Documentation



## Conveyor

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## Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)

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BSCI is a leading system aiming at improving social compliance in the supply chain of companies sourcing globally. Created in 2003 and with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, the BSCI provides its member companies a uniform methodology and tools to involve their suppliers in a continuous development oriented process. In addition to this, the dialogue with stakeholders on different levels plays an important role in BSCI's approach.

## Organizer & Facilitator



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LIFT Standards e.K. is a consultancy firm providing advisory service on social compliance with audit, remediation and enhanced productivity service to improve the working conditions.

LIFT Standards has been established 2001 in Dhaka and has a proven record to intensively worked in Bangladesh with suppliers and buyers in the interest of improved working conditions.

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## I. Participants List

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>
Adv. Lutful Hai	Parliament of Bangladesh	Chairman, Standing Committee on the Ministry of Commerce
Md. Israfil Alam	Parliament of Bangladesh	Chairman, Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment
Sarah Begum Kabori	Parliament of Bangladesh	Member of Parliament
Dr. Dietrich Kobschull	BSCI IGEP Foundation	Representative Chairman
Md. Shahidullah Azim	BGMEA	Director
Adnan Nafis	BGMEA	Research Information Officer
Md. Emdad-ul Haque	BGMEA	Assistant Secretary, Social Compliance Cell
Daniel Seidl	BGCCl	International Director
Md. Rejaul Haque	Lindex Bangladesh	Compliance Coordinator
Patric Gehlhaus	METRO Group Buying	Office Manager Dhaka
Margaret Chan	METRO Group Buying	Executive Manager, CSR
Helen Johansson	MQ Retail AB	CSR & Environment coordinator
Steven Ma	MQ Shanghai	CSR Specialist
Md. Nazrul Islam	MQ Retail AB, Dhaka	Country Manager
Maren Boehm	OTTO	Corporate Responsibility Asia
Ahmed Moyeen	OTTO International Bangladesh	General Manager
Zia Ahad	PVH	Regional Leader
Abu Arshad Khondoker	Wal-Mart, Global Procurement	ES Supplier Development Manager
Zahangir Alam	Wal-Mart, Global Procurement	ES Supplier Development Specialist
Mohamad Helal Uddin	Fiza Sweaters Limited	Managing Director
Ahmed Ullah	Han Apparels Ltd.	Director
Azad Ahmed Patwary	Knit Plus Ltd.	Executive Director
Shamim Ahmed	Triton Textile Ltd.	Compliance Manager
Jibananada Lodh	Parkscene Bangladesh Ltd.	General Manager
Md. Qamrul Hasan	Parkscene Bangladesh Ltd.	Manager (Admin & Compliance)
Mohin Hassan	northern group	Managing Director
Md. Manjur Morshed	GTZ	Senior Social Compliance Advisor
Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed	BILS	Assistant Executive Director
A.K.M. Nasim	Solidarity Center	Program Officer
Amirul Haque Amin	NGWF	President



Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan	BTUC	General Secretary
Fahima Akhter	BIGUF	President
Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad	Bangladesh Economic Association	President
Farid Hossain	Associated Press	Moderator, Bureau Chief
Christian von Mitzlaff	LIFT Standards e.K.	Facilitator and Organizer
Farhana von Mitzlaff	LIFT Standards e.K.	Organizer Team, Photographer, Compliance Consultant

## II. Reasoning of the Round Table

Following the Formation of the Round Table on Social Compliance in October 2009 the second Round Table held on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010 at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka providing an occasion for a sincere dialogue of progress minded individuals from directly involved stakeholders on labour related aspects in the garment industry.

The Round Table discussion shall create understanding among the participants and elaborating practical approaches contributing to the implementation of Social Compliance in industry aiming to develop a 'Bangladesh – driven consultation process'.



Participants are the business partners, associations, trade unions, NGO's, academia, Government representatives and Members of Parliament.

At the first session of the Round Table last autumn, the stakeholders articulated their interest to form a dialogue platform, meeting regular and have given themselves a set of rules enabling a frank discussion in a constructive and respectful manner.<sup>1</sup>

During the last year discussion, each participant's group listed a number of issues as possible topics for the agenda. From the most frequent and overlapping listing the topic of

'Communication and collaboration among stakeholders in times of labour unrest'

chosen as topic for this second Round Table this March. The intention has been to elaborate, which mechanism possibly lead to an escalating labour conflicts and which are de-escalating strategies, each stakeholder could contribute here.

This documentation covers this session with discussion and the workgroup results.

The Business of Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) sponsors the stakeholder dialogue on Social Compliance and LIFT Standards e.K. is the organiser and facilitator.

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<sup>1</sup> See documentation Formation Bangladesh Round Table 7. Oct. 2009, page 16

### III. Agenda

#### **“Communication and collaboration among stakeholders in times of conflict”**

held on Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010, 9:00 –13:30 p.m.  
at Palash Room, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, followed by a lunch.

#### **Programme**

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- 09:00 Introduction by the participants
- 09:10 Address by the Chief Guest  
Adv. Md. Lutful Hai  
Chairman, Standing Committee on Ministry of Commerce,  
Address by  
Mr. Md. Israfil Alam  
Chairman, Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment,  
Input brief by Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad
- Continued opening session with addresses by key participants
- 10:40 Tea break
- 11:00 Working session of the Second Round Table
- Scenario of an escalating labour conflict example
  - Stakeholders response – group work
  - Discussion
- 13:15 Notes by the Organizer on the Round Table structure
- 13:30 Lunch
-

## IV. Address during the opening session

For the opening session the press has been invited and participants from each stakeholder group has been asked to briefly address the Round Table on the question of implementation of Social Compliance in Bangladesh. Which relevance do they see in this initiative and how to contribute towards the objective of Social Compliance in Bangladesh.

On behalf of the stakeholder group the following person addressed the Round Table (in chronological order) after a brief welcome by the Organizer:

1. Mr. Patric Gehlhaus, METRO
2. Mr. Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan, BTUC
3. Mr. Md. Shahidullah Azim, BGMEA
4. Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, BEA
5. Adv. Lutful Hai, Chairman of Parliament Standing Committee and Chief Guest
6. Ms. Sarah Begum Kabori, Member of Parliament
7. Mr. Israfil Alam, Chairman of Parliament Standing Committee
8. Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad – commenting the morning session

### Address by Mr. Patric Gehlhaus, Metro

“We from Metro Group see Bangladesh as a very potential market. The problem we are facing is however the reputation and buyers hesitate to come to Bangladesh and are afraid about their orders and production due to unrest and negative news in Germany.

Our biggest aim is to improve the reputation of Bangladesh in Germany and generate more business in this country. I believe that as an outcome of the previous Round Table we do all understand that if we work together we can improve the social standards and the business environment in Bangladesh. The fact that we are coming together again today signify our willingness to cooperate, which already is a big step forward. I do expect from this day an open discussion and views and to find solutions and agreements (action plan) how to work together. To improve the communication in times of conflict is very important and is even more of importance prior to a conflict arises. I do hope to develop a common understanding. Thank you.”





## Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan, BTUC

Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC)



"I welcome this initiative, the Round Table on Social Compliance, and think it is very time relevant and effective for the workers of Bangladesh. The situation prevailing in the RMG sector is still under very poor working conditions, which I may point out on the occasion of the presence of the buyers. You will know of the fire few days back and 21 workers died.

The factories are not necessarily in an industrial complex but in housing buildings, neglecting the building code and the government inspection is very weak.

Workers are so devoted giving their lifetime working 10-12 hours but only receiving the minimum wage of 30 USD, which is insufficient to live. This is a sad part and how can the production be good under this condition. The Round Table can look into ways how to increase the living wages of the workers. The previous government announced to provide with 100g/day roughly 2 USD provided for 100 days work in the year of 150 Tk. equal of 2 USD. If we would take this as a minimum than the wages should be around 70 USD. Unfortunately the present wage is about 30\$ as it is a question of 'life of death'. The ILO sets the minimum of 2\$ per day. The minimum wage shall be of 5.000 Tk. equivalent of 77 \$ a month. I hope that in the course of the discussion we could come to a conclusion, which would be very helpful for the working class of Bangladesh.

Thank you very much."

The Facilitator requested to not go into technical issues at this moment and rather point out what shall be the mechanism of this Round Table in order to discuss topics.

## Mr. Shahidullah Azim, BGMEA



"I feel honoured to speak this morning at the Round Table on the topic of 'Communication and Collaboration among stakeholders in times of conflict'. It is a good initiative by BSCI all stakeholders group if the true picture is shared.

Communication is crucial and in most cases you find that the workers are misled and misdirected, getting agitated very seriously on non-related issues where their factories are not involved. For example, if a worker dies

in a road accident the workers go on rampage breaking factories.

When it comes to communication in garments we do have Compliance Officers who listen to the grievance. On the top we have Participation Committees and we are working that all our members factories are strictly following this.

BGMEA sticks to assure working conditions at the factories and maintain a Compliance Cell with 39 officers trained at buyers like wal-mart, Sears, Carrefour, H&M and ILO to conduct courses on Code of Conduct and raise awareness of members factories and educate manufacturers on compliance issues.

For the medical health care of garment workers BGMEA established 12 medical centres, buys medicine and advocates on productive health for the garment workers. BGMEA started a hospital at Dhaka and Chittagong. We also have education facilities for our girls and boys with schools for the workers.

BGMEA and GTZ are working in the social compliance activities.

We understand that we need to increase the communication with the workers. As a part of this initiative we have started a workers fair in Dhaka in 2009 and in 2010. We also launched the BGMEA hotline by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2009 to which any worker can call to voice their grievance. .. We all are open on suggestions how to increase the communication between the workers and the owners.

You need to understand that we cannot enforce but only educate the members in the garments.

Finally I like to offer my gratitude to the organizers for the remarkable offer and I am also very excited to see such a gathering. At the same time I would strongly demand a proper and actual presentation by all concerned stakeholders of the RMG sector in this perspective. I believe if we present all the facts properly we can achieve improvement in this sector.

Thank you very much."

## Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad,

"I think this two terms:

**Communication** and **collaboration** are extremely important. Even if in a family context there is no communication between father, mother and children that family cannot be happy. There has to be constant communication. Children have certain rights, parents have certain rights and obligations and in order to fulfil the obligation on the parts of the parents, they should talk to the children. Otherwise you will find the family very unhappy although you can force the young children to do certain things but eventually it may blow up and will not be a convenient atmosphere.



If you extend this to a factory situation there are various stakeholders they are at first the buyers. Within the factory they are workers and appointed managers and the owners. There need to be a constant communication. When a conflict arises you can't institute collaboration. It has to be there, even if it not functioning all the time nevertheless must be a mechanism available to press it into operation in times of conflict.

In Bangladesh we have been talking about this mechanism for a long time but I am not very sure if this is functional mechanism as of even now. As far I understand no Trade Unions are in the garment industry so whom do you talk to? They may be several people who might be in conflict of themselves. They maybe several people and they are in conflict of themselves and therefore you can't resolve the issue. So I think, a mechanism has to be established and the ILO Decent Work and Social Dialogue within factory, even if we keep the Government out – even within the factories - the owners, the management and the workers do have a conflict-free situation. When you have a number of people, doing a number of things, there will certainly occasions where conflicts will arise. But if you can anticipate them, we know where the conflicts might arise. Therefore, unless we pre-empt the occurrence of conflicts, there will be conflicts and we see this happening in Bangladesh. Therefore the compliance issue is extremely important, like the work environment for example. Very recently the fire in a factory and the inquiry committee has blamed the owners, so there has to be the right thing, I think their attitude is not right.

When I go into discussions like this, whichever part I am speaking to will claim that whatever he is doing is right and that situation is where conflict is to be bound to arise. Therefore we need to be flexible.

Dialogue is not of getting *my* ideas right. It's a 'give and take', you have to discuss and find common grounds and then minimize the conflicting areas. And that's the way the process, the dialogue the collaboration can develop.

I think we are in Bangladesh still way down from the ideal situation and we may never be able to reach the ideal situation but we may come close to it and that should be the enabler.

Now if you bring in other actors, like the government and the buyers from outside than it becomes much more complicated because they are other aspects that come in. Therefore they has to be a process of communication among these various stakeholders which will lead to collaboration. The areas identified last Round Table, which brought in a whole lot of aspects from the government, of the BSCI of all the organisations and stakeholders those has been identified. If you identified them, why don't you work on them on a continuous basis and not just once a year meeting and then we forget all about it.

This is what happened – and then another meeting let's say 6 months or 10 months with no communication in between and we come together again. Then we discuss the same issues again. This is not very helpful.

I would very strongly suggest that the two words: **Communication & Collaboration** has to be there on a continuous basis and collaboration will come on the basis of communication and discussion of the issues. I would commend very much that the process be instituted and even if it happens that all the stakeholders are not the same, I hope that all the stakeholders would be part of that process. In an atmosphere of trying to resolve the issues on a give and take basis I hope that will bring progress, although I think that we can not solve the problem next day of after or even next year. But if we can continue the process we should come close to the ideal situation.

Otherwise I don't thing that we can have a process of industrial growth, which will bring us where we should go as we are be able to go. Because there will be a lot of conflicts in destructions therefore we have to minimize them. We can eliminate them properly, but we must minimize them.

I will conclude here. Thank you very much.”

## Adv. Lutful Hai, Chairman Standing Committee on Ministry of Commerce and Chief Guest



"Hon'ble Chairperson Christian von Mitzlaff, Distinguished Guests, Hon'ble Participants, Hon'ble Organizer, the BSCI; Ladies and Gentlemen. Good Morning to everyone here.

I am indeed honoured to be invited as the Chief Guest in the inaugural ceremony of the second Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance-2010 organized by the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) of the Foreign Trade Association. I would like to express my sincere thanks to BSCI for organising such an event at a time when global financial crisis is creating a threat to the economy of Bangladesh despite increasing export of readymade garment from Bangladesh in recent days.

The readymade garment export was US\$ 12.35 billion (Tk. 86,450) in FY 2008-09 that accounted for about 79% of total exports of

our country. The industry employs 3.5 million people directly, of which 80% are less-privileged women. The RMG sector has been playing a significant role to empower the less privileged women of the country. Thus, the road to success in alleviating poverty of this nation is to be critically shaped by the continued success in RMG exports.

The term 'Social Compliance' is related to maintenance of good working environment, 'exploitation-free atmosphere', workers receiving good treatment and fair wages, reduced risk of accidents including structural and fire-side safety etc. Hence, the Social Compliance in Bangladesh's Readymade Garment Sector is of great importance despite our increasing export trend of readymade garments. The compliance issue has placed Bangladesh in a tough competition to retain the existing market share of apparel exports. To face this challenge, Government of Bangladesh, apparel producers and exporters are trying hard in producing quality products at competitive prices still abiding by all compliance norms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporters Association) and BKMEA (Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturer and Exporters Association) represent the export-oriented RMG sector in the country, they have got special responsibilities to help attain the required improvement on social compliance issues. Both the associations formed 'Compliance Cell's under their own management and mechanism. They also initiated 'Crash Programs' under which regular visits to the factories are made, particular aspects of compliance including enforcement of labor laws and fire prevention measures are examined and reported to various agencies of Government of Bangladesh. They are trying their best to improve the compliance situation at satisfactory level.

Compliance issues are mostly dealt and executed by different departments of different Ministries. However, considering the adverse impact of any non-compliance on the export earnings, Ministry of Commerce is engaged in coordinating and thereby facilitating the activities on compliance issues in the export-oriented RMG sector of the country.

Respected Guests and Participants,

In this regard, Bangladesh Government has taken some initiatives to help the industry to cope up with the compliance issues. These are as follows:

Firstly, in order to provide policy guidelines for meeting various requirements on social compliance including occupational safety, labour welfare and improvement of working conditions in the export-oriented Readymade Garments industries, Government formed a "Social Compliance Forum (SCF) for RMG" in July 26, 2005 with Hon'ble Commerce Minister as Chairman and Hon'ble State Minister for Labour and Employment as Co-Chairman. By giving top most priority to the compliance issue, representatives from Government, international organizations (like ILO, UNDP, GTZ etc.), NGOs, Civil Societies, Labour organizations, Buyers group and RMG owners have been included as members of the forum. SCF sits after every three months. Thirteen meetings of the Forum were held so far and decisions of the meetings are being implemented by the two Task' Forces (one on Occupational Safety and other and on Labour Welfare in RMG) and a Compliance Monitoring Cell (CMC) under the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB). The two Task-Forces hold regular meetings, visit RGM factories at random and make suggestions to the stakeholder associations to address particular compliance issues. SCF acts as the guiding and coordinating authority at the policy level on compliance related activities undertaken by the different stakeholders including the Task-Forces and CMC. Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) and stakeholders (BGMEA and BKMEA) regularly collect information on compliance issues.

The two taskforces, namely the Taskforce on Labour Welfare in RMG headed by Joint Secretary (Labour) in the Ministry of Labour & Employment and 'Taskforce on Occupational Safety in RMG' headed by Joint Secretary (Development) in the Ministry of Housing and Public Works were formed with the assigned responsibility to formulate compliance related Work Plans (short, medium and long term) for the RMG sector and to report the progress of the Work Plan implementation activities. All related Associations, Ministries, Departments, etc. are represented in the Taskforces. TF on occupational safety deals with the fire related workplace safety and enforcement of country's building related regulations while the TF on labor welfare deals with compliance on labour rights as per country law applicable in the sector. Both the Taskforces formulate Work Plans. Those Work Plans got nodding from the Social Compliance Forum. Taskforces hold regular meetings, visit RMG factories at random, make suggestions to the stakeholder associations to address particular compliance issues, etc.

A Tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the owners, workers and the government on 12 June, 2006 in order to ensure compliance in the garment sector. The main issues of MOU are minimum wage, appointment letter and ID cards, weekly holidays, various leaves, maternity benefits, etc.

In addition the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) is active and alert on compliance issues. It is striving to enforce Bangladesh Labour Law 2006, which is very much supportive to the compliance issues. A Crisis Management Committee, headed by the Joint Secretary (Labour) with representation from the concerned stakeholder associations and Ministries/ Departments including law enforcement agencies, has been formed in 'order' to address labour unrest situation at the factory level. Crisis Management Committee sits every month and provides necessary instructions to avert labour unrest in the garment industry.

In addition Ministry of Home Affairs is working to ensure Safety Environment and Fire Safety in the RMG factories. To improve the skill of the workers in RMG the govt. has already created a fund of taka 20 crore the income of which is being utilized to develop the workers and managers of the factory units through training and motivation.

Building code has been made mandatory for the factories so that physical infrastructures are built safe.

Ladies and Gentlemen presented here;

finally, it can be added here that Ministry of Commerce is firmly committed towards facilitating the proper environment in the garment industry so that apparel producers and exporters as well as the workers can survive in an atmosphere where both business and ethics are equally valued. We are working hard to make each garment factory socially compliant.

I thank the organizers for giving the possibility of expressing my view.

I wish the round table a success.

Thank you so much for your patient hearing.

Khoda Hafez :

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu."

## Ms. Sarah Begum Kabori, Member of Parliament

Summary in English:<sup>2</sup>



Ms. Kabori was given her own experience in her constituency Narayangonj:

There was not adequate fire preparation, fire brigade and problems in that area. Ms. Kabori advocates that fire brigades shall be in all zones of this industry. But we also don't have enough water and the need to be recovered as alternative water source.

In addition she talked about the need of Effluent Treatment Plants (ETP) as the out flux from factory makes people unwell in her constituency of Narayangonj. The industry is also facing many other problems like extortions, some of them due to political reason. The lack

of awareness is the basic problem either internal to the factories between the different level of management and workers as well as external to the factories between the industry leaders, union leaders as well as government and other stakeholders.

Another issue is the implementation of the law, which is extremely weak although the laws themselves are pretty good. The owners themselves are not to blame as they are often the victims of certain circumstances. In her consistency the owners are not living in the area but reside in Dhaka and visiting factories once in a while with the consequence to be detached from the reality of the ground and getting information's second hand and this contributes to the misunderstanding and problems that arises.

Ms. Kabori has interacted with workers and feel that they are sometimes mislead. Their understanding level often creates a kind of issues and violence and misunderstanding.

### Comments on Ms. Begum Kabori speech:

Mr. **Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed**, BILS:<sup>3</sup>

I would like to comment on aspect in the speech that workers should first talk to their management before they are running out of the factory and address to the Trade Unions.

It is law of the land who allows workers to go to the trade unions. Owners have the obligation according to the Labour code to



<sup>2</sup> Audio file in bangla on [participants site](#) upcoming

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies



form Participation Committee in the factory, which they ignore. Workers can only go to Trade Union or to rampage – no other option.

Special Department and Labour Department are not act properly. “When we see that the our workers are dying and after the investigation committees the responsible persons are not punished. There is even no single communication that one single day, a punishment has been taken. What can the workers do: they come to the factories, they love the country, they accept even the incidents where hundreds are dying, even mothers can not identify their children but even though, they are going back to the factory to work.

Mr. **Amirul Haque Amin, NGWF** (5:30)

National Garments Workers Federation (NGWF)



“I would have liked to hear from the Parliamentarian a regret about the fresh loss of 21 workers.

Violation of Labour Law will only fined with 5.000 Taka for formal punishment.

*Collaboration and communication* at factory level in times of conflict: Who will communication with whom as they is not Trade Union and no Participation Committee.

Ms. **Begum Kabori, MP**

Ms. Kabori replied in Bangla and summarised by Mr. Farid in English:

Regarding the remarks made on her previous comments:

“When workers have a problem, they shall go to the owners and vice-versa. First the workers shall go to the management and only if all attempts are exhausted, then the workers will go to the Trade Unions.

I feel sorry if I have been misunderstood and I never wanted to hurt or undermine the feelings of the workers and have all respect to them.” I do acknowledge that we have problems and that owners leave close the factory, which would not be a solution rather it needs to close the gap.



## Mr. Israfil Alam, MP and Chairman Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment



“If the local law is not consistent with the situation. Social Compliance is a very important issue and very difficult to implement in Bangladesh. As lawmaker we want that the law of the country is implemented as well as international protocols and we have to think of all citizens of the country. .. So far I know, the compliance situation in the RMG sector of Bangladesh is improving.

I conducted a research in the RMG sector recently on behalf of the Labour and Employment Standing Committee and it is for the first time I am going to disclose some of the results regarding the conflicting situation between owners,

trade unions, workers, journalists, lawyers, judged, human rights activists, NGO's, BGMEA and BKMEA. It is very true that there is a critical conflicting situation between workers and owners in Bangladesh.

### The details of this survey are:

- 86% stated the missing trade unions rights in the RMG sector
- 86 % agreed that a difficult working relations between owners and workers
- 70% recommended to apply the human rights according to the Constitution of Bangladesh and according to ILO Convention 87 & 98 it would reduce the conflicting situation between owners and workers
- 49% conflict situation is growing due to irregular payment and insufficient salaries
- 45% insecurity of jobs in the RMG sector, no appointment letter, no job description
- 16% misbehave from manager side
- 15% owners have no interest to listen to the problems of workers
- 12% exploitation from owners is one of the causes of conflict relations
- 11% workers are highly politicised,
- 11% stated that no conflicting situation exists
- 10% outsiders and external influence is playing a role to create a conflicting situation between garment owners and workers
- 10% waste business creating the conflicting situation
- 5% extortion by outsiders

In summery the main problems are wages and human rights.

We are advocating for the permit of Trade Union Rights in the RMG sector and the employers and donors will be benefited as any problem can be resolved through communication. Presently workers have no platform, no representatives to discuss their position. Therefore a forum needs to be ensured. Only to enforce the law and increasing the wages, the problems would not be solved.

I like to state clearly that destroying machinery, the factories is not part of Trade Union movement but a part of hostility and outsiders' role. We need to be serious about the workers rights and the genuine problem. I think BGMEA and BKMEA saying very good words in favour of the government and the country, for workers but not acting the correct thing for them. Today we have seen the result of the inquiring committee. We lost 25 workers at Garib & Garib factory due to the neglect of the factory owners. ...

The Article 37 and 38 of the Bangladesh Constitution permits the Trade Union rights to which everybody is bound to allow Trade Unions. ILO Convention 87 & 98 has given the right to form the Trade Union and for collective bargaining. This entitlement is totally neglected in this sector. If we don't ensure the enforcement of law, the enforcement of institutional guidance, direction in the RMG sector the Compliance will not be completed in the sector. This is my severe opinion. ...

Thank you very much."

## Discussion on the morning session

### Comments by Adv. Lutful Hai

"I would like to say few words. Today I am here as the chief guest but upon the time I have also be involved in the labour politics. I got elected in the workers unions from 1968-74. I firmly agree the statement of our Chairman of the Labour & Employment Standing Committee that in case the Trade Union would be allowed to function properly the conflict would reduce to a great extend. The Trade Union shall maintain a relationship with the owners. – *I used to do it, I was there.* –



The owner of the mill has been a Punjabi and we regular kept in discussion with him to solve the problems. After the independence I became the Chairman of the Managing Board and were a Member of the Parliament at the same time. With the help of the workers the composition mill achieved highest production and earned the highest profit. Still I remember the date in 1972 when I came down to hand over a cheque of 82 raj the profit in 1982. Why shouldn't the labour not cooperated as they enjoyed all entitlement. Why were their to cooperative, because we gave the workers the full rights and benefits.

In my view it will be better the sooner we allow the Trade Unions to be active in the RMG and other sectors the conflict will be less. I can't understand why these days the people went on rampage and damaging the factories when a conflict arises, this was not there! In all these cases the workers are not involved. Some external forces are engaged to steer the damages. I agree with our Hon'ble Member of Parliament Mr. Israfil Alam on the outcome of the survey conducted and that he highlighted the Trade Union as stated in our constitution and the sooner we allow the Trade Union to function in the better it will be for us.

Our owners are not very experience, unlike the other countries where they have a history of 100 years experience of labour activities. Our people are mostly new and as our Hon'ble colleague said, they mostly reside in Dhaka and hardly to the factory. How can they have a good relationship with the labours. It is the relationship, which helps to resolve the problems. The more I am in touch with the factory, the more understanding is there. The objective shall be of a fair game and fair business. Owners should not try to deprive the labour and labour should not demand whatever they like, either logical or not logical.

This is my observation, thank you very much."

### **Shahidullah Azim**

"At first I like to appreciate the remarks of our Hon'ble Member of Parliament Ms. Kabori as she is either an entrepreneur nor a worker leader. What she told is totally impartial.

Regarding the rampage in the garment industry, you will be aware of two days back recent incident at Islam Group where machinery of 2 billion Taka has been damaged. This entrepreneur receives the awards from Wal-Mart and other importers for the six consequent years. This factory was very rudely rampaged and the people hammered and destroy all the machineries. The outside labour leaders make the conflict between the owners and the labourers. We don't have problems with the Trade Unions but we are scared about the word *Trade Union* because of our bitter experience. We have 150 factories with Trade Unions, which are all closed down.

We have Participation Committee dealing with the issues of the workers and communicating with the owners, which we appreciate and should be from the workers of the factory and not from the outsiders. At Islam Group they gave increment every 12 months instead of others, now again they asked for 30% increment after 6 months but how can the factory pay?"

### **Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan**

"Two comments: First I can ensure what Mr. Israfil said about the Trade Union is true and it is the Trade Union the real authority who can ensure that the issues are not dealt at the plant level. When there is no solution at the plant level with the workers then the unrest situation came out and it shows that the workers issue are not addressed properly. Participation Committee are not an alternative to the ILO Conventions and I can ensure if Trade Union will be allowed and implemented about 90% of the problems would be solved at the table level inside the factory and the unrest situation would be minimised.

We appreciate this forum and also the remarks from the Hon'ble Chairman of the Standing Commerce for the Ministry of Commerce and also the Chairman of the Standing Committee of Labour and Employment.”

### Ms. Maren Boehm



“I am sitting here with a very sad feeling of ‘deja vue’. Actually Mr. Amirul Haque Amin and myself have been involved in the Spectrum Case many years back and that time we were sitting with BGMEA and BKMEA and the government. We have seen the previous initiative as well as the Monitoring Compliance Cell at the Ministry of Commerce, a total of many initiatives over the recent years but obviously they aren’t enough, I am sorry to point out. It is still a heart attack for all of us, it is tiring that it is still happening, the unrests and so on. As I am observing the market for many years we in Otto trace it back to management problems as they are also related to communication. We are regular in the factories and conducting audits and as a simply example when the toilets are not clean, I observe a nervous management instructing the

cleaning lady to do it better next time. We still have management communication issue here as this women will hardly know, what *do it better* means, rather it need to explain to her what to do and which are the expectations.

Responding on the topic today *Communication between all levels* is crucial to avoid accidents and unrest reaching smooth cooperation among the factory. Beside agreeing that Trade Union have their role to play and shall work inside the factories, I also like to point out that certain rules shall be applied in regard to communication. In our experience it is not sufficient just to put three parties together but rules needs to be observed. It is not sufficient to point out the right of every party but we also need to train respecting the common rules like in communication and to stick to the rules. This is a big challenge as well as the chance of us being together as we can give guidance and structure to this dialogue, which shall benefit and implemented in the factories.

## Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad observation on the opening session

This has been an interesting session in which we have heard views from vary stakeholders' perspectives.

It is indeed in the interest of all concerned in this industry to see that the industry prosperous and therefore **blame game** will not do and need to be avoided. So what shall we do?



We need to identify the issues and as I have said earlier some issues are internal to the factory others are internal to the industry. Yet there are other issues which are external to the factories, as well as external to the industry but internal to the country. Finally there are issues, which are external to the country. We need to identify all those issues when we are discussing while acknowledging that the industry in prospering.

During this discussion we have been mostly discussing in issues internal to the factory and internal to the industry and I think rightly so. One of the repeating issue coming up is the Trade Union and it's institutional right. Well, we may not like it but it is our Constitution. We shouldn't violate our Constitution and I would argue that we should follow the Constitution and many problems will be resolved. Trade Union is a Basic Right, is recognized in the Constitution and internationally. Rather we have to find ways to make it work better and also as the survey has strongly suggested that the non-existence of Trade Union is a major issue. I also mentioned in my earlier contribution the importance of *whom do we talk to?* You may have arranged a certain arranged process, but this will not do, as I believe it has to be representative of the workers. (51:31) Trade union is perhaps the only way by which the workers will be represented. I think that is extremely important as there is no mechanism otherwise to discuss.

I have been involved in some of those discussions last time when the minimum wage has been fixed. Trying to play the role of 'internal tutor' in my function as President to the Bangladesh Economic Association we had several meetings with representatives of Trade Unions and owners. But in the last meeting we broke down but I still believe, if we could have reached agreement of which we have been quite close to it, probably a number of conflicts wouldn't have arisen.

The role of the overseeing ministries is to watch that every party is acting properly and needs to be ensured under the law. Once we look outside of the factory and look to the current minimum wage of 1.662 Tk. compared with the poverty level one of a 2 adult household can not support the family as this amount as way below the poverty level.

How can then the workers survive much below this level? We need to be concerned with the price for the workers as they are the bases for production. But at the same time we have to be sure that the owners also survive. The correct wage can not be decided either by the owners nor the workers and even not even by the government. It need to be a dialogue among the parties and should it be 1600, 2, 3, 5 or 4.000 and what will happen to the industry. These are the issues we were looking at that time. They need to be an independent body. We had a commission set up but I am not sure whether it did the job on a basis of thorough research.

Once the internal issues are discussed we have to bring it outside of the industry: the fire brigade, the law and order situation and the environment among others. But also the responsibility of the various ministries, which also need to bring into the discussions. Otherwise you may a do a good job within the industry but the outsiders may disturb the whole thing.

We also have all the conventions we have to hang up to. We discussed about the ILO and the Decent Work Programme at lot, which includes all the issues. Our industry and government subscribed to that and we should try to implement that. If we subscribe to something but we do not implement, then we are cheating ourselves. Why did we sign in the first place? Because if we have reservations we shouldn't sign it, *but if we sign it – we must implement.*

In total it is total Communication issue. The word has been rightly chosen and it need to be an ongoing process. It can't be *one off*. I did in today and perhaps we do it again some months later. It rather need to be a continuous day process as we don't sit every day.

*Communication* is the mean, *Collaboration* is the result and the good environment is the outcome. Like when the factories works very well the industry works very well, which would be the ultimate outcome. I can see that this Round Table is set up on this concept. We need to try avoiding Blame Game, which we love in Bangladesh to do and bring up substantial issues and try to reach conclusions, then I foresee to progress. Otherwise we continue like we did over the years, blaming each other here and there and go home - that will achieve nothing.

Thank you very much."

- Tea break -

## Address to the Round Table by Mr. Dietrich Kebschull

In India we do maintain a Round Table for the last 10 years which includes the government and started with a lot of enthusiasm, which came bit down. The government joined with many good proposals and today we can say to have a climate of good cooperation but lacking good solution so far. We are talking a lot and have a good set of proposals what could be done but as soon it comes to concrete problems we realize the complex situation of involved parties and competences with the issue of contracted versus permanent labours.

In the large picture is it a good group and forum for constructive talks. Although we can not change the world but this is a small leverage to begin with.



## V. Working session

### Scenario of an escalating labour situation by Mr. Zia Ahad

In order to stimulate the discussion, Mr. Zia Ahad kindly agreed to present a exemplary situation, in which a labour conflict escalated:



“I like to give an example from a realistic scenario which could illustrate the importance of the session we have today: the importance of communication and highlight perhaps the consequences of a gap that may arises from polarisation or inappropriate engagement. I will not use any names in my example as all of you are familiar reading the newspaper of what goes on in the industry, which we often read in sensational terms therefore perspectives sometimes differs of the same facts.

I like to emphasise on recent incidents that happened in a sporadic manner all over the country and perhaps the lack of lessons we have taken from it. The point I like to cause relates to the incident of violence we often see, even this morning as well. The violence we have seen spreading out in the streets and other places often has a spiralling effect. We often see that a very small issue escalates into major problems and can lead to vandalism.”

Conflicts we had where unattended concerns of workers, who do not find an expression at the workplace and therefore escalated into a scenario where it can get out of control.



This is the situation I like to describe:

A large factory has a number of workers who express dissatisfaction with their supervisors, what for ever reason. The workers seeking avenues to voice this and went outside the factory and started to communicate with people they thought would be of help. This created a whole chain of events, which make it necessary of external people to get involved at the workplace. Quickly did the original minor issue (dissatisfaction about supervisors by some workers) suddenly became a completely different issue. It spilled out in the street and escalated and let the vandalism inside the workplace and basically the whole issue has been lost.

Because the original issue has not been addressed when it started, it went then outside the factory into the street and eventually involved the government, the police agencies and others. After days of violence it finally and the loss of few lives, a resolution has been imposed from external. I like to sketch out the different dynamics:

Internally the concern of the communication lack carried the internal issue  
externally to those who were not involved changed context and escalating to  
violence and affected the factory and outsiders.

As an effect – what is visual is the violence and that is picked up by the press to cover the unrest which involves hundred or sometimes thousand of workers; it involves violence, it involves the administration. The question I like to bring into the discussion: Is there a way that this could have prevented proactively? Is there a way in which communication would have enhanced or avoiding the spiralling of violence?

These are the underlying question we could discuss? The idea was not to accuse any party by pointing fingers specifically. The idea is rather to indentify the kind of opportunities exists to create a communication path that could have used to avoid this escalating situation.

My question to the Round Table is: how do you see this scenario, which is in my observation regular and repeating? What do you feel could have been done in this situation to prevent the escalation of this nation to happening?

## **Working group results**

Mr. Farid Hossain introduced the task for the working group to give their reply to the question on how to improve Communication and Collaboration among the stakeholders.

“Responding to the question of what could have done to prevent the situation the stakeholder groups (suppliers, buyers, workers ... and others), will kindly display their views at the pinboard. This does not need to state your official group position, you are encouraged to reflect your individual position.”

Views by stakeholders per group:

## Suppliers

- Top management needs to handle the problem
- BGMEA and BKMEA to be more active to solve the problem with every member of the industry
- Minimum wages not more than 5% of TTL workers
- Workers needs to be aware
- Educate more both supervisor workers and management about the law
- Government policy needs to improve “to save the industry, save the workers as well as the Nation”
- Financial support
- Needs industrial police force
- Mid level management to be well trained
- Industry should be out of politics, local leaders

## BGMEA

- Can anyone guarantee Trade Union would not be politicized?
- If the Government ensures uninterrupted power of gas supply owner can save unnecessary cost of distribute to the workers
- there should be a country law against vandalism
- workers participation committee should be more pro-active

## Trade Union

- Removal of barriers to form Trade Union and exercise collective bargaining
- To ensure living wages and other fundamental rights and facilities
- Require constitution of Participation Committee

## Academics

- There should be dispute resolution system to redress the workers grievances against the ill-treatment of the management people
- Establish permanent tripartite committee with legal status for RMG sector
- Regional / area base consultative committee (Govt. + Trade Union + Owner + elected representative + NGO)
- Ensure exemplarily punishment against the persons respectively. For accidents and workers death and publish it
- Remove barriers to from Trade Unions establishing Participation Committee according to law
- Ensure legal rights including the right to participate in the companies profile

## Development Agency

- Effective participation committee
- Working groups / Committees should prepare and present suggestions or results

## Buyers

- Set up system for communication between mid level management, workers and owner
- Worker represent should be elected by workers
- Effective grievance procedure
- Human Resource knowledge of mid level management
- Training and awareness to the workers on their rights, roles and responsibilities
- Routine structured dialogue between senior management and worker representatives in factory
- Pro-active and transparent initiative by the management to solicit and resolve worker grievances
- Important to bridge the gap between owner and worker communication
- Important to create “Participation Committee” not union to have dialogue
- Owner should be fair with workers on their rights
- Solve issues within own home not with outsider
- Worker and owner should think as a family
- Instructional, regular meetings between management / workers
- Involve independent arbitrators if necessary
- Develop and implement a system for grievance / suggestion
- Install different channels
- Anonymous boxes
- Direct contacts to management
- Hotline etc.
- Awareness of workers right among workers
- How to use participation committee as communication tool in direction to management
- Management should respect the raised topic of the committee and give feedback of decision and action plan
- Social dialogue
- Aware of workers and management rights and responsibilities
- Ensure laws and regulations
- Government authority should be effective (inspection department)
- Within logical period of time revise the minimum wages

## Members of Parliament

Without allowing the constitutional legal, professional and human rights

No initiative would be fruitful to reduce the conflicting relation and labour unrest in RMG sector of Bangladesh

- a. Trade unions should be allowed to function in factories, offices and business establishment. Workers and employees working not less than five years in the concerned establishment be illegible to be member of trade organization or unions
- b. Cordial relation should be there among the owners, union leaders, workers and employees.

## Working group presentations

### **BGMEA,**

Mr. **Adnan Nafis**

«Can anybody guarantee that the Trade Union would not be politicised.»<sup>4</sup>

“The main problem for us is that 150 BGMEA members have Trade Unions and the problem they are facing are:

1. Campaigning of the Trade Union makes the factory to stop. Only during the election day it could be accepted. But after the election, the losing party will not accept and remain non-cooperative and as a result the factory will again shut down. This is the same scenario on the national level like students politics. The factory owners face practical problem and are against the word “Trade Union”. We are not against Trade Union, but this is only the practical experience. A factory is a business unit. If the machines don’t run – money is not made. If money is not made – who is going to pay the workers?
2. If the government would provide uninterrupted power and gas supply, owners could save unnecessary cost and distribute it to the workers. Although our cost increases, the buyers will not give us extra money as the costs are fixed. Consequently it need to be paid from the management pocket for the one hour electricity loss. In case the government would ensure uninterrupted power supply



<sup>4</sup> The statements in annotations « » are citations from the working group results.

and gas for 24 hours, infrastructure and road is good we would saving this money and would distribute some to the workers.

3. «A country law against vandalism should be there.»

The workers do not have to pay the damage like 2 billion Taka damage at Islam Garments. The workers will argue that they demand has not been made. When they demand are fulfilled, who is covering that costs? Who is covering their salaries if the factory shuts down for six months? The owner has to pay more money to buy the machineries. If he is not paying the workers for six months, they will agitate again, but it is them who destroyed the factory in the first place. Every day we see fire put on cars and damage, but workers never have to pay. 200 cars were broken but none will be compensated for their loss.

4. «Workers Participation Committee should be more proactive.»

We have nothing against Trade Unions or anything. But if this is more pro-active this will only ensure that workers shall be here – without politics and confrontation. Without competition the workers rights will be introduces properly and achieved. ... If this works out nicely we could think of further things.”

**Suppliers Group, Mr. Mohamad Helal Uddin «Management needs to handle the problem.»**

“This regards the gap between the top management and the workers. It is the top management who needs to handle the problem and if management would handle directly probably 99% of the problem would be solved.

BKMEA and BGMEA need to be more active to solve problems at any members’ factory. Sometimes we observed that both associations did not support their members when in problem and do not provide solutions. They might visit the factory, but when the problem is already over. If the committees are strong the worker vandalism could be countered.

1. Regarding the minimum wage, we are so much focusing on this discussion, but it only affects not more the 3-5% of the workers. The minimum wages is only for the



starters like Helpers. In a factory you will not find more than 3-5% and there can only be employed up to 4 months and then the helper is trained and qualifies as Operator. If the factory will not provide the promotion as Operator the worker will go to another factory being already trained. Coming from a sweater factory the workers salary is 10 – 12.000 Taka and the

knitting operators can get up to 14.000 / 19-22.000 Taka on contract basis salary. In sweater factories 90-95% workers are on contract basis including the women who

are earning 8-10.000 Tk. when assembling the body depending on their quality and productivity.... And in high season we are still short of 35-40% of workers and have no chance to pay less salary.

**2. «Workers need to be aware»**

The industry is not fresh anymore and contribute heavily to the foreign earning, but still we are not aware either on the side of owners nor on the level of workers. Workers need to be more aware regarding vandalism and unrest to save the industry and the nation.

Government needs to be more active in providing the policies. Only we are talking on common issues without results, rather we need to go to the root of the problem. ... Which is the real policy (strategy) to save this industry and the nation as we could not afford the example of the jute industry?

**3. «Financial Support»**

In this 'world recession' we are really facing a lot of problems. All factory owners with land and houses are mortgaged with the bank, still they are running the factories. ... We need policy for financial support to take of the burden we have to provide with our private assets.

**4. «Middle Management to be well trained»**

The mid management might create some problems. They need to stay out of politics and local leaders."

Mr. Ahmed Ullah, Han Apparels Ltd.

"We provide all benefits to the workers. Two days back, there was strike at my factory located in Savar area over 3 days. I decided to talk and to sit with the committee of the elected union. But they refused and requested to sit together with all workers. I didn't agree as we have an elected a committee. As the strike continued, I called all concerned authorities like the Ministry of Labour. BGEMEA has been



informed and the police and locked the factory on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, as I am entitled according to the law. We all sat together with the union leader but I have been accused of have doing wrong of not having paid 3 days salary, although I am covered by the book. The point I like to make is that when I started the factory, we have to educate everybody. We have the policy of 'food for education' and those who take education will get a free lunch. Now we are giving food allowance. Although we are providing all facilities, still problems arising again and again? This is my question!

## Trade Union

Mr. Amirul Haque, NGWF

We only raised 3 basic issues:

### 1. «Removal of barriers from Trade Union and exercise Collective Bargaining»

All from of barriers are meant including those in the law. I talk about our labour law the section "Termination". We already have the provisions of "Dismissal", "Discharge", "Retrench" and "Retirement", all is there. Why do we have the "Termination" law? We call this a *black law* in our language and only for the reason to hinder the workers to form Trade Unions.

Another barrier is the Labour Law 2006 as job security is not mentioned at all.



Trade Unions executives also have no secure workplace.

Administrative barriers: I like to mentioned with satisfaction that our participating Member of Parliament are not owners of factories but a big number of Parliamentarians are. This makes the administrative barriers against forming the Trade Union.

Attitude of owner and mid level management: Owners have all provision to avoid Trade Union and can hire 'muscle men', make a factory irregular and after forming trade union, reinstall the previous factory position and show this as the result of forming Trade Union. Finally this could result in

the closure of the factory to abolish the Trade Union organisation and after six months carry on with the factory.

In absent of the owners, the mid-level-management (from supervisor up to the manager) are one kind of boss in absent of the owner. Mentally they have the attitude that in case of a union would be in the factory, a separate channel would exists to voice workers and other issues with the top management. The mid-level management will never tolerate this alternative channel. We want the removal of all of barriers.

**2. «Ensure the living wage as well as other fundamental rights and facilities»**

You will be aware that the workers do not get sufficient food in the factory. Any law enforcing authorities can't change this and workers are hungry. We need the living wage.

It is a fundamental right that at least one day off per week. Legal overtime is 2 hours per day and needs to be voluntary. We know that it is not voluntary in practice. As a Trade Union we don't raise this non-voluntary overtime, knowing that the income is necessary. Although we can consider overtime up to 13 hours, at least one day off is very much needed for the workers.

Maternity Leave: Many women workers do not get this maternity leave in the majority of factories. Day care centres are missing on factory level, although the owners may claim the opposite. For which reason can the mother not feed their babies in the factory? Only because the day care centres are not usable. Those fundamental issues in the factory shall be ensured.

**3. «Participation Committee needs to be active and elective.»**

**Academics / labour right activist**

Mr. **Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, BILS**

"My first proposal is that a **Tripartite Committee with a legal status** for the RMG sector. I strongly feel that there is a necessity to establish this as this is a huge industry with 3 million workers and 5.000 factories. ... This industry only goes like a colourful thing, there will be disturbance and conflict. It is a huge establishment and is grown spontaneously, without any plan. Even in the two cities in Dhaka and Chittagong as a result of this industry we have additional 5.000 citizen without any infrastructure development, no hospitals, dispensaries, utilities services for this suddenly increased citizen. This will cause problems and we should accept this. ... A permanent discussion forum with legal status is needed. We observe many forums like BGMEA, Commerce Ministry and sometimes at the Labour Ministry, but they don't have a legal status. According to the Bangladesh Labour Law a Tripartite Committee is there and the Participation Committee on factory level but in industry level no correspondent forum exists. In our opinion many issues could be resolved if government would amend the law establishing a forum representing the Trade Union, government, employers, other ministries, civil society organisations and even the buyers could be invited there.



As I have already mentioned in last Round Table held in October and would like to repeat again, a **regional Consultative Committee** with Members of the Parliament, I appreciate the



participation of Ms. Kabori from Narayangonj and we also need for the region Tongi, Mirpur, owners group and other influential persons. This is important as many conflicts happening on regional level outside the factory.

I like to repeat the previous mentioned statements, to remove the barriers to form well functioning and responsible Trade Unions. Nothing wrong with the wording used of *politized Trade Unions* as everybody shall be politicised. If Bangladesh citizen are not politicised we would not have an independent country. We want the politic rule the country but not the partisan union. There should be highly professionalized Trade Unions with the credibility to the industry and the workers. If BGMEA would allow Trade Union, we could ensure responsible and credible TU. But other issues like electricity bill we can't ensure and workers can't pay for that bill and gas. ... We believe that Trade Union can serve for uninterrupted communication and conflict resolution.

Another issue is that there should be a **Dispute Resolution mechanism to deal with the ill-treatment of the workers by the management**. We don't have a law covering this in case a supervisor abuse the system, what is the punishment – no one knows? If the head of the management would give strict instruction not to abuse any workers, it wouldn't happened. Rather I do understand that is it one kind of excuse by the management to blame the mid-level management to disburden.

Regarding the legal provision to participate the workers of 5% of the factory profit, this is in the mind set of the workers. I don't know any factory providing this. But even if the worker would receive 20 Tk. at the end of the year, he would feel part of the process and this would already change things dealing with in the Participation Committee respectively the Participatory Compensation Committee.

I have some specific proposals to bridge the communication gap.

1. Stop local hooligans.  
It is one of the major reasons to build up the mistrust and the communication gap between the workers and the employers.
2. Exemplary punishment for the responsible person for accident, death and rampage of the factories.  
We are missing institutions and I like the wording demanding *Law & Punishment for vandalism*. Here we could include a law to punish the killings. I have studies the instruction manuals of BGMEA to their member between 2004 and 2006 in which the members have been requested to lock the back doors and to use the second stair case. Why do the member not following it? When member do not follow, why to informing the government or the police as this member is damaging our image of the industry. The members do not follow the instructions. But instead BGMEA is reacting after an incident to granting the victims 200.000 Taka as a compensation for the death.
3. Stop overacting to the media.  
It is known that those who have the money and the power and can articulate their viewpoints and in the employers group are some media-friendly persons giving wrong message and agitating. We need in-house discussions and not showing heroism in the media. Good examples of workers contributed to the factory shall also be recognized and disseminated.
4. BGMEA shall not save their members only for the fact that they are members. BGMEA is a business association and not a law enforcing agency and they don't need to take that responsibility ...."

Mr. A.K.M. Nasim, legal advisor



Regarding the 5% profit sharing for the workers, it is the experience, that without the pressure of the buyers the provision will not come into action. As it is provision of the Bangladesh Law, I urge you to support this, which will also help to establish the Provident Fund for the workers. This law date back from 1966 and is still not implemented.

### Development Agency

Mr. Manjur Morshed, GTZ

"I like to comment on the previous speakers:

In regard of the Termination, I like to point out that it is the provision of the employers and the employees. We usually mean the workers. An employer can terminate an employee without any reason but needs to be compensated with penalty of 120 days notice including benefits.



Regarding Trade Union and the Participation Committees it is the question of the 'egg and the chicken'; which comes first. ... There is no alternative to Trade Union and highly professional workers – management relation for solving the problems. Both can not achieved overnight. However, I feel that we have presently another chance, is the formation of the Participation Committee, which is even legally mandatory. ... Taking the example of Maternity Leave 12 years back, I remember well that it was expectable to the professional auditor to calculate on the basic salary as it needed time to accept for the industry to calculate on higher wages as it is the practice at present.

In a conclusion we need to start with the Participation Committee, which is democratic as members are elected by the workers and all issues can be discussed here."

## Member of Parliament

Mr. **Israfil Alam**, MP

“As lawmaker I need to state that we can not support any activities, by which the law may be violated and we need to act within the law. I therefore repeat that without allowing the human and constitutional right no initiative would be fruitful to reduce the conflicting relation and the labour unrest in RMG sector of Bangladesh. Addressing to my brothers, the owners: No business men would invest his money without analysing. In every business are opportunities as well as risks factors.



I am aware of the risk come with Trade Union. We can't disallow the Trade Union rights because of some practice of Trade Union in Bangladesh. We have tried to improve the quality and make democratic Trade Union in a real sense. Here it is the employers who could contribute a lot. Please do not reject the legal right of the workers, rather try to see the good will and coming forward for improvement. We do help Trade Union will contribute to increase the productivity and ensure fruitful and dear relation in the industrial sector.

If any factory is destroyed, owners will get support from insurance and other financial support. But if workers loss their live, the family

become helpless and we have to look after this issue. What can government do in the private sector? It can ensure the policy support, provide infrastructure but government can't operate the private business and the industry. Bangladesh government is in my view already doing everything within their capacity and scope for the private sector in Bangladesh.

I admit as Chairman of the Standing Committee to have a problem. We need to look after the workers, government, suppliers and buyers side and even the citizen. It is a very clear picture in Bangladesh that 5.000 owners of the RMG sector are very strong and are united and work within one platform. But the voice of 3,5 million workers is very weak and they don't have a platform to express their crises and solve their problem. This we need to think about it. If we don't try to understand this problem the main issue of conflicting relation and labour unrest in the RMG sector will remain not-understandable. Therefore I reiterate the aspects of the right of workers, otherwise this problem will continue.

In our opinion it is time of mutual cooperation, time of compromise and not of contradiction and conflict. We need to go ahead jointly. The position of owners in the RMG sector has very positively changed and uplifted. But the position of workers in the sector remains unchanged. Still they are living in slums but owners are gradually

developing their lives. How can we believe in this situation in the 'brotherhood' relation? How can we ensure the good working relation? These issues shall be considered.

I admit that there are some problems with the Trade Unions in Bangladesh. Real representatives of garment workers should be encouraged in Trade Union activities. If you fail in this aspect – outsiders will become the leader of some Trade Unions and have no relation with the genuine workers. These are 'created leaders' and even owners have created their favourite men in the name of the TU. This is not the right way. The dialogue with genuine workers is needed and they to be promoted and we would get the positive result.

I therefore appeal to all sides considering: Bangladesh is a poor country with so many problems that we have to go jointly. The government should ensure the inspection very effectively and try to conclude the labour law in the light of ILO Convention and our election manifesto. Workers should be cool, calculative and cooperative. Owners and brothers shall increase the salary and buyers shall try to increase the price of products. I request the representatives of all stakeholders to ensure the right of the workers."

## Comments on the group presentations

Mr. **Amirul Haque Amin**, (NGWF)

I like to clarify on the issue of imprisonment or compensation against the violation of the law:

This has been the legal provision under the labour law until 2006 there was the scope of 3 months prison or Tk. 1.000 compensation or both. During the government interim period the ordinates violating the law, only compensation will stand of Tk. 25.000. Our leaders promised us that this ordinate will not pass the parliament and would this bill will be rejected. This bill has not been placed during the first parliament period but unfortunately in the last parliament session it has been placed, passed and became: "Bangladesh Labour Amendment Law, 2009". Under this new law there is no provision of imprisonment anymore and the compensation is lowered to only Tk. 5.000. This penalty is so minimum that the owners are encouraged to violate the law.

Mr. **Syed Sultan**, BILS

I like to specify: according to the Labour Law 2006 there are the provision of punishments under particular articles:

Imprisonment

Financial penalty

But the law provides a safeguard that in case no specific violation as prescribed in the law applies, a three months imprisonment and 1.000 Taka penalty.

Mr. **Azim**, BGMEA

Listening to the Round Table discussion, it gives the impression as if all laws are in favour of the workers and none in favour for the employers.

Workers have their termination benefits but if 200 workers are not joining without any information the day after their salary payment, the production will interrupted; the employers can't ship out the goods in time and have to send the goods by air or might face the cancellation of the total consignment as the buyers have stated the stipulated

time. Who is solving this problem? One can not only be concerned of paying the wages and salaries in time.

Business is not a charity! The manufactures have invested their money to make profit! Entrepreneurs are also getting frustrated day by day due to unwanted vandalism like Mondul Garments, Dual Brothers, Islam Group, all targeted factories for unrealistic demands. The factories have been ransacked and billion of Taka loss and the factory owners can not start their factory within 6 months.



If they will not be any industry in future, there will be no workers, no labour leaders, no NGO's to stick on employers and workers to earn their bread and butter. My message to our Members of Parliament is, that the entrepreneurs are getting frustrated day by day.

#### **Dr. Kebschull**

I like to state, that I learned a lot during the discussion. To my ears this session has not been a 'blame game'. In those meetings usually one group of stakeholders points out what the other group should do. Here we are talking about social compliance. I would like to emphasize that social compliance does not mean to put up the tasks of the entrepreneur vis-à-vis the workers or the Trade Unions. In my viewpoint social compliance is *Social Responsibility* of each one working in the company. This is not limit to *rights* but also includes *duties*. Both sides, the entrepreneurs as well as the workers, need to look for the benefit of the company. The discussion today reminded me to those in China and India. Social Compliance is not restricted to Bangladesh but has a strong foreign component. There are people in the world who are using the world 'Internationality' for the protectionism. In order to help the poor in Bangladesh they find reason to boycott products from Bangladesh.

BSCI wants to avoid this with social compliance. BSCI wants to strengthen the Bangladesh companies and make them more competitive within the existing legal framework. A new type of partnership shall not emphasize on the necessity to be done by others but rather looks to ourselves of what can be done better. More income and employment can only be created through sound business. Charity and other nice to have is only possible when profitable business exists. BSCI looks for new partnership with does not only mean being social compliant but also demonstrates our involvement and keening belonging to a family of companies working for the benefit of the country and the whole community.

I like to avoid in BSCI and other social compliance discussions to point the fingers to others of what they need to improve while being satisfied with our achievements.

## VI. Organisational questions of the Round Table

At the end the of the session the Organizer raises two questions:

- a) Frequency: how often the Round Table shall meet?
- b) Core Group: carry forward today's discussion
  - bridging communication between the Round Tables
  - set next agenda,
  - responding to urgent matters in the sector,
  - set-up local sub-group (Narayangonj, Gazipur, Mirpur)
  - thematic sub-group

The Core Group would be important to carry the Round Table discussion into the respective institutions and possibly feed back their reaction to the next session of the Round Table.

### Comments by the participants:

Ms. Maren: Initially the interest of monthly meetings have been proposed and last Round Table. We agreed on a schedule every 3 months. In my perspective 6 months would be too long.

I would also like to have a working group in-between to bridge during the RT, which is necessary to ensure sound communication within the group. Otherwise we loose momentum and restart more or less where we have started and would only progress only very slowly. "

Mr. Syed Sultan: "We need to go beyond the communication among stakeholders. To whom are we going the place the recommendation of the Round Table and how do we communicate with them like the government.

The Core Group should be a real representation of the stakeholders and I feel lucky that the two stakeholders overseeing the two ministries are present with their Chairmen participating actively until the end of this session. The Core Group can follow-up with the Ministries to consider the recommendation of the Round Table and they response shall be conveyed to the next Round Table.

Thirdly, I like to say that the intellectual participations like Mr. Kholiquzzaman shall be constant contribution and I hope, he will continue to participate in the Round Table."

Mr. Lutful Hai added that exchange of communication with the government forums and the Round Table shall be established. He indicated, to report on the Compliance Cell of the Ministry of Commerce at the next Round Table.

## VII. Reflection by the Organizer

This second Round Table has been particular valued by the participants and concept as well as structure has proven to be a good setting.

With this focused discussion on one topic many good contributions and came up and although differences in perspectives have been heard, more overlapping analytical statements analyses were given by the stakeholders as one might have assumed. This documentation is in full detail to iterate the valuables contributions in the hope this material serves to develop an understanding and the will of collaboration. This industry needs all attempts to a constructive dialogue on social issues.

The topic *communication & collaboration* has been reflected from several angle and was central during today's dialogue in which the importance achieved common ground of having genuine mechanism of communication between the workers and the management, starting in the factory and make top management part of it.

The topic of wages is high on the political agenda during summer 2010 in Bangladesh and with the expected new fixing of the minimum wage board *communication* is probably one of the most important value needed in during this fixing process as well as from the time the new minimum wage will be announced.

In the interest of achieving a continuum and produce tangible outcomes of the Round Table, a frequency of every 3-4 months is necessary. In addition to the regular sessions, results from the previous session would need to be actively communicated among and beyond the participants in between the sessions. In order to move a topic forward, the discussions would need to infiltrate into the stakeholders group and institutions and vice-versa back into the subsequent session of the Round Table.

In addition to the generic discussion on compliance issues it might be advisable working in future on a conclusion about a single issue. Qualifying to proceed in practical terms and continuously monitor and discuss on this issue could eventually the potential of an tangible outcome of the Round Table sessions.

VIII. Pictorials





Pictorials



Pictorials



Pictorials





Pictorials





## IX. Feedback by the participants

### A.K.M. Nasim, Legal Advisor

- There should be dispute resolution system to redress the workers Grievance against the ill treatment of the management's people.
- Removal of barriers to form Trade Union and exercise collective bargaining
- There should be a permanent committee of stakeholders
  - Buyers and Management
  - Government → MOLE, MOC
  - Workers → Sector based
- To ensure living wages and other fundamental rights and facilities

**Ms. Helen Johansson, Buyer**

- There is a need for more frequent meetings
- It should be a clear agenda and actions should be set
- Look into a project where the Trade Union can start co-operation with one of the factories
- How can we get more support from the Government
- Also need to discuss environmental issues
- Create the working groups for different topics

**Mr. Azim, BGMEA**

- A very good and informative session. The round table should be held at every 3 months. There should be some local core group to coordinate. So there will be some continuity.

**Ms. Margaret Chan, Metro**

- Not only discussion and brain storming but also put into action for bring the topics to correct channels e.g. Government department ... to implement actual improvements
- Understanding rather than complaining will have a much better outcome
- Short time to resume the discussion

**Metro Group**

- The second session of today's Round Table was very interesting and brought up very important and good points
- In future we should develop action plans and to sit with members of the government to finally take actions and to change something
- Discussion is not enough, topics need to be worked out and could be supported by the government

Take action plan to (without name):

- Workers and mid level management raising
- Trade unions leader make aware about aims and objectives
- Focus on environment issues

Comments on Round Table (without name)

- It is very effective due to the key stakeholders are there such as Trade Unions, Employer, BGMEA, Brands, Government are involve here
- This type of Round Table need to be organized in every three months later instead of six months
- Specific agenda should be make before meeting
- Environmental issues need to be added within this round table
- All other buyers representative say, GAP, NIKE, H&M should be involved

## X. Newspaper Clippings

The Daily Star

# The Daily Star

Committed to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Tuesday, March 30, 2010 03:23 PM GMT+06:00

Published On: 2010-03-04

Business

## Roundtable points to communication gap for RMG labour unrest

Star Business Report



A roundtable in Dhaka yesterday pointed to inadequate communications among owners, workers and trade unionists as a major reason for the recurrent labour unrest in the readymade garment (RMG) sector, Bangladesh's prime foreign exchange earner. The workers misunderstand the owners as mid-level management sometimes fails to make them understand properly, the speakers observed.

Lift Standards, a Germany-based social compliance advisory firm, organised the discussion on 'communication and cooperation among stakeholders in times of unrest' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel where lawmakers and international buyers spoke among others.

Economist Dr Quazi Kholiquz-zaman Ahmad urged all stakeholders to keep themselves away from a 'blame game' so far RMG labour unrest is concerned. "The issues that led to labour unrest have been identified, now it needs special care from all sides to resolve this problem," Ahmad suggested.

Pointing his finger at trade unionism, he said, "Formation of trade unions in the industrial sector is a constitutional right of the workers and their representatives. The owners should allow such rights in the RMG sector. But, we must ensure that trade union leaders run those properly."

Lutful Hai, chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Commerce,



hoped that there will be no labour unrest in the RMG sector soon after the establishment of trade unions at all the garment factories.

"It's true that sometimes some unofficial forces provoke workers to create unrest," the lawmaker said.

"The rules for formation of bargaining agents at the garment factories are violated," observed Israfil Alam, the chief of parliamentary standing committee on the labour and employment ministry.

Lawmaker Sarah Kabori suggested owners arrange open dialogues with the workers on a regular basis in the interest of a better understanding between the two sides.

"The owners should consider the workers as part of their factories," the actor-turned-politician said, pointing to the communication gap as the main for RMG labour unrest.

While sharing her experience of such unrest, Kabori said owners seek help from the local influential people and government agencies after the occurrence of any such incident, but they can resolve any dispute through discussion among the stakeholders.

Shahidullah Azim, a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, spelt out his bitter experience of trade unions in the RMG sector.

"So far I know, some 150 garment factories where trade unions were active have been announced closed now," he said.

The machinery and apparels worth Tk 2 billion in a composite garment factory of Islam Group have been damaged recently.

"We feel proud of Islam Group, as it is one of the highly compliant factories, which received Wal-Mart award for six consecutive times," Azim said.

He said sometimes so-called labour leaders create problems in the factories instead of resolving the issues in a proper manner.

Maren Boehm, manager, CR-Buying Markets of Otto Group of Germany, said social compliance in Bangladesh is not strong. "Still the labour unrest and fire incidents are taking place in the factories due to problems in management and cooperation," Boehm said.

Dr Wajed Ali Khan, coordinator of the Sramik Karmachari Dikya Parishad, also spoke on the occasion.

## The Daily Ittefaq



মার্চ ০৪, ২০১০, বুধসপ্তাহ : ২০ ফায়ুন, ১৪১৬

আপডেট বাংলাদেশ সময় রাত ১২:০০

### ট্রেড ইউনিয়নের অভাবে পোশাক শিল্পে গোলযোগ বাড়ছে

সরকারি জরিপের তথ্য

ইত্তেফাক রিপোর্ট

রাজধানীতে অনুষ্ঠিত এক গোলটেবিল বৈঠকে বলা হয়েছে, তৈরি পোশাক কারখানায় ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন চালু না থাকার এবং শ্রমিকদের অপরাধ ও অনিয়মিত মজুরি দেয়ার কারণে বাব বাব সংঘর্ষের ঘটনা ঘটছে। এছাড়া শ্রমিক ও মালিক সম্পর্ক ভাল না থাকার কারণেও পোশাক কারখানায় তাড়াতাড়ির ঘটনা ঘটছে। বৈঠকে আরো বলা হয়, ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন চালু এবং মালিক-শ্রমিক যোগাযোগ বৃদ্ধি করে তৈরি পোশাক কারখানায় কাজের পরিবেশ বজায় রাখার কোন বিকল্প নেই। সরকারের এক জরিপে এসব তথ্য উঠে এসেছে বলে বৈঠকে জানানো হয়। জরিপের রিপোর্ট আশাশ্রী এক সভাহের মধ্যে এখানমতীয় কাছে সম্প্রদায় করা হবে।

পাতকাল দুধবার রাজধানীর একটি হোটেলের তৈরি পোশাক শিল্পে 'সোশ্যাল কমপ্লায়েন্স' বিষয়ক এ গোলটেবিল বৈঠক অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে আম ও কর্নেলিংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয় সংক্রান্ত সংসদীয় স্থায়ী কমিটির সভাপতি মো: ইব্রাহিম আলম জরিপের বিভিন্ন দিক তুলে ধরেন। অন্যদের মধ্যে এখানমতীয় পরিচালক মন্ত্রণালয় সংক্রান্ত সংসদীয় স্থায়ী কমিটির সভাপতি এজ্ঞাকেকেটি লুৎফুল হাই, অর্থনীতিবিদ ড. কাজী খলিকুজ্জামান আহমদ এবং সংসদ সদস্য সারা বেগম কবরী বক্তব্য রাখেন। শিল্প কারখানার মালিক ও শ্রমিক প্রতিনিধিরা এ সময় উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

ব্রাসেলস তিত্তিক 'দি বিজনেস সোশ্যাল কমপ্লায়েন্স ইনিশিয়েটিভ এবং শারমার্শক কোম্পানী লিফট স্ট্যান্ডার্ড যৌথ উদ্যোগে এ গোলটেবিল বৈঠকের আয়োজন করে। লিফট-এর ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক ত্রিভিয়ারাম তম মিতজলাক অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেন এবং বার্কী সংস্থা এশি'র ঢাকার ব্যুরো চিফ ফবিপ হোসেন অনুষ্ঠান সঞ্চালনা করেন।

ড. কাজী খলিকুজ্জামান আহমদ বলেন, তৈরি পোশাক কারখানায় কোন ঘটনা ঘটায় পাব একে অপরের দোষারোপ করে। শ্রমিক ও মালিকদের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বৃদ্ধি করার উপায় খুঁজে বের করতে হবে। দুইপক্ষের মধ্যে সব সময় আলোচনা অব্যাহত রাখতে হবে। পোশাক কারখানায় ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন নেই। তাহলে কে কার সাথে কথা বলবে। তিনি বলেন, ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন সাংবিধানিক অধিকার। শ্রমিকদের এ অধিকার না দেয়ার সাংবিধান সংঘর্ষ করা হচ্ছে।

এজ্ঞাকেকেটি লুৎফুল হাই বলেন, তৈরি পোশাক শিল্প দেশের অর্থনীতিতে তৎস্বত্বপূর্ণ অবদান রাখছে। ২০০৮-০৯ অর্থবছরে তৈরি পোশাক রফতানি করে ১২ দশমিক ৩৫ বিলিয়ন ডলার বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা আয় হয়েছে। যা মেতি রফতানি আয়ের ৭.৯ শতাংশ। এজন্য গার্মেন্টস শিল্পে কাজের পরিবেশ শিথিল করাতে হবে।

মো: ইব্রাহিম আলম বলেন, তৈরি পোশাক কারখানায় বাব বাব যোগাযোগের কারণে অনুসন্ধানের একটি জরিপ চালিয়ে একটি রিপোর্ট তৈরি করা হয়েছে। আশাশ্রী এক সভাহের মধ্যে তা এখানমতীয় কাছে সম্প্রদায় করা হবে। জরিপের কিছু অংশ তুলে ধরে তিনি বলেন, বিভিন্ন শ্রেণী ও পেশাজীবী মানুষের মধ্যে জরিপ চালানো হয়েছে। এতে অধিকাংশ লোকই বলেছে ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন না থাকার কারণে পোশাক শিল্পে গোলযোগের ঘটনা ঘটছে। ৪৯ শতাংশ লোক বলেছে সঙ্গ এবং অনিয়মিত মজুরি দেয়ার কারণেও সংঘর্ষের ঘটনা ঘটছে। ৪৫ শতাংশ লোক বলেছে শ্রমিকদের চাকরির নিশ্চয়তা নেই এজন্য এ ঘটনা ঘটছে। ইব্রাহিম আলম জানান, ৭০ শতাংশ লোক সুপারিশ করেছে ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন চালু করলে পোশাক শিল্পে সংঘর্ষের ঘটনা কমে আসবে।

<http://ittefaq.com.bd/content/2010/03/04/news0158.html>

## The Daily Ittefaq, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2010

The restlessness increases in the garments industries with out trade union

The survey of government facts

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It is said in a hotel of Dhaka city that there is no trade union in ready made garments industries for which anarchy and labours are unhappy and labour unrest prevailed always in every factory. Inadequate salary and wages are given to the workers for which the labours are unhappy and labour unrest occurs sometimes. The relation between the owners and the labours are not satisfactory. It is said further in the meeting that the relation between the two sides should be develop otherwise peace will not come. These facts have come out by the government survey. The report will be submitted to the Prime Minister within a few days.

Yesterday on Wednesday Social Compliance in ready made garments a round table conference was held at a hotel in Dhaka city. In the opening ceremony, Mr. Israfil Alam the Chairmen of Labour Ministry raised these things. In the meeting Advocate Lutful Hai the economist Mr. Kholiquzzaman, Sarah Begum Kabori M.P. delivered their valuable speeches. In the meeting the owners and the delegates were present.

This meeting was organized by LIFT Standards and sponsored by Business Social Compliances Initiative (BSCI) at Brussels. The Managing Director Christian von Mitzlaff of LIFT Standards was the Chairman of the meeting. Mr. Farid Hossain, AP bureau chief, Dhaka was the moderator in the meeting.

The economist Mr. Kholiquzzaman said `If any bad occurrence occurred they give blame one another. It is necessary to find ways and means how to develop the labour owner relationship. In both sides consultation should be made. There is no trade union in garments industry. Therefore, who will speak with whom? As workers haven't this right, we are denying constitutional right.

Advocate Lutful Hai said in the meeting that ready made garments keep a significant role in the economy of Bangladesh. In 2008-2009 the ready made garments earned 12.35 billion dollars by export. For this reason working conditions should be maintain in the garments industry.

Mr. Israfil Alam said that a survey has been conducted to reveal the cause of repeated conflict in the ready made garment factories. The report of the survey will be submitted to the Prime Minister with in a week. Many people said that conflict are occurring because absence of trade union in the garment industry. 49% people said that less salary and irregular of payment is another cause. 45% people said that there is no service security of the workers for which labour unrest occurs. Mr. Israil Alam said that 70% people give their opinions if there is trade union in the factory there will be no agitation and unrest.

Prothom Alo, 4 March 2010



Unrest in ready made garment industry has been occurred lacking of communication between owners, labours and trade unions. The middle management of the factories makes dealings with the labours. They failed to make the labour understand. For this reason they do not realize the owners of factories. So the workers choose the way of agitation to make fulfilment of their demands.

Yesterday, Wednesday a Round Table conference was held in a five star hotel by a German based company named LIFT Standards and discuss all hindrances regarding labours and the owners of the garments industries.

Mr. Lutful Hai was in the Chief Guest of the conference. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed, Israfil Alam, Sarah Begum Kabori (M.P), Shaidullah Azim (BGMEA) and Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan delivered their valuable speeches. Mr. Farid Hossain, Bureau Chief of Associate Press acted as a moderator.

Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmed told the labours and the owners of the garments not to give blame each other. He said further that internal and external activities are also responsible for this. For this reason, the labours, owners of the garments and the buyers are also

পোশাক কারখানায় অসন্তোষ প্রশমন

## মালিক ও শ্রমিক পক্ষের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানোর তাগিদ

শিখর প্রতিবেদক \*

মালিক, শ্রমিক ও ট্রেড ইউনিয়নের মধ্যে যোগাযোগের ঘাটতি থাকায় তৈরি পোশাক খাতে প্রায়ই শ্রমিক অসন্তোষ দেখা দেয়। কারখানার মধ্যম পর্যায়ের কর্মকর্তারা শ্রমিকদের সঙ্গে রুঢ় আচরণ করেন। তাঁরা শ্রমিকদের বোঝাতে ব্যর্থ হন। আর এতে শ্রমিকেরা ভুল বোঝেন মালিকদের। তাই দাবি আদায়ে আন্দোলনের পথ বেছে নেন তাঁরা।

পতকাল বৃহবার স্থানীয় একটি হোটলে জার্মানিভিত্তিক প্রতিষ্ঠান লিফট স্ট্যান্ডার্ড আয়োজিত 'শ্রমিক অসন্তোষ রোধে মালিক-শ্রমিক যোগাযোগ ও সহযোগিতামূলক সম্পর্ক' শীর্ষক গোলটেবল বৈঠকে এসব অভিমত তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়-সম্পর্কিত স্থায়ী কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান লুৎফুল হাই এতে প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন।

বৈঠকে আলোচনায় অংশ নেন বাংলাদেশ অর্থনীতি সমিতির সভাপতি কাজী খলীকুজ্জমান আহমদ, শ্রম ও কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়-সম্পর্কিত সংসদীয় স্থায়ী কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান ইসরাফিল আলম, সাংসদ সারাহ বেগম কবরী, বাংলাদেশ তৈরি পোশাক উৎপাদক ও রপ্তানিকারক সমিতির (বিজিএমইএ) পরিচালক শহীদুল্লাহ আজিম, শ্রমিক-কর্মচারী ঐক্য পরিষদের (স্কপ) সমন্বয়কারী ওয়াজেদ-উল-ইসলাম খান প্রমুখ। এসোসিয়েটেড প্রেসের (এপি) ঢাকা ব্যুরো চিফ ফরিদ হোসেন এতে সঞ্চালক ছিলেন।

পোশাক খাতে অসন্তোষের জন্য মালিক-শ্রমিকদের উদ্দেশে একে অপরকে দোষারোপের খেলা থেকে বিরত থাকার আহ্বান জানান কাজী খলীকুজ্জমান আহমদ। তিনি বলেন, 'অসন্তোষের জন্য শুধু অভ্যন্তরীণ নয়, বাইরের ইন্ধনও রয়েছে। এতে শ্রমিক, মালিক এবং ক্রেতা—সব পক্ষই ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়।'

শিল্প খাতে ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন শ্রমিকদের সাংবিধানিক অধিকার উল্লেখ করে খলীকুজ্জমান আহমদ বলেন, 'পোশাক খাতের শ্রমিকদের এই অধিকার চর্চার ব্যাপারে মালিকদের সহযোগিতা করা উচিত।'

লুৎফুল হাই বলেন, তৈরি পোশাক খাতে মাঝেমধ্যে যে শ্রমিক অসন্তোষ হয়, তার পেছনে অন্য শক্তিও কাজ করে। তবে এসব অসন্তোষ দূর হবে, শিল্প খাতে ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন কার্যক্রমও শুরু হবে। তা শুধু সময়ের ব্যাপার।

ইসরাফিল আলম বলেন, 'শোষণ ও হয়রানি বজায় থাকলে শ্রমিক অসন্তোষ দূর হবে না।' দূর কষাকষি বা আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমাধান পোশাক মালিকেরাই অনেক সময় মানে না বলে মন্তব্য করেন তিনি।

সাংসদ সারাহ বেগম কবরী বলেন, 'শ্রমিক ও মালিকদের মধ্যে যোগাযোগের ঘাটতি দূর করা, অসন্তোষ দূর করার অন্যতম উপায়।' এ জন্য নিয়মিত ভিত্তিতে আলোচনার পরামর্শ দেন তিনি। শ্রমিকেরা যেন বুঝতে পারেন যে মালিকেরা তাঁদের সঙ্গেই রয়েছেন।

সারাহ বেগম আরও বলেন, 'শ্রমিকদের চাকর বা দাস মনে করা উচিত নয়। মনে করতে হবে যে তাঁরা কারখানার অংশ।'

শহীদুল্লাহ আজিম বলেন, 'কথিত শ্রমিক নেতারা অনেক সময় পরিস্থিতি জটিল করে তোলে। তারা সংকট নিরসন না করে উল্টো তা বাড়িয়ে দেয়।'

become victimized. Kholiquzzaman said that owners of garments industries should help the workers to practise trade union because it is their legitimate right.

Lutful Hai said that the external force also make loss of the labours and the garments industries. Yet this unrest will go away and trade union also introduced in the garments sector. It is nothing but only time factor.

Mr. Israfil Alam said if there is extort and harassment remains with the labour there will be no happiness in the mind of the labourers. Bargaining and consultation will be the main factor of the owners and labours.

To minimise the unrest, M.P. Sarah Begum Kabori said, it will be important to reduce the communication gap between the workers and the owners. That's why she advised to organise regular meetings. Workers should understand that the owners are on their side. She also addressed, "don't think that the labours are slaves or servants. Owners should think, workers are part of their factories.

Shahidullah Azim said that some times the so called 'labour leaders' make the situation more complex. Instead of minimising they escalating the conflict.

Amader Shomoy



তারিখ: ০৪, ২০১০, বুধবার  
 তারিখ: ০৪, ২০১০ / তারিখ: ০৪, ২০১০ / তারিখ: ০৪, ২০১০

**অনিয়মিত বেতন ও চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তার কারণে শিল্পে অস্থিরতা**

ঢাকা শেরাটন হোটেল

অনিয়মিত বেতন ও চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তার কারণে শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া।

শিল্প – ভারতীয় ই-কে নব্বইয়ের দশকের দ্বিতীয় অর্ধে এ অঞ্চলে উদ্ভূত হয়েছে। এখনি শুরু হতে শুরু করে। এখনি শুরু হতে শুরু করে। এখনি শুরু হতে শুরু করে। এখনি শুরু হতে শুরু করে। এখনি শুরু হতে শুরু করে।

অনিয়মিত বেতন ও চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তার কারণে শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া।

ইতিমধ্যে অস্থিরতা হওয়া, পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া। পোশাক শিল্পে অস্থিরতা হওয়া এবং চাকরির অনিশ্চয়তা হওয়া।

<http://www.amadershomoy.com/content/2010/03/04/news0756.html>

Amader shomoy

4<sup>th</sup> march 2010

The speakers in the discussion pointed out the irregular salaries and uncertainty in servicing causing unrest in garment industry.

Restlessness in garments industries is mainly responsible for ill payment of salaries and allowances and do not have service security. If we want to remove these things we shall have to introduce trade union in garments sector. Yesterday in Hotel Sheraton a round table conference on Social Compliance with the Chairman, Israfil Alam of Labour Employment Ministry said these things.

LIFT Standards E.K of a German organization has organized this round table conference and Mr. Farid Hossain, bureau chief of Associate Press acted as a moderator. Mr. Lutful Hai was in the Chief Guest of the conference. Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmed, Israfil Alam, Sarah Begum Kabori (M.P.) delivered their valuable speeches.

In the meeting Qazi Kholiquzzaman said that 'it is true that there is unrest in garment sector. Workers and owners should stopped to blame each other and always work together to remove the unrest.

Mr. Israfil Alam said that the cause of unrest in garments sector have chalked out. Now we shall have to go for an action. By any means, we shall have to remove this unrest from the garment industry.

Report by Aminul Islam

**Prothom Alo**, Saturday 6 March 2010

### *One side – the other side*

**News:** To reduce conflict in garment factories it is important to enhance communication between owners and workers.

*Owner* ←

*Worker:* “.. even I can not reach him with the help of a ladder!  
.. How can I communicate?”



Documentation by LIFT Standards e.K.