

BILS English Bulletin **April-June, 2021**

Speakers at BILS-CPD Social Dialogue

Effective social dialogues key to recovery of labour market during COVID-19

After the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy, particularly on the world of work during the first half of 2020, a significant part since then has been struggling for rebounding and recovery. The major struggle has been confronted by different worker groups, including regular, temporary, and casual workers and small-scale employers, particularly those self-employed and involved in MSMEs, retailing, construction, road, commerce, tourism, and other informal sectors. The scenario is not different for Bangladesh. Trade union policy strategy should focus on the world of work, particularly highlighting the workers of those



who are organised and unorganised. Effective social dialogues will be the key for recovery of the labour market during COVID-19. These observations emerged at the virtual dialogue on Recovery of the Labour Market during COVID-19: Role of Trade Union. The dialogue was jointly organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), and Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) was held on Saturday, 17 April 2021.

CPD Executive Director, Dr Fahmida Khatun and BILS Secretary-General & Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan delivered the introductory remarks at the dialogue. They remarked that the rebounding and recovery of the world of work particularly those of workers and employers have been supported mainly by different public policies and interventions. These public policies and employers' actions have been primarily influenced by the active participation of the trade unions. Like other countries, trade unions in Bangladesh have played an active role both in humanitarian issues and workers' rights issues during this crisis period. A detailed review of their activities would help understand the nature and extent of their engagement, their capacities in influencing national and international policies and employers' activities, as well as the gaps in activities where further engagement is expected in the future. In this backdrop, this study has revisited the role of trade unions in Bangladesh during the pandemic period to identify a set of policy proposals for influencing the process of sustainable recovery of the labour market.

CPD Research Director Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, made the keynote presentation at the dialogue and said that different tripartite discussions and negotiations that have been undertaken during this crisis period had ensured limited success in favour of workers and MSMEs regarding coping with the risks and rebounding and recovery from the crisis. Workers' health and safety are in a vulnerable state due to the second wave of the pandemic. There is a need for tripartite

discussion and a joint statement on ensuring the interest of workers through implementing the long-term policies. Based on the national social Safety Net strategies, trade unions need to identify various support measures required for workers and their families under the provisions of social security for the working-age people, socially excluded groups, a food transfer programme, protection for disabilities and affordable healthcare. Government, employers and other stakeholders should work together to sign agreements related to international labour and human rights.

Guest of Honour at the dialogue Ministry of Labour and Employment Secretary K. M. Abdus Salam mentioned all stakeholders are heard with equal importance and monitoring is taking place regularly through the central monitoring committee.

ILO Bangladesh Country Director Tuomo Poutiainen also joined the virtual dialogue as the other Guest of Honour. Tuomo Poutiainen remarked that the government should focus on providing social safety net to labours in both formal and informal sectors.

The Special Guest Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and BILS Vice Chairman Shirin Akhter, MP, reiterated the need for continued social dialogue with the participation of all. She also called for increasing the number of enlisted organised labours.

Tripartite coordination is vital to reduce communication gap among stakeholders, said the Chair of the session and CPD Board of Trustees Treasurer and Former Advisor to the Caretaker Government and Chairman, Apex Group Syed Manzur Elahi, opined that it is the responsibility of the government to organise participatory social dialogue.

Eminent Researcher, Human Rights Activist and Former Chairperson, Ain O Salish Kendro (ASK) Dr. Hameeda Hossain, raised the sufferings of the workers to commute to the factory during the lock-down period due to lack of transport facilities which are supposed to be arranged by the employers as per the instruction of the government.

CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan, put emphasis on effective social dialogue between entrepreneurs and workers.

JSJB General Secretary and BILS Advisory Council Member Naimul Ahsan Jewel, JSF General Secretary and, BILS Vice Chairman Amirul Hoque Amin also spoke at the dialogue as Distinguished Discussants. The dialogue was participated by relevant government officials, business leaders, development activists, experts and academia, representatives from the development partners and media professionals.

[BILS press conference on the proposed national budget for the fiscal year 2021-22](#)

Call for increase allocations for working people on budget

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised a press conference calling for increasing the allocation for working people in the national budget for the fiscal year 2021-22. There is also

a comprehensive budget plan to create a complete database of working people, with specific budget plans and necessary budget allocations to provide allowance in line with price increases, formulation of a universal pension scheme, re-employment of workers and a full-fledged budget plan to vaccinate workers. The press conference was held at the BILS Seminar Hall and virtually titled "BILS Recommendations on the Proposed National Budget for the Fiscal Year 2021-22" on June 28, 2021.

Presenting the recommendations at the press conference, BILS Deputy Director (Research) Md.

Manirul Islam, said that although there were various demands for workers and working people during the COVID-19 period, but they were ignored in the proposed budget. He said that currently the second wave of Covid-19 is going on at its highest stage. There are restrictions on both internal and external. So far, 23 recovery packages worth Tk 128441 crore



have been announced, which is about 4.2 percent of GDP. GDP growth has also increased significantly in recent times. In the fiscal year 2020-21, the GDP growth has been 6.1 percent. Even then, the income of the workers has decreased due to COVID-19. Many workers have lost their jobs. They are making a living by spending the deposit money. Many workers are insecure about their jobs. On the other hand, labour migration abroad has also come down significantly to only 2 lakh people a year, compared to an average of 8 lakh people in previous years. In the past few months, many migrant workers have returned to the country because of COVID-19.

In his welcome speech, BILS Secretary General and Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan, said that many workers in the formal and informal sectors have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 and other issues including social security should be included in the budget to help them. He said, the proposed budget has neglected the participation of labour representatives in the budget process including employment security, productive employment, social security of workers. He added that there is no guideline in the budget regarding the employment of migrant workers who have returned to the country. He opined that as long as they are not able to join the work, they should be given government assistance and more importance should be given to skill development in order to create new jobs for them.

Speaking on the occasion BILS Advisory Council Member Naimul Ahsan Jewel, said the proposed budget was not a worker-friendly, rather it is business-friendly. Even then, the budget does not have the necessary plans and allocations for small businesses. He said the position of millions of workers has fallen below the poverty line because of COVID-19. He noted that European Union's fund for the export-oriented industries could not be distributed due to the lack of a database. He stressed the need to have a complete database to assist the workers. He called

upon the concerned departments to implement the recommendations of the BILS considering the difficulty of the workers.

BILS Advisory Council Member and President of Jatiya Sramik Federation Quamrul Ahsan and BILS Secretary Abul Kalam Azad answered various questions of the journalists. Also present at the press conference were BILS directors Kohinoor Mahmood and Nazma Yasmeen, Deputy Directors Md. Yousuf Al Mamun and MA Mazid.

BILS Recommendations:

The following recommendations, unanimously adopted by the BILS Advisory Council and Executive Council and signed by BILS Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz and Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, have been sent to the concerned Members of Parliament including the Speaker, Finance Minister, and State Minister for Labour and Employment.

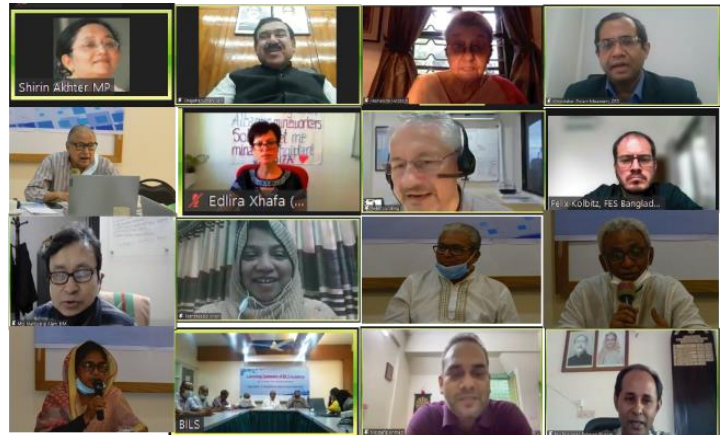
01. Ensure necessary planning and allocation in the budget to create a complete workers database. It can be a digital database. It can combine employment data (Sector/Nature of employment/wage/ vulnerability) with NID data. TUs can be engaged with this.
02. Incorporate in the budget a complete plan of actions and allocation to ensure that the proposed 100 special economic zones and 39 high tech parks are established within least possible time.
03. Allocate the necessary budget for the management of industries run under PPP as per the government decision.
04. Incorporate a budgetary plan and allocation to modernize and reopen 25 state owned closed jute mills.
05. Introduce a new project and allocate for this necessary budget to address initial analysis and planning works on creating of productive employment and Decent Work.
06. Incorporate a budget plan and allocation of necessary budget for the purpose of formulating a universal pension scheme and provision of concessionary allowances in line with the increase in commodity prices considering the social security of the workers.
07. Incorporate a complete plan of action in the budget to ensure implementation of SME budget.
08. Incorporate in the budget necessary plan and budget allocation to introduce a common pension scheme and unemployment allowance.
09. Incorporate in the budget a complete vaccination plan and subsequent allocation for workers.
10. Incorporate in the budget necessary plan and allocation for establishing of COVID-19 specific treatment centers for workers in the labor intensive industrial area.
11. Incorporate in the budget necessary plan and allocation to introduce a health insurance scheme for workers.
12. Incorporate in the budget necessary plan and allocation to introduce a common safety insurance scheme for workers.
13. Incorporate in the budget a concrete yearly plan and allocation on skill development of workers.

Inauguration of BILS Academy to increase the capacity to implement a fair and decent working environment

The training department of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS has started its journey as 'BILS Academy' with the aim of fully launching academic training on various issues related to labour and trade unions including national and international labour issues, laws, policies, standards, gender equality, leadership development. The inauguration of BILS Academy was announced through a virtual event on June 14, 2021. BILS Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz presided over the opening ceremony of BILS Academy.



Welcoming the inaugural ceremony, BILS Secretary General and Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan said that so far the main participants of BILS training have been leaders and activists of different levels of the National Trade Union Federation. For the currently employing middle level management in various factories, new labour court lawyers, job seekers and interested youth trade union activists BILS Academy has embarked on a journey to develop knowledge and skills and resolve attitudes towards resolving industrial disputes and labour grievances through social dialogue and collective bargaining to providing training on international labour standards, labour laws and labour rights, development of worker-employer relations, occupational health and safety, establishment of sustainable industrial relations, effective communication.



Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and BILS Vice Chairman Shirin Akhter, MP, said the journey of BILS Academy would add a new dimension to academic training on labour and trade unions.

Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan, MP, said the training at BILS Academy would enable not only workers or trade union leaders but also middle level industrialists to play a role in maintaining sound industrial relations.

Former Minister and IndustriAll Bangladesh Council (IBC) President Shahjahan Khan, MP, said the rights of the working people would be protected through the joint efforts of all through the inauguration of BILS Academy.

Noting that BILS has played an important role in launching Massive Open Online courses in regional languages, Global Labour University's Online Academy Executive Director Adlira Xahfa, said BILS Academy will play an important role in developing the skills of labour rights, including academics, development workers, students, including the training of trade union leaders.

Sramik Nirapotta Forum-SNF Convener Dr. Hameeda Hossain, said that training should play an important role not only for acquiring knowledge but also in practical field. She called upon the workers of the organisations affiliated with the SNF to get involved in the training program.

Welcoming the BILS Academy Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Research Director Khandaker Golam Moazzem, said that the BILS Academy's training should be extended not only to workers or trade union leaders but also to others involved in others industry they worked with labour. At the same time, he called upon the industrial relations officers of the factory to make such training compulsory.

SNV's RMG Inclusive Business Program team leader Parthiba Rahat Khan, said BILS is working for workers even during the COVID-19 pandemic. BILS has conducted about 200 factories training programs with SNV on law and international standards and workers 'welfare and protection in, through which workers' welfare and safety activities have been started in many factories.

National Coordination Council for Workers Education (NCCWE) Chairman and Jatiya Sramik League Acting President Noor Kutub Alam Mannan, Sramik Karmachary Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Joint Coordinator Shahidullah Chowdhury, Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) Heda of SRO Peter Lunding, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh Resident Representative Felix Kolbitz, Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIAM) Senior Management Councilor and Project Director Md. Mahbub Ul Alam, ILO South Asia Decent Workers Technical Team Workers Activist Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmmed, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment Rajshahi Mahfuzur Rahman Bhuiyan, BILS Director Kohinoor Mahmood and Nazma Yesmin were present at the opening ceremony. National Trade Union Federation Leaders, Public and Private organisation representatives and Civil Society representatives also present.

Call for ratification of ILO Convention 189 to establish the rights of domestic workers at home and abroad

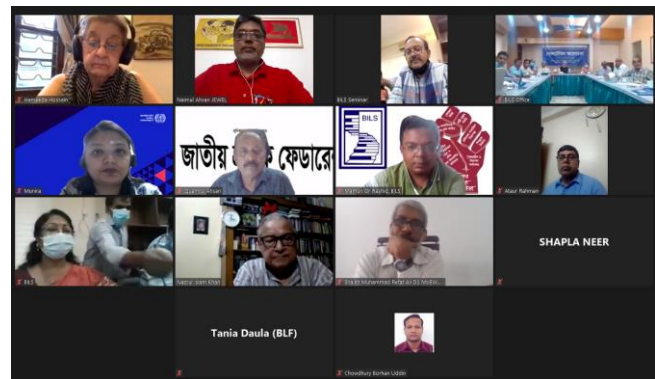
Speakers called for ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers to establish their rights and dignity at home and abroad. Speakers call this at the roundtable titled “Recommendations and future action for the ratification of ILO Convention-169 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers” was held on June 29, 2021 at the BILS Seminar Hall at the initiative of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).



Speaking on the occasion Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Employment Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan, MP, said that the number of women workers in the labour market is increasing day by day. Many of them are working as domestic workers. It is not enough to sign only policies or ILO conventions for them, but they have also to be brought under the labour law. This is possible only if all parties are sincere. Considering the amount of remittances sent by expatriate women workers what we are doing for them, she asked. She emphasized on formulating a policy for sending and receiving workers.

Sramik Nirapotta Forum-SNF Convenor Dr. Hameeda Hossain said, there should be a specific process for domestic workers so that they can file complaints if they are victims of torture. She emphasised the need for greater publicity to ratifying ILO Convention 189.

Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Sheikh Mohammad Refat Ali said, the need to establish the rights of domestic workers is equally important as ratifying the ILO Convention. He also highlighted various initiatives of the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment to establish the rights of domestic workers.



In his welcome speech, BILS Secretary General and Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan said that millions of domestic workers have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 pandemic situation. They do not have employment letters, no fixed working hours, no fixed wages, so they do not get

any benefits like the formal sector workers. Considering these, he opined that it is necessary to ratify the ILO Convention-189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

Socialist Workers Front President Razekuzzaman Ratan said that if the work of domestic workers is not recognized, the work of women will not be recognized as well. Recognition of their work will create social values, and this convention needs to be ratified to create those social values. He called for the formation of a training institute for the training of domestic workers.

Speaking on the occasion, BILS Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz said, Bangladesh presides over the conference where ILO Convention-189 is adopted. Since Bangladesh has voted in favor of this Convention, it is necessary to sign it.

BILS Executive Council Member Shakil Akhter Chowdhury acted as a moderator, while Jatiya Sramik League Acting President Noor Kutub Alam Mannan, Jatiya Sramik Federation President Quamrul Ahsan, NCCWE Member Secretary Naimul Ahsan Jewel, Domestic Workers Rights Network Acting Coordinator Abul Hossin, Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) Senior Statistical Officer Md. Masud Rana, ILO Child Labour Regional Project National Project Coordinator Syeda Munira Sultana, BILS Director Nazma Yesmin were also spoke at the roundtable.

BILS discussion meeting on the occasion of historic May Day

Call for protection of social security and rights of working people

Speakers called for the protection of the social security and rights of the working people affected by the pandemic caused by COVID-19 or Corona virus. Speakers called this at a discussion meeting titled "May Day awareness: Social security and protection of workers' during COVID-19 period". On the occasion of the historic May Day, the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS organised the discussion meeting on May 6, 2021.

BILS Secretary General and Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan said, working people are in trouble in COVID-19 situation and they are worried about their families. He said a large number of working people have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, most of whom are workers in the informal sector. Private sector workers are in uncertainty other than government employees. At such times it is the responsibility of the state to protect them.



In his welcome speech BILS Joint Secretary General Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan said, The consciousness of May Day is eight hours of labour,

eight hours of recreation and eight hours of rest, but even in the 135 years of May Day, these rights of workers have not been established. Noting that workers do not have minimum rights and social security, he called on all to unite for the realisation of workers' rights. At the same time, he demanded the establishment of rationing facilities for the workers and specialised hospitals for their treatment.

Department for Inspection for Factories Establishment (DIFE) Inspector General Md. Nasir Uddin Ahmed said, using the experience of last year, the Crisis Management Committee is working on a new action plan this year to address the existing problems. He said the TCB has been instructed to conduct its activities in labour intensive areas so that the working people can get food at lower prices. Noting that efforts are being made to immediately resolve the grievances of the workers who came to the helpline of the DIFE, he called upon all to work together to resolve the problems of the workers.

Noting the country's economy has suffered due to the COVID-19 Sramik Karmachary Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Joint Coordinator and Jatiya Sramik League Acting President Noor Kutub Alam Mannan called upon the trade union leaders at the field level to work together to implement the recommendations raised by the discussion meeting.

Workers Specialist of Decent Work Technical Team at ILO South Asia Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed said, the Great May Day movement was demanding an eight-hour workday, but in the lockdown, the government issued a notification exempting garment workers from certain working hours. The provision of the law is that exemption can be given if it is important to the people. This issue needs to be clarified.

ILO Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations (SDIR) project Chief Technical Advisor Neeran Ramjuthan said, the employment, livelihood and education of the workers have been severely affected by the present Covid-19 situation. In the current situation, workers need to ensure insurance benefits, compensation and social security. He mentioned that effective social dialogue could play an important role in overcoming this situation.

Giyasuddin Ahmed, director of the labor department, said the government was working to ensure that workers did not lose their jobs and receive a salary bonus. He urged employers to be sympathetic to workers.

Mentioning workers work out of fear of corona, but employers delay paying their wages Department of Labour Director Giasuddin Ahmed said, in the current COVID-19 situation, the government is working to ensure that workers do not lose their jobs and receive a salary bonus. He urged employers to be sympathetic to workers.

During the meeting BILS Deputy Director (Research) Md. Manirul Islam present a presentation on social security and protection of rights of workers. He said according to the ILO, global working hours have decreased by about 10 percent during the April-June period of 2020 due to

Covid-19. About 305 million people worldwide have been directly affected. About 3% of the total labour force in Bangladesh has lost their jobs. He noted that between March and September 2020, about 0.4 million migrant workers lost their jobs. During this time 2.45 crore new poverty was created. He also said that it was difficult to determine the number of workers affected as there was no specific database for workers. He added that the helplessness of the workers has increased due to the lack of adequate social security for the workers. It is important to form a high-level national steering committee comprising employers-workers, buyers and donor agencies to address the impact of workers' during COVID-19. He further added that proper social dialogue and provision of national social security for the workers is the need of the current situation.

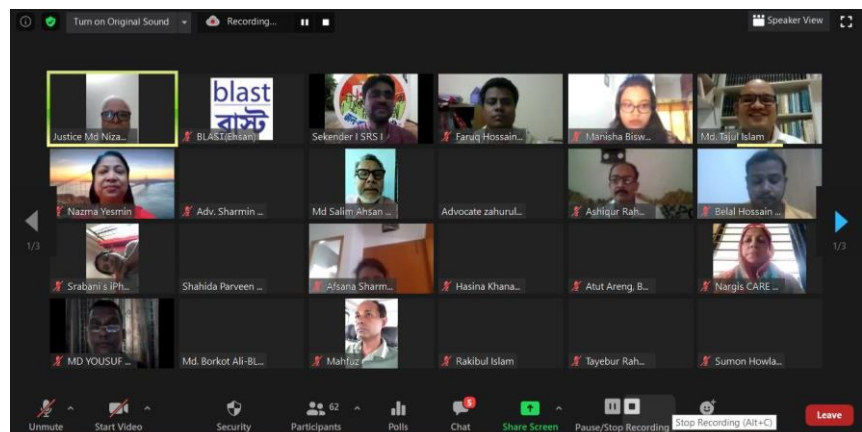
Speaking on the occasion, BILS Vice Chairman Anwar Hossain said that workers are working at the risk of their lives so they should be vaccinated on a priority basis. He called on the trade union leaders to come forward to raise awareness among the workers about the vaccine.

BILS Advisory Council Member Naimul Ahsan Jewel acted as a moderator while Jatiya Sramik Federation President Quamrul Ahsan, Bangladesh Trade Union Sangha General Secretary Chowdhury Ashiqul Alam, Jatiya Sramik Jote Bangladesh President Saifuzzaman Badsha, Bangladesh Labour Federation General Secretary Shakil Akhter Chowdhury were speaking at the meeting. BILS affiliated national trade union federation leaders also present at the meeting.

BLAST, SRS, BILS and SNF joint meeting on commemorating Eight Years of Rana Plaza Collapse

Demand for protection of workers during disasters and amendment of Labour Law and Rules

Trade union leaders, labour law experts and civil society representatives called for amendments to the labour law, keeping in mind the disaster-era period of learning from the Rana Plaza collapse. This was stated by the speakers at the virtual meeting on "Protection of workers in times of disaster: labour laws and other regulations" jointly organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust-Blast, Safety and Rights Society-SRS, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS and Sramik Nirapotta Forum-SNF on commemorating the eight years of Rana Plaza collapse on April 24, 2021.



In his speech, Chief Legal Adviser of Blast and former Judge of the Appellate Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Justice Nizamul Haque Nasim, said that the safety of the workers is very important in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone needs to think about how to help workers when they are in danger. He said the cases would have progressed and the workers would have got something if Rana Plaza had handled the cases by forming a team to handle the cases in the High Court. He called upon all to work in unitedly so that the workers get their fair share in the days to come.

BILS Vice Chairman Shirin Akhtar, MP, said that all should work together to resolve the existing problems of labour law in a tripartite initiative. For this, special importance should be given to the exchange of information. She said the government needs to monitor whether the incentives are reaching the right people. She called upon all to come forward in building a humane society.

Trade Union Kendra General Secretary Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan, said that considering the health risks of the workers, the former labour welfare centers should be set up as health centers and the treatment of workers through experienced doctors should be considered. He demanded that making a factory-based workers list for giving COVID vaccine.

Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishments (DIFE) Legal officer Md. Masum Billah, said the government has announced various incentive packages for the workers in the light of international standards during the COVID-19. Noting that an initiative has been taken to provide cash assistance to the needy workers in the readymade garments, leather and footwear industries, he called upon all to come forward to make it more universal.

Labour Court Bar Association President Selim Ahsan Khan, said the Rana Plaza accident and the extreme COVID-19 situation should not be seen together, the two are completely different. He opined that different laws are needed to deal with man-made and natural disasters. At the same time, he mentioned various errors in the labour law (layoffs, lay-offs, etc.) and demanded that steps be taken to amend them.

Referring to the Constitution and the provisions of the Labour Act Safety and Rights Society Executive Director Sekendar Ali Mina, said in the key article that Rana Plaza Accident Day is now established as a day for the rights of working people. He noted that workers are joining the regular work even in the face of the risk of COVID-19 infection, as if their livelihood seemed to be greater than their lives. He said it was important to strengthen the health and legal protections of workers in the current COVID-19 situation. Strengthening the legal protection of workers in times of disaster requires social protection as well. In this time he make some recommendation for workers that the scope of social security for working people should be increased, specialized hospitals should be set up by the industrial owners and medical treatment should be provided on emergency basis, action should be taken according to the declared disaster status, amendment of labour law and rules, health awareness training should be provided to workers.

Other speakers noted that workers were deprived of legal protection during disasters, and called for a new chapter to be added to the Labour Law by forming a committee with representatives from the tripartite committee. At the same time, on the pretext of coronation, they demanded that

the workers should not be fired, the factory should not be laid-off and the workers should be included in the social safety net.

Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Research Director Khandoker Golam Moazzem acted as a moderator. While BLAST Deputy Director (Law) Adv. Barkot Ali, Labour Court Bar Association Former President A K M Nasim, Labour Court practitioner Amina Dewan Shilpi, BILS Director Kohinoor Mahmood and Nazma Yesmin, BLAST Advocacy and Capacity Building Advisor Md. Tajul Islam, DIFE Deputy Inspector (Rajshahi) Md. Mahfuzur Rahman Bhuiyan, Labour Leader Z. N. M Kamrul Anam, Sirajul Islam Rony and Shahida Parvin Shikha were sepeke at the meeting.

Exemplary punishment demanded for torturers to stop violence against domestic workers

Trade union leaders and civil society representatives called for end to violence against domestic workers, exemplary punishment for torturers, including legal protection, proper treatment of victims and appropriate compensation. The demand was made at a human chain and protest meeting held in front of the National Press Club on June 5, 2021. In collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS and Domestic Workers Rights Network-DWRN jointly organised the human chain.



Speakers at the human chain said that in the last few days, two domestic workers named Amena Khatun (11) and Nilufar Begum (15) have been tortured in the Dhaka's Mohakhali and Hamzarbagh areas of Chittagong city. One after another deaths and tortures of domestic workers are taking place in the country due to non-implementation of 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015' framed for the protection of domestic workers across the country. They said the torturers repeatedly dared to torture domestic workers because of the lack of justice. If the perpetrators of these incidents are given exemplary punishment, then no one will dare to torture the domestic workers for fear of that.

At the same time, the speakers urged ratified the ILO Convention-189 and implemented the 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy-2015' to protect the safety of domestic workers across the country, to include domestic workers in the labour law, fair compensation to

the injured workers, medical expenses of the injured workers to be borne by the employers, permanent rehabilitation of the families of the killed workers and injured workers.

DWRN Acting Coordinator Abul Hossain presided over the human chain while Bangladesh Mukta Sramik Federation Acting General Secretary Shahidullah Badal, Jatiya Sramik League Trade Union Affairs Secretary Firoz Hossain, DWRN Member Secretary and BILS Director Nazma Yesmin, National Domestic Women Workers Union General Secretary Murshida Akhter Nahar, Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra Office Secretary Shahida Parvin Shikha, Jatiya Sramik League Womens Affairs Secretary Promila Podder, Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal Representative Lutfunnahar Lata, Jatiya Sramik Jote representative Hena Chowdhury, Jatiya Sramik Federation representative Arifa Akhter and BILS and DWRN affiliated Human Rights organisation and national trade union federation leaders were presents at the human chain.

Demands exemplary punishment of torturers to end violence against domestic workers

Trade union leaders and civil society representatives called for end to violence against domestic workers, exemplary punishment for torturers, including legal protection, proper treatment of victims and appropriate compensation. The demand was made at a human chain and protest meeting held in front of the National Press Club on June 16, 2021. Domestic Workers Rights Network-DWRN organised the human chain and protest meeting.



Speakers at the human chain and protest meeting said that recently (June 11, 2021) a domestic worker named Niasa Akhter (18) was tortured in a house in Sector 9, Uttara, Dhaka. They said, incidents of torture, killings, and human rights abuses against domestic workers have risen alarmingly in recent years. In such a situation, International Domestic Workers' Day is being celebrated today. The speakers said that just as they have some fair rights as domestic workers, they also have the right to dignity as human beings. During this COVID-19 period, domestic workers did not receive much help or support from the public and private sectors and a large number of them were laid off and unemployed. As a result, it has become difficult for them to survive. Such incidents of violence and torture against them in such situations are extreme signs of inhumanity.

The speakers said that one after another deaths and tortures of domestic workers are taking place in the country due to non-implementation of the 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015' framed for the protection of domestic workers across the country. They said the

torturer repeatedly dared to torture domestic workers because of the lack of justice. If the torturers of these incidents are given exemplary punishment, then no one will dare to torture the domestic workers for fear of that.

At the same time, the speakers demanded for ratification of the ILO Convention-189 and implementation of the 'Domestic workers protection and Welfare Policy, 2015' to protect the safety of domestic workers across the country, to include domestic workers in the labour law, fair compensation to the injured workers, medical expenses of the injured workers to be borne by the employers, permanent rehabilitation of the families of the killed workers and injured workers.

Domestic Workers' Rights Network-DWRN acting Coordinator Abul Hossain, presided over the human chain and protest meeting, which was attended by leaders of human rights organisations, national trade union federations and civil society representatives.

International Domestic Workers' Day 2021: Awareness Campaign in various places of Dhaka city

On the occasion of International Domestic Workers' Day 2021, BILS-Suniti Project initiated awareness campaigns on the rights of domestic workers in various places of Dhaka city with the aim of raising awareness about domestic workers. Under the project BILS hanged Banners containing slogans for protecting domestic workers rights and safety messages against COVID-19 in 20 different areas in Dhaka city i.e. Rayer Bazar, Mohammadpur, Gabtali, Pallabi, Mirpur 13, Uttara Sector 10, Banasree Main Road, Magbazar, Merul Badda, South Banasree, Fakirapul T&T Colony Gate, Motijheel, Wari, Jurain, Press Club, Tejgaon, Agargaon, Manipuri Para, Kalabagan and Jhigatala.

Besides, BILS hanged posters containing demand for protection of rights and entitlements of domestic workers and the demand to ratify ILO convention 189 which is a convention on domestic workers. On the day of observing the day 4 rickshaw van was roaming around the city containing banner on the van with slogan on domestic workers rights. Leaflets were distributed from the van and a loudspeaker announcement on safety messages on COVID 19 pandemic and demands of domestic workers were going on whole day.

SNF paid homage to the deceased workers recalling Eight years of Rana Plaza building collapse

Sramik Nirapotta Forum-SNF paid homage to the deceased workers of Rana Plaza on April 24, 2021 at Jurain graveyard and in front of Rana Plaza Savar, Dhaka.

Expressing deep sympathy for the deceased workers of Rana Plaza accident Leaders said that quick trial and exemplary punishment are yet not ensure while eight years of this incident already have passed. They urged to ensure trial and punishment of responsible person through proper investigation. Emphasizing on building National culture in order to ensure workplace safety they urged to ensure long term treatment and rehabilitation of injured and victim workers. They also demanded that all formal and informal workers be brought under the purview of the Labour Law, national standards of compensation be set up, specialized hospitals be set up for the treatment of occupants suffering from occupational diseases and accidents and special units be set up in hospitals.



Socialist Workers Front President Razekuzzaman Ratan, Jatiya Sramik Jote Bangladesh President Saifuzzaman Badsha, Jatiya Sramik Federation president Quamrul Ahsan, Jatiya Sramik Jote Working President Abdul Wahed, Jatiya Sramik League Trade Union affiliated Secretary Feroz Hossain, Socialist Workers Front General Secretary Ahsan Habib Bulbul and Leaders of national trade union federations participated in the programme.

BILS-CSO Network Meeting held

BILS, under its' DGB-BW project organized a meeting of its' LRSC-Civil society network entitled "Sromik Shanghoti Forum" on June 10, 2021 at Hotel Asian SR, Chattogram.

Main objectives of the meeting are what is to be done in terms of 7 workers brutal killing and injury of many other workers due to a police firing at SS Power Plant, located at Gondamara, Banskhali, Chattogram, reviewing early forum activities and others.



Speakers in the meeting discussed over the SS Power Plant killing and agreed to exchange information and support to ensure treatment of the injured workers and provide possible logistic supports to get the legal compensation of dead workers.

BILS-LRSC Centre Coordination Committee Chairman A M Nazimuddin chaired the meeting. Senior Journalist and Sub-editor of The Daily Suprovat Bangladesh Subash Dey, BILS-LRSC Member-Secretary Md. Safar Ali, Ex. president of Chattogram Union of Journalist Nazimuddin Shaymol, Chattogram Labour Court practitioner Advocate Md. Jan-E-Alam-a, YPSA

representative Md. Ali Shahin and Md. Jahedul Islam, SANGSAPTOK representative Jainab Begum Mitu, BBF representative Utpal Barua, OSHE representative Md. Saiful Islam, BELA representative Farmin Elahi Era, BITA representative Ela Chowdhury, BILS Sr. Officer Rizwanur Rahman Khan and Pahari Bhattacharjee, Assistant Program officer Fazlul Kabir Mintu were spoke on the occasion.

Media Briefing held at Chattogram

BILS under its' DGB-BW project organised a Media Briefing on June 27, 2021 at Dum Phoonek Restaurant, opposite of Chattogram Press Club.

Main objectives of the Media Briefing was to acknowledge last 6 months BILS-LRSC activities, to opine on existing regional Trade Union scenario and to express opinion on the latest government-declared budget in terms of labour and trade union perspectives.

BILS-LRSC Center Coordination Committee member and senior Trade Union leader Tapan Datta read out the key note paper. While BILS-LRSC Chairman A M Nazimuddin and Member-Secretary of LRSC Center Coordination Committee Md. Safar Ali and BILS Sr. Officer Pahari Bhattacharjee answered questions raised by the media-persons during the press briefing.



Speakers at the press briefing said that all informal sector workers are passing a very risky period amid COVID-19. Most informal workers like construction, transport, hawkers, rickshaw-pullers, hotel-restaurant, decorator-shop workers are in vulnerable condition for last 1 year due to job-scarcity, less-income and pandemic-related socio-economic new realities. RMG and other sector workers is also becoming victim of illegal lay-off and forced termination—the speakers said.

From the media briefing also expressed deep concern over recent killing of 7 workers at SS Power Plant, Gondamara, Banskali, Chattogram. It also condemned continuous accidental injury and death of Ship breaking sector workers due to negligence of yard owners and lack of vigilance by the related government departments and organs.

The leaders demanded subsidies for workers and less-privileged citizens in the proposed and declared budget. It also claimed for rationing and other facilities for working class of the countries.

Awareness Rising Camp for Workers held at Chattagram

BILS under its' DGB-BW project organised an "Awareness Rising Camp for Workers" on May 31, 2021 at Santibag, Agrabad, Chatogram.

Speakers in the awareness rising camp said, workers in Bangladesh are fighting for ensuring 8-hours working hour, Safe workplace, minimum wages and all law-covered rights. But even amid pandemic they are being victim of illegal lay-off, forced termination and living inhuman life. We have to work for the overall improvement in the livelihood of workers. They said we have no alternative of saving our life and livelihood amid pandemic situation.



Later, BILS user friendly publication on rights and safety were distributed among the participants. The awareness rising camp was organized with in the Covid-19 situation, following all the health restrictions with limited participation and maintaining social distances and health safety.

During the camp, a meeting was arranged that was presided over by, Chattogram Mohanagar Nirman Sromik Dal President Md. Altaf, BILS-LRSC Centre Coordination Committee president A M Nazimuddin was the chief guest in the camp while BILS senior Officer Pahari Bhattacharjee, Rizwanur Rahma khan, local TU leaders namely Md. Ali, Hasibur Rahman Biplob, Fatema Begum, Md, Mofiz spoke on this occasion.

SRS, BLAST, BILS, and SNF opinion sharing meetings on Occupational Health and Safety Day 2021

All workers must be brought under social security

Representatives of trade unions and development agencies have demanded that measures be taken to ensure occupational health and safety, including social security for workers during the COVID-19 period. Speakers expressed their views on a webinar titled "Occupational Health and Safety during Covid: Reality and the Way Out". the occasion of National Occupational Health and Safety Day 2021 Safety and Rights Society-SRS, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust-BAST,



Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS, and Sramik Nirapottya Forum-SNF organised the webinar on April 29, 2021.

BILS Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan said that there was a movement on May Day to fix eight hours of daily work time. Referring to the issue of compensation to the bank officials affected by the Corona, he said that such benefits should be added for the workers who are keeping the wheel of the country's economy during the covid situation.

Called for ensuring decent working environment in all cases, SRS Executive Director Sekendar Ali Mina said that everyone should work together in this regard. He added that the views and approaches of the labour partners may be different but they need to have confidence in each other to achieve the main goal. He called for measures to be taken to ensure occupational health and safety, including social security for workers during COVID-19.

Mentioning the challenge of ensuring safe working environment in Corona, Bangladesh Trade Union Center General Secretary Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan said, first the lives of the workers have to be saved. If the workers survive, the factory will survive. For this, it is necessary to make arrangements to provide quick financial assistance to the workers from the Workers Welfare Foundation.

BLAST Deputy Director, Md. Barkat Ali, said the law was being amended to include provisions on social security for workers so that workers would not have to suffer extra in an pandemic like COVID. He further said that the declared social security opportunities for the workers should be given to the workers.

Referring to various initiatives of the government, Department of Factory and Establishment Inspection, Rajshahi Deputy Inspector Mahfuzur Rahman Bhuiyan, said that the officials of the department were inspecting the factories at the risk of their lives, even after the offices was closed in Lockdown. He said that at the initiative of DIFE, work is being done to set up separate booths for corona vaccine in each factory. At that time, he requested the workers to contact the hotline of the department.

Sramik Karmachary Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Representative Quamrul Ahsan, said that although everything was closed at the lockdown, the factory was declared open in accordance with the health rules, but no arrangements were made for the workers to comply with the health rules or travel. He called upon the government to take initiative to solve the problems of the workers through the crisis committee.

Mentioning that health is the root of all happiness, NCCWE Member Secretary Naimul Ahsan Jewel said that if the health of the workers is not good, if they do not work properly, the production system of the factory will also be interrupted. He demanded to increase the allocation in the health sector in the coming budget.

In the keynote paper presenting at the meeting, SRS Program Officer Sinthi Ghosh mentioned that workers are most affected by the Corona situation. Many workers have lost their jobs, and many have lost their wages. He said that he was working under lockdown or strict prohibition

during the coronation period but if he was deprived of his rights for any reason, he could not get any chance of redressed and could not go to court as the court was closed.

Other speakers at the meeting demanded included risk allowance for workers, initiative of factory owners to provide corona vaccine to workers, reduction of accidents by improving working environment, non-retrenchment of workers during COVID period, mobilization of workers through bank accounts, strengthening tripartite committee activities, specialized hospital for workers.

BILS Director Nazma Yasmeen highlighted the significance of Occupational Health and Safety Day at a meeting while Bangladesh Labour Federation General Secretary Shakil Akhtar Chowdhury acted as a moderator. Jatiya Sramik League Trade Union Affairs Secretary Firoz Hossain, DIFE Faridpur Deputy-Inspector Matiur Rahman also spoke the meeting. The webinar was also attended by workers' representatives, including government, employers, trade unions and the media representatives.