

BILS Conference & General Meeting-2022

Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz Chairman and Nazrul Islam Khan Secretary General reelected

With the slogan “27 years of strength, solidarity and capacity building of Bangladesh’s labour movement” the conference and general meeting of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS was held on October 22, 2022 at



Institution of Diploma Engineers Bangladesh (IDEB) Auditorium, Kakrail, Dhaka. BILS executive council election was held in the meeting. Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz and Nazrul Islam Khan are elected respectively as Chairman and General Secretary again.

Among others, elected as Vice Chairmen, are Md. Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan, Shirin Akhter, MP, Anwar Hossain, Amirul Haque Amin and Md. Alauddin Mia; elected as Joint Secretary Generals are Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan, Khan Shirajul Islam and Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed; elected as Finance Secretary is Md. Rifiquel Islam; elected as secretaries are Md. Kobir Hossain, Abdul Kader Hawlader, Nurul Islam Khan Nasim, Md. Safar Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Shakil Akhter Chowdhury, Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan, MP, and Shamim Ara, elected as Members are Md. Abdul Wahed, Umma Hasan Jhalmal, B M Zafar, Pulak Ranjan Dhar, Nasrin Akhter Dina, Kazi Rahima Akhter Shathi, Robiul Hqaue and Nargis Jahan.

Liberation War Affairs Minister A. K. M. Mozammel Haque, MP was present as chief guest at the opening ceremony of the conference, while BILS Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz was on the chair.



BILS Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan delivered the welcome speech. International Labour Organization ILO Program Manager Neeran Ramjuthan, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) Additional Secretary General Saidul Islam, Sramik Karmachary Oikkya Parishad (SKOP) leader Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Industrial Bangladesh Council (IBC) President Abul Kalam Azad



and others spoke as special guests at the conference.

In the speech of the chief guest, the Honorable Minister of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs A. K. M. Mozammel Haque, MP said BILS is an example of a united democratic trade union movement with the participation and leadership of various parties and opinions. There are many important lessons to be learned at the national level from here. BILS has been making significant contributions through cooperation in various areas, including the formulation of democratic labour laws, policies and regulations, which play an important role in establishing workers' rights. He expressed hope that BILS will continue its research and development activities to establish the rights and dignity of workers while maintaining good relations with the government and the employers.

In his welcome speech, BILS Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan said, BILS is not

a trade union, it supports the trade union movement. Since its inception BILS has been working to build the capacity of its affiliated national trade union federations to uphold the role of trade unions as partners in social justice and development. BILS is playing this role through education-training, information flow, promotion and research activities.



Referring to the contribution of BILS for 27 years, BILS Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman Shiraz said, today BILS is working with reputation in the country and abroad with the support of trade union leaders in this long journey.

In the speech of the honorable guest, ILO Bangladesh Program Manager Neeran Ramjuthan said that tripartite dialogue is an important issue in achieving global peace and security. Expressing the hope that Bangladesh's achievements will continue, he said, increasing the efficiency of trade unions is the need of the era. Mentioning the informal sector as a challenge in terms of organizing, he said, in all cases, the work of decoration is not yet possible for sure. In this regard, he emphasized on the working relationship of BILS with the ILO and the continuation of lobbying advocacy with the government.

Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) Additional Secretary General Saidul Islam said that Bangladesh Employers Federation has been working with BILS in the past and will continue in the future to maintain good relations between workers and employers in establishing workers' rights.

Other speakers in the meeting praised the various progress achieved by BILS in labour issues and said that the role of BILS is immense in organizing workers as an organization of working people in the country. They expressed hope that they will continue their unremitting efforts to realize the rights of the working people in the coming days and in this regard, the solidarity of the government and the owners and other supporting organizations will continue.



Nationwide BILS General Members, advisory and executive council members, trade union leaders, civil society representatives were present in the meeting.

Workshops held as part of daylong event

A total of five workshops held at the venue during the AGM as part of the daylong event. Those are:

1. Social Protection of Workers in Garment Sector: Workshop on Preparation of Position Papers of Trade Unions;

2. Marginal fishers and the need for effective coordination in fisheries development: the role and actions of trade unions;

3. Determining organizing and recruitment strategies in changing labor market



conditions;

4. Tripartite Consultative Council on Readymade Garment Sector: Achievements and Future Actions; and

5. Reviewing the contribution of Bills in increasing the strength and capacity of the labor movement in Bangladesh and determining future actions.

Leaders and members of different federations and unions participated those workshops.



Call for ratification of ILO Convention 189

Trade unions and civil society representatives have called for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on 'Decent Work for Domestic Workers' to ensure the rights, dignity and safety of domestic workers. Speakers made this demand at a round table meeting titled "11 years of ILO Convention 189: Prospects and Future Actions" at the Azimur Rahman Conference Hall of the Daily Star Center in the capital on December 1, 2022 under the initiative of the Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN).

Mentioning that the labour law is being amended, she said, there should be a united movement to include domestic workers in the labour law and ratify ILO Convention 189.

In his welcome speech BILS Joint Secretary General Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan said that the trade union should enter the field in a united movement to rescue the domestic workers from the dire situation. In order to convert the domestic worker welfare policy into a law, everyone has to apply pressure on the government in unitedly.



BILS Advisory Council Member Shah Mohd. Abu Zafar chaired the meeting while Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment Shamsun Nahar Bhuiyan, MP was chief guest. In the speech of the chief guest, Shamsun Nahar Bhuiyan, MP said that everyone should work unitedly to ensure the rights, dignity and protection of domestic workers. She said, women's rights are not a favor, they deserve it. Domestic workers are also our sisters or relatives, so their rights and dignity must be ensured. Everyone should work together for this.

Domestic Workers Rights Network (DWRN) Acting Coordinator Abul Hossain said Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia that has policies for domestic workers. But it is not implemented. Hope the government will pay attention to it.

ILO Bangladesh National Project Coordinator Anny Drong said that the government has the will to ratify ILO Convention 189. But also has some pre plan. It is expected that the government will take a timely decision in this regard.

Stating that there is no alternative to organize them to ensure the protection of domestic workers, Jatiya Sramik League Joint General Secretary and BILS Joint Secretary General Khan Sirajul Islam said, it is possible to ensure the rights and dignity of domestic workers by organising and united movement.

Jatiya Sramik Jote Bangladesh president Saifuzzaman Badsha said that until domestic workers are included in the labour law, the government should play a strong role in implementing all the guidelines mentioned in the policy for their protection.

DWRN Member Secretary and BILS Director Nazma Yesmin said, Bangladesh has already set an example in South Asia in formulating a comprehensive policy for domestic workers through the formulation of Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015. The rights of domestic workers can be ensured by ratifying the ILO Convention 189 on the Protection of Domestic Workers along with the implementation of the policy.

In the Chair's speech, BILS Advisory Council Member Shah Mohd. Abu Zafar said, Bangladesh was the President of the ILO session in which this convention was adopted, so it is very important to ratify this convention.

Other speakers demanded the ratification of ILO Convention-189, the implementation of the 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy-2015' to protect the safety of domestic workers across the country, inclusion of domestic workers in labour laws, provision of official legal assistance in cases of domestic workers, ensuring safety and safe migration to workplaces of all domestic workers and protection of

domestic workers from torture. Called for introduction of registration and inspection program to protect and verify actual status.

National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) Chairman Shamim Ara, Bangladesher Jatiya Sramik Jote General Secretary Badal Khan, Jatiya Sramik Jote Working President Md. Abdul Wahed and others were also present at the round table. Apart from this, BILS and Domestic Workers Rights Network human rights organizations, National Trade Union Federation and civil society leaders were also present the round table.

Dialogue on the small-scale fishers in Bangladesh

BILS in collaboration with Manusher Jonno Foundation-MJF and COAST Foundation organised an exchange dialogue titled "Life on edge: the small-scale fishers in Bangladesh" on November 13, 2022 at Hotel Bengal Blue Berry, Gulshan, Dhaka.



The key objective of this dialogue is to present Sustainable Oceans Project (what we did, what we achieved, what we learned), and to discuss way forward. The overall project experiences, achievements,

and learning is being presented before the International and National CSOs, who are already working in the fisheries sector of Bangladesh, with a view to encouraging the continuation of this efforts.

BILS Secretary General and Executive Director Nazrul Islam Khan, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, COAST Foundation Joint Director-Social Development and Communication Md. Mujibul Haque Munir, ILO Bangladesh Program officer Md. Saidul Islam, Solidarity Center Bangladesh Country Director A K M Nasim, Deputy Country Director Monika Hartsel, Program Officer Mohammad Nazrul Islam, FAO Chief Technical Advisor M. Norman, Dr. Md. Program Officer Abul

Hasanat, BILS Advisory Council Member Naimul Ahsan Jewel, MJF Sr. Programme Manager (Research) Shaikh Giasuddin Ahmed, Safety and Rights Society Executive Director Sekender Ali Mina, Bangladesh Labour Foundation representative Mahmudul Hasan Khan, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust representative Md. Amanullah, BILS Executive Council Secretary Shakil Akhter Chowdhury and BILS Director Nazma Yesmin discussed among others at the programme.

Domestic workers human chain held at Bhashantek area

Trade unions and civil society representatives demanded the ratification of ILO Conventions 189 and 190 and the inclusion of domestic workers in labour laws, ensuring decent work. On the occasion of 16 days activism a domestic

workers rally and human chain was organised by Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies-BILS Suniti project on December 2, 2022 in Bhashantek rehabilitation area of the capital.

Speakers in the human chain demanded the government to ensure social security for domestic workers and arrange low-cost housing schemes for them. They said that in recent times, incidents such as torture, murder, and human rights violations against domestic workers have increased alarmingly. Due to the non-implementation of the 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015' made for the protection of domestic workers across the country, the death and torture of domestic workers are happening one after the other in the country. They said that if the domestic workers can be trained and organized, exploitation and torture on them will be reduced. They urged the domestic workers to participate in the training program organized by Suniti Project. During this time, the speakers urged to ratify the ILO Convention-189.

Domestic Workers Rights Network Acting Coordinator Abul Hossain, NDWWU



General Secretary Murshida Akhtar Nahar, BILS Deputy Director Md Yousuf Al-Mamun along with local leaders, local employers and Domestic Workers also spoke at the event.

Discussion held with university students to protect the domestic workers rights

On the occasion of the 16 days activism against gender based violence 2022 under the slogan “UNITE! Activism to end violence against Women and Girls”, discussion with university students in the joint organised by Southeast Social Services Club,



Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS (Suniti Project) and Domestic Workers Rights Network on December 5, 2022 at Southeast University Seminar Hall, Banani, Dhaka.

Southeast University Board of Trustees Advisor ANM Meshkat Uddin chaired the meeting and South East Social Services Club moderator Bahreen Khan acted as a moderator. Domestic Workers Rights Network Acting Coordinator Abul Hossain,

BILS Executive Council Member Kazi Rahima Akhter Shathi, Domestic workers Rights Network Member Secretary and BILS Director Nazma Yasmin, Southeast University Board of Trustees Secretary Tariq Al Jalil, Southeast University Career and Professional Development Services Director Tahniah Saheed, BILS Suniti Project Coordinator Md. Yusuf Al-Mamun also spoke on the meeting.

Speakers in the meeting said, we all have a dream, we want a society of equality. The young generation did not get a chance to go to the liberation war but they are aware of the history of the liberation war. They said that only the young generation can do the job of removing the discrimination between people. They can change the society. The speakers also said that everyone should be more sensitive for the working people and everyone should come forward unitedly to ensure the rights and safety of the domestic workers. In this regard, university students can play a leading role and change is possible through them.



Law to prevent sexual harassment at workplace demanded

Gender Platform Bangladesh, a coalition of organizations working on labour rights, has called for a “Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Act” to end all forms of violence and harassment in the workplace. The speakers made this call at the round table meeting on ‘Reducing Violence and Harassment in the Workplace: Expectations

Shamsun Nahar Bhuiyan, MP present as chief guest. BILS Director Nazma Yesmin highlighted the activities of Gender Platform on the elimination of violence and harassment in the workplace.

Speaking as the chief guest, Shamsun Nahar Bhuiyan, MP said that any form of sexual harassment in the workplace creates



hostile conditions which are a clear violation of human rights and one of the obstacles to development. She said that women work hard home and outside the home but

and Actions’ organized by Gender Platform Bangladesh on December 6, 2022 at Azimur Rahman Conference Hall, The Daily Star center, Dhaka on the occasion of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2022.

there is no recognition of women’s domestic work. They are harassed and tortured in various ways. Enacting “Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Act” is very important to address workplace violence and harassment.

Gender Platform Bangladesh member organisation Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association President Advocate Salma Ali chaired the meeting and Bangladesh Labour Foundation Executive Director AKM Ashraf Uddin acted as moderator while Member of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment

Pointing out that men and women are contributing almost equally in the progress of the economic development of the country, Nusrat Jahan, Deputy Solicitor of the Law and Justice Department of the Ministry of Law, said that there are many good laws in the country and the government is working to implement them. If the law is properly implemented, violence

and harassment against women will decrease. In this case, it is very important to change everyone's mind about following the law.

National Human Rights Commission Deputy Director Sushmita Paik said, the definition of the guidelines of the High Court to prevent sexual harassment says which behaviors are sexual harassment, yet women are constantly being harassed by these behaviors in the workplace. It is very important to change the mindset of everyone in this regard. She said that a child should be raised as a good person from the family. He should know what is good and what is bad.

Referring to ILO Convention 190 as very important for Bangladesh, Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) Additional Secretary General Saidul Islam said, there is an opportunity to accept the instructions of High Court as a law to prevent sexual harassment. In this case, everyone's commitment is absolutely necessary.

In the chaired speech, Advocate Salma Ali said, we have to proceed with zero tolerance policy to prevent violence and harassment against women. In addition to changing the attitude towards women, everyone's responsibility should be increased.

Sramik Karmachary Oikya Parishad (SKOP) Joint Coordinator Ahsan Habib Bulbul said that every human being has human rights for human development. Women are subjected to sexual harassment at workplace, commuting and other places which hampers their mental development. He said if the working environment is not made safe for the workers, their productivity

will be low which will affect the economy of the country as well.

Samajtantrik Sramik Front President Razekuzzaman Ratan said that our dithering has increased the scope of violence. Positive attitude of all can solve this problem. He said that just as awareness is needed, it is absolutely necessary to support the victims. Socially an environment should be created where women are protected and enjoy all the rights. Where there will be no discrimination, violence and harassment.

Other speakers in the meeting said that women are working equally with men in the country and outside the country. Bangladesh's progress in terms of women's empowerment and economic development is admirable. But women are still subjected to torture and harassment in all areas. The speakers said that everyone, including journalists, should come forward to prevent torture and harassment in workplaces and educational institutions. In this case, they expressed the opinion that the government can play a stronger role by expanding the definitional scope of the workplace.

National Coordination Committee for Workers Education-NCCWE Chairman Shamim Ara, Solidarity Center Bangladesh Country Program Director AKM Nasim, BKMEA Assistant Secretary Md Zakaria Khaled, Awaz Foundation Treasurer Khadiza Akhter, Mondial FNV Bangladesh Consultant Md. Shahinur Rahman, Karmajibi Nari representative Kazi Gulshan Ara, Fairware Foundation Bangladesh Country Manager Bablur Rahman Also present in the meeting.

Advocacy meeting held with DIFE

BILS, under its' DGB-BW project activities, organised an advocacy meeting with the officials of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) on October 27, 2022 at DIFE office, Chattogram.

The meeting mainly focused on the position of grievances given earlier to DIFE by TU's



to settle disputes as well as on inspection of some local informal sector to ensure workers' rights and entitlements. BILS and trade union leaders requested DIFE officials to take action against the violation of labour law and rules in some workplaces.

The meeting was presided by BILS-LRSC Coordination Committee Chairman A M Nazimuddin, while DIFE Labour Inspector (General) Naimul Aziz and Razu Ahmed, BFTUC representative K M Shahidullah, BLF Representative Robiul Huq Shimul, BJSD representative Md. Ali, Advocate Md. Iqbal and Hasibur Rahaman Bplob, TUC representative Fazlul Kabir Mintu, BILS Senior Officer Pahari Bhattacharjee and Rizwanur Rahman Khan were present.

Advocacy meeting held with DIFE

A delegation of Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA), one of the core partners of BILS, visited PHP Ship Breaking Yard at Shitakunda, Chittagong on October 1, 2022. The team led by Carsten Flint Hunneche and Aya Caraphina S. Abraham participated in formal discussion meetings with shipbreaking workers, employers, trade union leaders and BILS officials.

Ship Breaking Workers Trade Union Forum (SBWTUF) Joint Conveners A M Nazim Uddin and Md. Shafar Ali, Treasurer Rizwanur Rahman Khan Member Mohammad Ali, Abdur Rahim Master, Mohammad Idris, BILS Deputy Director Abdul Mazid, Senior Officer Pahari Bhattacharya and Fazlul Kabir Mintu were present among others in different meetings.



The delegation expressed the hope that the activities under BILS-DTDA cooperation will play a special role in ensuring Decent Work and the protection of labour rights in the shipbreaking industry and the cooperation from DTDA will continue to improve the overall quality of livelihood of the workers.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS

House 20; Road 11 (New) 32 (Old); Dhanmondi R/A Dhaka-1209

Telephone: +880-2-41020280-3; E-mail: bils@citech.net; Website: www.bilsbd.org