

Industry Context Analysis: RMG in Gazipur & Ashulia

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**BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF
LABOUR STUDIES – BILS**

**3F - UNITED FEDERATION
OF DANISH WORKERS**



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The views expressed in this report are those of the principal researcher, author and editor and do not necessarily represent those of 3 F and BILS



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ACRONYMS

BDT	:	Bangladeshi Taka
BGMEA	:	Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BGIWF	:	Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation
BILS	:	Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies
BKMEA	:	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BNP	:	Bangladesh Nationalized Party (Political party)
BRGWF	:	Bangladesh Revolutionary Garments Workers Federation
CEO	:	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	:	Civil Society Organization
DS	:	Daily Star
EPZ	:	Export Processing Zone
FBCCI	:	Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry
FGD	:	Focus Group discussion
FoA	:	Freedom of Association
KII	:	Key Informant Interview
LC	:	Letter of Credit
LDC	:	Least Developed Country
MD	:	Managing Director
MoLE	:	Ministry of Labor and Employment
RMG	:	Ready Made Garments
TU	:	Trade Union
TUF	:	Trade Union Federation
3 F	:	A Danish United Federation of Workers

Section One

Introduction and Methodology

Problem Statement

“33 RMG factories shut amid worker unrest”, this was one of the news headlines in the daily Business Standard on the last 3rd November 2024. From the formation of the new interim government on the last 9th of August 2024 and till December, often with some pause, this was so far the persisting situation in the country’s Gazipur-Ashulia industrial belt particularly centering round the RMG industry. Employers and local law-enforcers were continuously claiming this to be as workers level causes. The government and the public domain were in general reluctant to see this as having some negative political influences. Workers representatives often claimed this to be an employer driven cause to deny lawful workers demand.

Whatever was the reason, this caused a real panic among all industrial level stakeholders. The government, the employers, the workers representatives, the buyers, the development partners and the CSOs were continuously expressing their concerns as well as trying their level best to find a peaceful solution to this situation. Since, RMG is the dominant export earning industry, accounting for more than 85% industrial export-earnings. Following the resignation and fleeing the 15 years long authoritarian ruler, an Interim government was formed only on the last 8th of August 2024. As such, the country is in a democratic transition process. RMG unrest has serious potential to negatively disrupt many of the mass-needed transformation practices.

In the underlying circumstances of above, this research was thought of. The mainstay of this research is to study in-depth the industrial context pertaining to the RMG making especially in the country’s Gazipur-Ashulia industrial region. To the extent, this research studies the causes and consequences for every effect as well as look for remedies from the relevant stakeholders to the identified causes. The Interim Government has formed a Labour Commission. BILS’s executive Director has been appointed the Chairman to this commission. Research findings are expected among others to help this commission to make an objective analysis of the country’s industrial and labour rights situation. This is a BILS-3F joint research. BILS’s research department implemented this research. 3F – United Federation of Danish Workers is the main funding partner.

Research Objective

General

To study and analyze the underlying circumstances of the recent RMG unrest persistent mainly in the Gazipur and Ashulia Industrial zones of Bangladesh

Specific objective

- 1) Study and unveil the persisting real situation

- 2) Identify the causes for unrest
- 3) Analyze the consequences from unrest
- 4) Capture views from relevant all stakeholders and suggest remedies

Methodology

This research is predominantly premised on the qualitative paradigm of research. The research methods broadly include newspaper review, spot visit and observation, Focus Group Discussion, Consultation, Key informant Interview, Interview, and Case Study Collection. A set of pre-developed checklists are used for collecting data from primary sources. Following table summarizes the research methodology:

Methods	Number	Locations	Stakeholders
Newspaper screening	2	First 1 to determine research locales and the second 1 comprehensive throughout entire research period	
Spot visit & Observation	2	1 X 2 Research locales	All
FGD with workers	4	2 X 2 Research locales	Victim factory workers
FGD with community peoples	4	2 X 2 Research locales	Community peoples
Consultation	2	1 X 2 Research locales	Local TU leaders
Key Informant Interview (KII)	6	3 X 2 Research locales	Well-informed local influential and political leaders
Interview	20	10 X 2 Research locales	1) Employers and their associations, 2) law enforcers, 3) local administration, 4) media persons, 5) health services providers, and 6) relevant other government and non-government stakeholders
Case Study Collection	2	1 X 2 Research locales	Victim workers

Methodological process, analysis and presentation

We make an in-depth screening of 14 national news dailies. They are as follows:

- Prothom Alo
- Jugantor
- The Daily Ittefaq
- Somokal
- Kaler Kontho

- Songbad
- Bonik Barta
- Somoier Alo
- The Daily Star
- Newage
- The Financial Express
- Bangladesh Protidin
- The Business Standard
- Desh Rupantor

We studied RMG industry related reporting particularly for Gazipur and Ashulia regions. Initially, we studied the unrest related reporting, any unrest, what happens, what were the causes and what have been the consequences. Secondly, we studied in-depth all other RMG related reporting which have a production relation. Having cross-matched research findings from both first and second round of screening and data, we have made a consolidated analysis of findings.

To better understand the exact situation, we made before and after analysis of findings. More particularly, we grouped our findings into two time spans such as 1) before 5 of August 2024, and 2) after 5 of August 2024. Regarding 'before 5 of August 2024 timespan', we studied newspaper reporting only for two months, June and July 2024, since our findings were adequate to understand the real situation and trend. For 'after 5 August timespan', we studied reporting for five complete months such as August, September, October, November and December of 2024.

Mentionable that while driving for collecting primary information, we further narrowed-down our study areas and focus. Again, we administer two stages of newspaper screening. In the first stage, we made a complete list of RMG factories, those based in Ashulia and Gazipur regions, from which triggered the unrest. In a second stage, we make a priority listing of seven factories each from both Gazipur and Ashulia, from which triggered the most unrests. At a later stage, we further cross-check at field level particularly with the trade unions, NGOs, and community peoples of our priority listing, we revise and finalize the list of seven factories each from Gazipur and Ashulia. We collect primary information centering round only these listed factories and incidences.

We made a second level of consolidation of our findings between primary collected information and those obtained from newspaper screening. After due synthesis, and two levels of consolidations, final analysis of findings has been made in this report. Thus, methodologically, this research is strong to the extent possible and analyses are authentic and reliable. We hope this report shall help to understand the real situation and the respective causes and consequences of the recent RMG unrest particularly in the country's Gazipur and Ashulia regions.

Research Questions

Relevant to research objectives, this research addresses the following research questions:

Research Objectives	Research Questions
<u>Objective 1</u> Study and unveil the persisting real situation	- What is the issue with unrest? - What is the date, start the unrest? - How long did it last? - What are/were the demands? - Any intimidation/force? - Any casualties? What? How? - Any follow-up actions? What? How? - Any negotiation? Who? How? - What was the role of the workers? Who? When? How? Why? - What was the role of the TUs? Who? When? How? Why? Consequences? - What was the role of the law enforcers? - What are the legal consequences (Case filed/Arrest/Red/Bail)? - What was the role of the local political parties? Who? When? Why? How? - Any role from the local influential/community? Who? When? Why? How? - What was the role of the employer? Who help? What process? How? - What was the role of the media? Who? How? Consequences? - What are/were the processes (Step by step)? - What is the current status?
<u>Objective 2</u> Identify the causes for unrest	- What were/are the reasons? - What are the behind causes? - Any third elements/factors? Who? Why? How? Consequences? - Any external elements/factors? Who? Why? How? Consequences? - Any political elements/causes? Who? Why? How? Consequences? - How do you know that? - Who can be a key informant?
<u>Objective 3</u> Analyze the consequences from unrest	- Any strike/movement/street movement? - Any vandalisms (inside factory and surrounding environment)? - Any casualties? How many? What are the different types of casualties? - What about the medical care and facilities for the physical victims? - Any Job loss? How many? Follow-up actions? Consequences? - Any factory lay -off/closure? How many? Follow-up? Consequences? - Any negotiation/bargaining/social dialogue? What results achieved? - Any monetary gain/loss?
<u>Objective 4</u> Capture views from relevant all stakeholders and suggest remedies	- What should be the remedies? - What could have been the best alternatives? Whose role? What process? - What role for the Government? Where are the gaps? - What role for Employers and their associations? - What role for TUs? - What role for Buyers? - What role for the CSOs? - What role for the law enforcers?

Section Two

Status of Recent RMG unrest

To get a simple understanding of the status of unrest in the RMG industry in the country's Ashulia and Gazipur regions specially after 5 August 2024, we have studied and analyzed data for a timeline ranging from June to December 2024. We consider 5 of August 2024 as a breakeven point and divide the entire study period into two particular time periods such as a) before 5 of August 2024 and b) after 5 of August 2024. Thus, a comparative analysis of the unrest situation between these two time spans are drawn. This helps us to provide a profound and vivid analysis and understanding of the unrest situation and the respective causes and consequences specially after 5 of August 2024.

Status before 5 August 2024 (June-July 2024)

During June-July and to the extent up to 5 of August 2024, our research finds only three (3) unrests reporting in the entire Gazipur and Ashulia regions (0.2% factories). Of them, two (2) unrests held in two factories in Gazipur locations such as 1) TRZ garments on 26 June 2024 and 2) Anowar knit composite on 2nd July 2024. A third unrest was reported in Savar Ashulia area in Anlima textile on 8 June 2024.

Status of unrest before 5 August

- On average, unrest in 1.5 (0.1%) factory a month
- In Gazipur, on average, unrest in 1 (0.1%) factory a month
- In Ashulia, on average, unrest in 0.5 (0.1%) factory a month

On an average, 1.5 (0.1%) factory-cases of unrest reportedly materialize in each month in the entire Gazipur and Ashulia industrial areas. For Gazipur region only, on average, one ((0.1%) unrest occurs in each month and for Ashulia the relative figure was 0.5 (0.1%) unrest on average a month. Unrest before 5 August reportedly followed by limited scale factory lay-off, sit-in demonstration, human chain, road-blockade, and clash with law enforcing agencies. All including three (3) hours of road-blockade are reported. Following a road-blockade, a clash between workers and law enforcers reportedly had injured 50 workers. No vandalism inside factories however are reported. Labour rights violations such as unpaid arrears, unpaid bonus, irregular payment, and forced retrenchment are reported as the main causes of unrest.

Among the unrest reporting at three factories, at the TRZ garments in Gazipur, there has been reportedly discontent for the last two years. Several times contracts were signed between management and workers, BGMEA mediated often. Second last outburst was on 26 June 2024. Workers demonstrated on the street and blocked the road for about one hour, following which the factory authority declared the factory laid off on 1st of July 2024. On 2nd of July 2024, they further

signed a contract with a few workers leaders on condition to pay the unpaid wages, which few other workers leaders seriously criticized and continued to protest openly.

Apart from unrests, our research has identified one case of firing incident during this reporting period. In Sraboni Knitwear in Ashulia, Savar a firing incident on 18 of July 2024 has reportedly caused burning of all raw-materials and RMG products, as well as seriously damaged the infrastructure particularly the storing facility.

Table: Status of unrest before 5 of August 2024

SL	Factories and areas for unrest	Reasons	Consequences
Gazipur			
01	26 June 2024: TRZ Garments, Gazipur (1) Unrest continued for last 2 years, 2) Several times contract signed between management and workers, 3) BGMEA mediated often, 4) Factory laid off on 1 st July)	- Unpaid wage and bonus - Irregular wage payment	- demonstration and road blockade for 1 hour - Factory lay-off on 1 st July - 2 nd July contract signed between management and a few workers leaders - Many workers leaders critic the contract signing initiative
02	2 nd July 2024: Anowar Knit composite, Telihati, Gazipur	- Outstanding bonus - Salary arrears	- Sit-in demonstration - Road blockade for 2 hours - Workers-police clash - 50 injured
Ashulia			
03	8 June 2024: Anlima textile, Ulile, Savar	- Payment to retrenched workers - Re-employment of retrenched workers	- Human chain and sit-in demonstration
Total: 1) Unrest in 3 (0.2%) factories, 2) 3 hours road-blockade, 3) limited demonstration outside factories			

Important other happening in June-July 2024

- Reduction in RMG export incentives rates:** In line with the government plan to prepare the private sector for LDC graduation in 2026, incentives for all export items have been reduced. Takes effect from 1st of July and will remain valid until 30 June 2025.
 - Special incentive has been scaled down from 0.5% to 0.3%.
 - Incentives for venturing into new markets reduced by 1 percentage point.

Table: Reduction of export incentives

Incentives	Previous rate	New rate
Additional 1.50% incentive for textile exporters to EU	1%	0.5 %
New product/market expansion for textile	3%	2%
Special cash incentive to RMG sector	0.5%	0.3%

Source: Bangladesh Bank Circular 30/06/2024¹

- 2) **All factories were closed down for 5 consecutive days:** For quota movement, the government declared a country-wide curfew on 19 July. 19 to 22 July 2024, for 5 consecutive days all RMG factories remained closed. The internet facility was totally blocked. According to BGMEA, RMG factory closing cost an estimated 48 million USD which is equivalent to 21450 crore taka.² 21 July 2024, BGMEA and BKMEA conduct a meeting with the principal secretary of the Prime Minister office to reopen the factories and to restore the broadband internet connection.

Following the reopening of the factories on 23 July 2024, mostly factories were open for 10-13 hours to make up the loss. Referring to representatives from Masco/Tosuka/Mondol/Al-Muslim garments, daily newspapers reported that such a practice shall continue for next 3/4 weeks to make up the losses.

AGM Masum Hossain, Tosuka Garments said, “We produce 1 lakh piece of pant every day in our factory”. (25/7/24, Bonik Barta)

“Per day loss equivalent to 16 cror USD”, FBCCI (21 July 2024, Ittefaq)

“Per day loss equivalent to 16 hundred cror BDT”, BGMEA (23 July 2024, Sangbad)

“RMG factories resort to weekend production to minimize loss” DS 28 July 2024

“Apparel retailers express concern about shipment delay (DS 30 July)

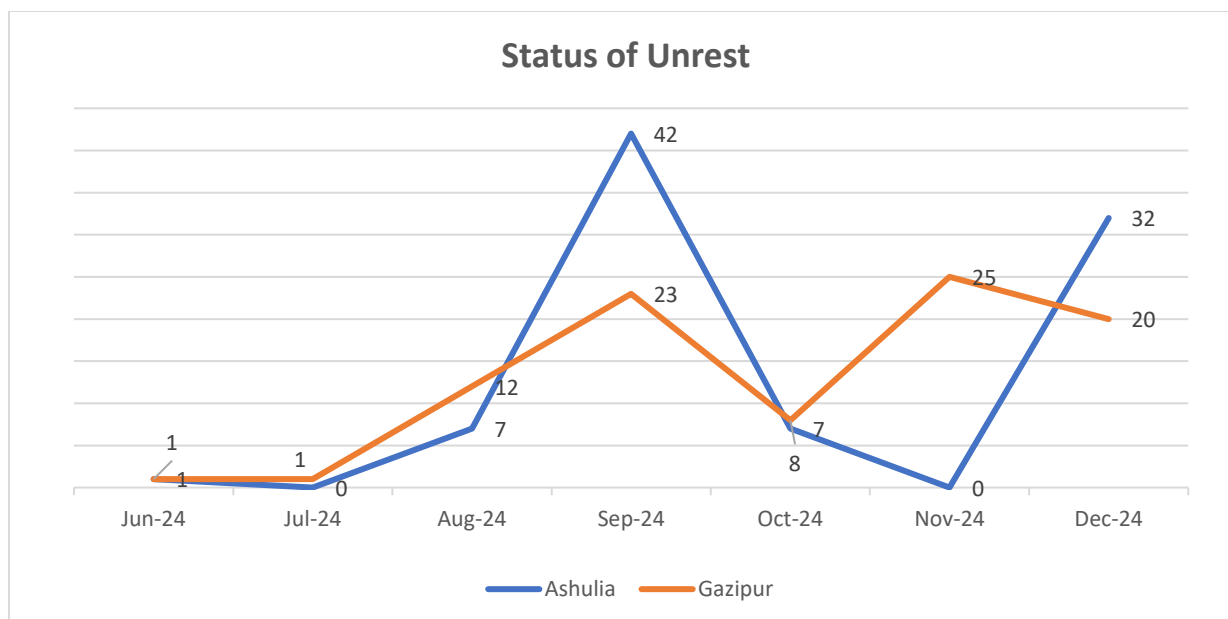
Status after 5 August 2024

Status of unrest inside factories

Our research finds quite unusual and rapid increasing of unrest after 5 of August 2024 (see following graph). Between 6 August 2024 to December 2024, a total of 176 cases of unrest were reported in 176 RMG factories under Ashulia and Gazipur industrial zones. From the BGMEA recognized mapped in Bangladesh data, Ashulia and Gazipur have altogether 1345 RMG factories. Of them, 470 factories are located in Ashulia region and 875 factories in Gazipur District. Against this count, more than 13% of factories in Ghazipur and Ashulia have been affected by unrest.

¹ The business standard (01/07/2024), Tonmoy Modak and Sakhawat Prince

² Daily Star 22 July 2024, Jugantor 30 July 2024



During June-July 2024, only 3 cases of unrest in only 3 factories are known. If we count the percentage data, unrest took place only in 0.2% factories. The distribution is almost equal between June and July and between Ashulia and Gazipur. More particularly, In June 2024, unrest took place in only 0.1% factories and in July 2024, unrest took place only in 0.07% factories.

On the other hand, in the 5 months from August to December 2024, more or less 176 factories in Ashulia and Ghazipur have been affected by unrest. In terms of numbers, a total of 13 percent of factories have been affected by unrest. That is, 65 times more unrest has been caused after August 5 than before. After August 5, on average, 35 factories have been affected per month in the study area. That means, unrest occurred on average in 3% factories each month, this is almost 30 times higher than the average number of unrest a month before 5 of August 2024.

Table: Status of Factory level Unrest

Months	Ashulia	Gazipur	Total
June 2024	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
July 2024	0 (Nil)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.07%)
Sub-total	1 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	3 (0.2%)
August 2024	7 (1.5%)	12 (1.4%)	19 (1.4%)
September 2024	42 (9%)	23 (3%)	65 (4.8%)
October 2024	7 (1.5%)	8 (1%)	15 (1.1%)
November 2024	-	25 (3%)	25 (1.9%)
December 2024	32 (7%)	20 (2%)	52 (3.9%)
Sub-total	(88)19%	88 (10%)	176 (13%)
Mean average	18 (4%)	18 (2%)	35 (3%)
Total	89 (19%)	90 (10%)	179 (13%)

Although Gazipur has almost double the number of RMG factories than Ashulia, unrest was significantly higher in the factories located in Ashulia region (19%) compared to Gazipur located factories (10%). Research findings show that on average, 4% or 18 factories in Ashulia have fallen in unrest every month. While the numbers are similar (18), in Ghazipur, an average of 2% of factories per month have fallen in unrest. As month progresses, there is further marked an abnormal trend of unrest month by month. In the month of August, unrest is reported only in 7 factories in Ashulia and 12 factories in Gazipur. In the next month in September 2024, unrest was highest in Ashulia, 42 factories fell in unrest, which was six times higher than the previous month. In Gazipur, unrest occurs only in the double number of factories in September rather than August. In the month of October, unrest fell abruptly both in Ashulia and Gazipur, it was reported only in 8 factories in Gazipur and 7 factories in Ashulia. In the following month in November, unrest was abnormally highest in Gazipur, 25 factories caught in unrest, more than 3 times higher than the previous month. In Ashulia, no unrested factory was reported for the entire November whereas unrest took a sharp turn in December, 37 factories fell in unrest, which is 7% of the entire factories in Ashulia region.

Status of unrest outside factory

Status of demonstration/protest

Unrest equally continued outside the factories. Demonstrations and protests in the street, human chains in the public place and road-blockade were common. In the 5 months between August and December 2024, unrest was reported at least in 69 days in the Ashulia and Gazipur industrial belts. On average, 14 days in a month, unrest was reported in the research locales. Alternatively, 45% of days in each month are lost due to RMG workers' demonstrations and protests in Ashulia and Gazipur. This is huge. Most unrest outside factories reportedly takes place in the month of September, 60% days were lost due to workers movement and the least in the month of August, only 23% days lost.

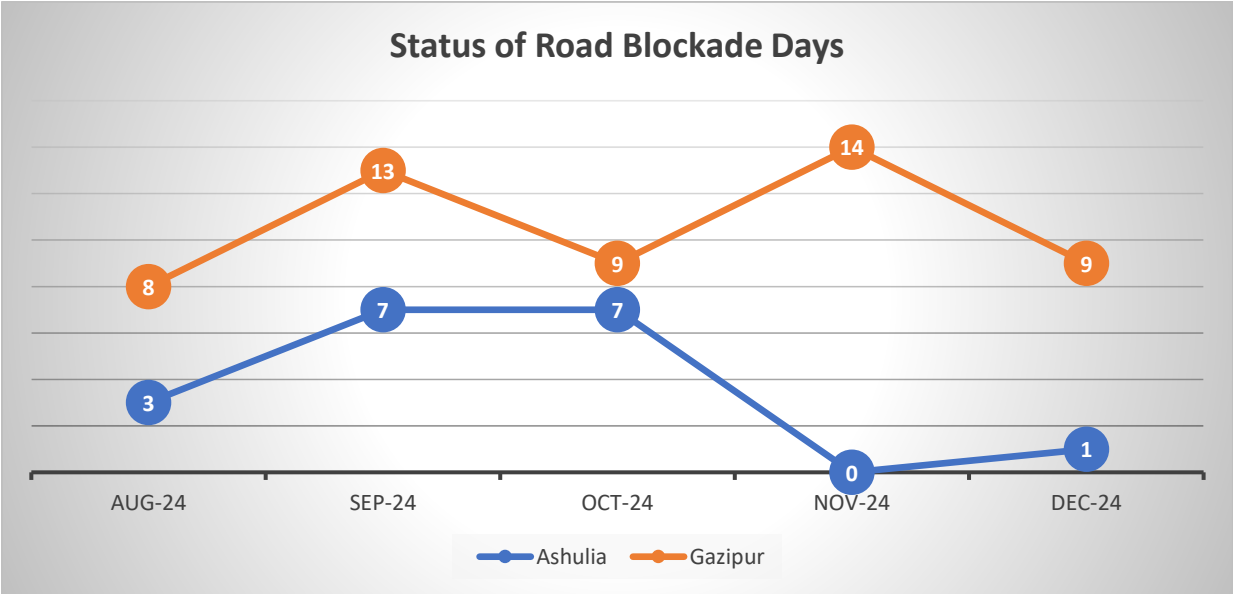
Table: Demonstration outside factories

Months	Status of demonstrations	
	How many days	% days of months
August 2024	7	23%
September 2024	18	60%
October 2024	14	45%
November 2024	15	50%
December 2024	15	48%
Mean	13.8	45%

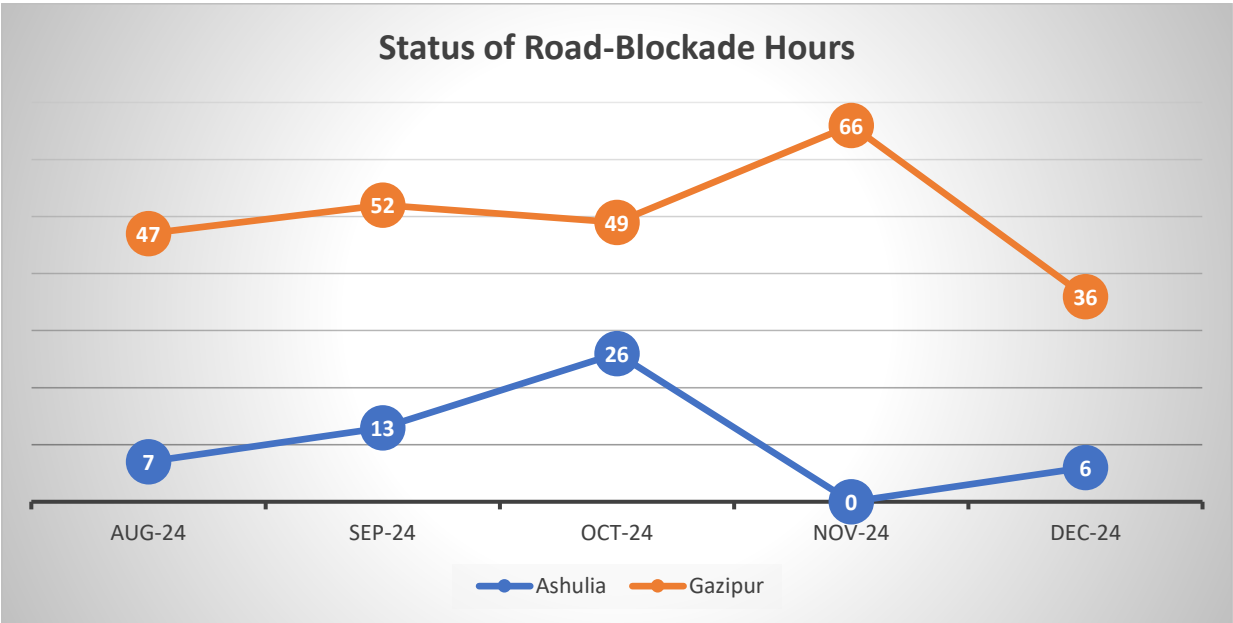
Status of road-blockade

Road-blockade was one of core components of unrest outside the factories in both Gazipur and Ashulia regions. Our research finds that from 5 of August 2024 until December 30, RMG workers from Gazipur and Ashulia blocked roads for about 71 days. That means, on average they blocked

roads for some 14 days a month, which is 47% of entire days of a month. Individually, road-blockade was more common in Gazipur. On average, every month, for about 11 days RMG workers blocked some roads in different parts of Gazipur. Statistically, 35% days a month, roads were blocked in some parts and somewhere in Gazipur. Highest number of road-blockades happened in the month of November, 47% days reportedly roads were blocked. The least number of road-blockade occurs in the month of August, 26% days road-blockade.



In Ashulia, RMG workers blocked roads for about 6 days every month, which is equivalent to 12% days a month. Most road-blockades happen in the month of September and October, for about 23% days in each month, workers blocked roads in some parts in Ashulia. A declining trend of road blockade is observed in the months of November and December.



Our research too has analyzed the hours of road-blockade in Ashulia and Gazipur. Data analysis suggests that the RMG workers blocked roads in Gazipur and Ashulia combined for a total of 302 hours from August to December 2024. Of them, various roads in Gazipur were blocked for about 250 hours and in Ashulia for about 52 hours.

Table: Status of Road Blockade

Months	Days of blockade		Total days of blockade	Blockade Hours		Total hours blocked
	Gazipur	Ashulia		Gazipur	Ashulia	
August 2024	8 (26%)	3 (10%)	11	47	7	54
September 2024	13 (43%)	7 (23%)	20	52	13	65
October 2024	9 (29%)	7 (23%)	16	49	26	75
November 2024	14 (47%)	0	14	66+	0	66
December 2024	9 (29%)	1 (3%)	10	36+	6	42
Total	53	18	71	250+	52+	302
Mean	11 days (35%)	6 days 12%	14 days (47%)	4.7	3	4.3

RMG workers unrest in Ashulia and Gazipur: starting and growth

After 5 of August 2024, along with fleeing away the then Prime Minister, local Awamileague leaders specially connected with Jhoot businesses just disappeared overnight. Following 5 of August, for the first few days, chaotic situations prevailed everywhere in Gazipur and Ashulia. Then started a real competition among the local groups to win Jhoot businesses. Sporadic clash and unrest are reported in the mid and last days of August.

On 19 August, some around 500 organized RMG workers reportedly first demonstrated in the Dhaka EPZ area and block the Dhaka-EPZ entrance claiming equal employment opportunities for men and women. Starting from 28 August, worker demonstrations continued in Ashulia and Gazipur for at least 12 consecutive days. On 29 August, workers from Pearl Garments of Ashulia demonstrated in the street. On 31st August several thousand workers from Ashulia's Nasa group protested for their 15 points of demand in the street. Mentionable that the Chairman of Nasa group is linked closely with the Awamileague politics and had a direct connection and influence on the ousted government. Protest continued for the second consecutive day. Agitated workers throw brick pieces to the nearby factories. Real unrest started. 40 factories were announced closed immediately. The unrest spread fast in the adjacent Gazipur District. "Started from the EPZ. The call was equal employment opportunity for men and women. 2/3 days later, it passed to Nasa group. As the days passed, demands kept increasing. Started with only 2 demands, finally it was 15-16 points of demands", said Mr. Kamran, President, Shadhin Bangla Garments Sromik Kormochari Federation.

Following the unrest, on 9 September BGMEA, law enforcers, employers and TU leaders in a meeting at Ashulia agreed to the workers demand to increase attendance bonus and employ on equal skill basis. But the protest continued as it is for about next 15 days. This situation little-bit clam-down during mid-September. On 15 September, except for 18 factories, all were declared open. On 22 September workers again started demonstrating and blocked the roads demanding wage increase to BDT 25,000. On September 24, the interim government, factory owners and labour representatives agreed to an 18-point demand, which was formulated based on demands raised by the workers at various stages and factories. The unrest continued. On 27 September, workers of Ashulia's Skyline garments demonstrated in the street for different demands. Once again, workers from different factories started calling on strikes.

Mostly, local community peoples didn't take the unrest positively. Non-cooperation from the local community stakeholders is widely reported. Despite having a conducive time and context, the movement could not get too wild as it was expected. Masud Rana, one of the workers of Mahmud Jeans said to us, "most of the landlords in our area are against the workers. They cannot last even for a month without paying our rent. Yet they cannot see us. Local peoples cannot tolerate us. Journalists have also not played any role on behalf of the workers. Many were taken to the police, many of them were released after paying money. Only the workers have suffered, the owner has not suffered any loss. There has been no job for the past 4-5 months. I have not been able to get a job anywhere else yet."

Follow-up actions/Government in Action

The unrest was followed by a good number of Government actions as following:

- Joint force with a military in command was deployed.
- BGMEA deployed community policing with the help from the military.
- Export oriented garments are set to receive a soft loan to pay August month salaries. Bangladesh Bank in its circular issued 1st September 2024 asked banks to take steps so that loan funds are disbursed directly to the workers bank accounts or through mobile financial systems.
- Following the unrest, on 9 September BGMEA, law enforcers, employers and TU leaders in a meeting at Ashulia agreed to increase attendance bonus of RMG workers to 225 taka as well as employ on skill basis.
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment launched a helpline number 16357 on September 13 to report worker dissatisfaction and complaints.
- At a tripartite meeting held at the labour ministry on 24 September 2024, attended by four advisers of the interim government, labour union representatives and leaders of BGMEA agreed to workers 18-points demands and issued a joint statement to implement immediately all the 18 points of workers' demands. On 7 October 2024, agreement signed between the interim government, factory owners and labour representatives on a prior agreed 18 points of demands. 18 points of agreement among others included the following:

- Attendance bonus revised and increases to 225 taka only
- While working after 8pm, 10 taka to be added with the tiffin bill
- Night bill revised and increased 10 taka only
- Implementation of the last declared minimum wage in all factories by October 2024
- Disciplinary actions as per law if failed to give salary by 10 of the next month
- Settlement of service benefits as per law
- Supplying of essential goods to RMG workers through TCB in a subsidized price
- Central initiative to control Jhoot business
- Maternity leave increases to 120 days
- Employment as per skills and no discrimination between men and women
- On 6 November 2024, MWB Chairman Mamunur Rashid submitted a set of proposals to the Labour ministry highlighting the need for amending the labour act and the labour rules to strengthen the wage board and ensure the effective implementation of workers wage.
- The fifth meeting of the 'Minimum Wage Review and Annual Increment Hike for the RMG Sector' held on 9 December 2024 at the Secretariat agreed to raise the annual wage increment for the RMG workers from 5% to 9%, effective from January 2025.

Section Three

RMG Unrest in Gazipur & Ashulia: Consequences

Mathematical figures presented in different stages by the different RMG stakeholders about the consequences and loss from the unrest for the RMG industry are all assuming and estimated calculations. It is very difficult to rely on them. We didn't find any established methodology or system to document and calculate exactly the consequences and/or loss. To overcome this gap, we have meticulously scrutinized 13 news dailies. We collected primary information including expert opinion and appraisal from practicing NGOs and Trade Unions of the unrest to the maximum extent possible. We developed a good number of main indicators. We cross-matched primary and secondary collected information for each indicator we developed. These help us to develop an objective analysis of the consequences.

Factory closing

Factory closures, production stoppages, overall losses – this was the worst implication. Factory closures due to worker dissatisfaction were a normal occurrence every month from July to November. In July, all factories were closed for 5 consecutive days from 19th to 22nd due to curfew. After the fall of the government on 5th August, most factories were closed in an unwritten manner for the first few days. Starting from the late of August till November 2024, factory closures due to worker dissatisfaction became a regular occurrence. Almost every day, sometimes with a gap, the owners were forced to close the factory. According to a news reporting, by December 2024, 67 RMG factories have been shut down permanently³. Onward, December 2024, there is analysed a sign of improvement. An approximate portrait of factory closures based on newspaper screening data is presented in the table below:

“Garments are closed from Nabinagar to Chandra for 15 days a month. The police were also unable to take any action, because they were also afraid”, said Mr. Humayun Kabir Khan who is a prominent workers voice in Gazipur.

Ms. Rozina Akhter who is a TU leader in Gazipur said to us, “after August 5, many big factories have been closed down, such as Mahmud Jeans, Mahmud Denim, Nagra Garments, garment of Kaya Cosmetics group and many others. Many workers have become unemployed.”

Shri Suk Charan, a worker from PN Composite ltd said to us, “after August 5, all factories were closed for 5/7 consecutive days”.

Mr. Kaplan Hossain who is a Managing Director of Dekko Legacy Group said to us, “My factory was shut down in September for 23 days and 5 days in October.”

³ Bizbd report, 12 January 2025, <https://bizbdreview.com/bangladesh-rmg-sector-faces-1100-unrest-cases-in-aug-dec/>

Table: Status of factory closing

Months and dates	Factory closing in Ashulia and Gazipur (Approximate)
July (19-22)	All factories were closed
August (6-12)	Mostly, factories remained closed
31 August, 2024	40 factories were declared closed
1 st September, 2024	20 factories were declared closed
2 nd September, 2024	95/100 factories were declared closed
4 September, 2024	167 factories were declared closed
7 September, 2024	44 factories were declared closed in Ashulia
8 September, 2024	45 factories were declared closed at midday
9 September, 2024	119 factories were remained closed
10 September, 2024	51 factories remained closed
11 September, 2024	183 factories were declared closed. 66 factories were declared closed as per section 13(1) for indefinite time period
12 September, 2024	257 factories were declared closed
17 September, 2024	29 factories were declared closed
18 September, 2024	25 factories were declared closed
19 September, 2024	22 factories were declared closed
22 September, 2024	25 factories were declared closed
23 September, 2024	60 factories were declared closed
29 September, 2024	17 factories were declared closed
3 rd October, 2024	34 factories were declared closed
4 November, 2024	30 factories remained closed

Cases and Arrest

Following the unrest, there reported a regular attempt from the law enforcers to arrest and detain the workers and trade union leaders. In a few instances it was reportedly military led block raid and arrest, in few other cases it was a joint action by army and police, and in the rest other instances it was solely police led searching and arrest. Many of these reportedly were administered after dark at night. Trade union leaders from both Ashulia and Gazipur repeatedly report to us that mostly they kept on hiding to avoid arrests. The resulting consequence has been that regular industrial relation practices came to a halt in the RMG industry. Following major arrests are commonly reported:

Date, month, and place	Number and nature of arrest
02 September 2024 in Ashulia	3 workers arrested
5 September 2024 in Savar-Ashulia region	14 workers arrested
13 October 2024 in Ashulia	18 peoples including workers and TU leaders arrested
02 October 2024 in Tongi, Gazipur	39 peoples arrested including workers and TU leaders
August-September 2024, Gazipur	More than 100 workers arrested from Tusuka, Fullever, SM Knitwear, and High Fashion garments
29 November 2024, Gazipur	7 workers including union leaders arrested connection to allegation with attack on MD of Mahmud Jeans
August-October 2024 in Gazipur	122 peoples arrested

“Military arrested many of our workers. They said that we do politics in the factory. I am the president of a union, but I myself could not sleep peacefully in my house. Military came to my house to arrest me. Police came too. A case was filed against all of us. It was later resolved. The trade union in the factory could not play any role in this problem. They had already thrown us out. We could not even talk to the management”, said to Mr. Alamgir who is a union leader in Ashulia based Deco garments

“Earlier the leaders were afraid of the police, now they are afraid of the army. Army called on many of us in the Moucha camp. They discussed and analyzed very calmly, all of which were like threats. Labor leaders like us were arrested by the army in the dead of night for speaking on behalf of workers. Neither workers have been benefited nor the owners”, said Ms Rozina Akhter Sumi who is a President of Green Bangla garments workers federation from Gazipur.

“The army has arrested one after another labor leaders, first our Lutfar brother for United Federation was arrested, then our Gazipur IBC regional committee general secretary Motir brother, then they arrested me, then they arrested Jewel brother, then some other labor leaders”, said to us Mr. Zubair Sarker, IBC regional committee president.

After 8 pm, the joint forces went into action. They fired TR shells, rubber bullets, and sound grenades. Many were injured. Later, after midnight, raids were conducted at each person's house. They have arrested at least 7 people”, said Mr. Ripon who is a union leader in Gazipur

Incidences and Cases filed

Around 1000 incidents (approximate) are reported across key industrial areas under Gazipur and Ashulia regions during August-December 2024. Among others, factory vandalism, demonstration, road-blockade, clash between workers and law enforcers, throwing bricks, baton charges, and shooting tear gases were common. Associated with these incidents, there again reported a proliferation of cases filed with the police stations. According to one recent report, until December 2024, a total of 131 cases have been filed in Gazipur and Ashulia. Of them, 98 in Gazipur, and 33 in Ashulia and Savar⁴. Quoting local police officials, the Business standard on 13 November 2024 reported that approximately 16,000 people are accused in a total of 34 cases filed in connection with the arson attacks and vandalism in various factories in Ashulia and Gazipur. Among the accused, only around 200 have been named, while the identities of other individuals remain unknown, with the majority believed to be garment workers. Mr. Khokon, a worker from Next Apparels of Ashulia said to us, “many unknown cases have been filed against the workers. I cannot say the exact number. People are continuously on a run”. Mr. Ripon, union leader from Gazipur said, “They filed a case. They named 21 people and filed an anonymous case against 600 people. Half of the 21 people are staff and the other half are workers of Mahmud Jeans. My name is also included.”

Casualties (Injury and Death)

Table: Casualties

Months	Casualties	
	Injury	Death
August 2024	17	Nil
September 2024	65	1 (Rokeya Begum)
October 2024	5 (3 bullet injured)	2 (Champa Khatun and Russel Hawleder)
November 2024	50	1 (Anjuara Khatun)
December 2024	4	Nil
Total	141	4

Our research finds that around 141 workers have been injured and 4 died in the RMG unrest in Ashulia and Gazipur during 6 August 2024 to 30 December 2024. Among the deceased workers, three are women (Rokeya Begum, Champa Khatun, and Anjuara Begum) and one is a man. Of them, three were bullet injured, particularly shot dead during clashes between workers and the law enforcers, while protesting on streets for their persisting demands. One woman worker however died from a brick-chunk injury. While standing on the factory gate, workers from the roof top of a

⁴ Bizbd report, 12 January 2025, <https://bizbdreview.com/bangladesh-rmg-sector-faces-1100-unrest-cases-in-aug-dec/>

nearby factory reportedly threw a brick-chunk and injured Rokeya Begum, who then died in a nearby hospital. Beaten by the law enforcers and hired goons however reportedly the main cause of the injuries. TNG: Sabina, “Hired goons from the owner's side beat the workers a lot. 5/7 people were seriously injured” said Ms Sabina, who works in TNG Garments in Gazipur.

Termination/firing/Sacked

Associated with the unrest, factory layoff, termination, firing and sacking became a regular practice in both Ashulia and Gazipur regions. To control unrest particularly to tighten unruly workers, employers more or less used this weapon to identify and fire the protesting workers. Along with firing, reportedly blacklisting was rampant. *“Termination was rampant after 5th of August. Al-Muslim, Tusuka, S. M Knitwear, S. M. High fashion, and many other factories have terminated workers who have spoken out. More than 1 lakh workers have been blacklisted. Blacklisted workers are denied job in other factories”,* said Ms. Rozina Akhter Sumi, President of Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation. In the following table, we have captured only a partial picture of the entire action, which we expect shall help to understand the magnitude of the issue:

Name of the Garments	Place	No fired
Ananta Garments and Ananta Sports wear	Ashulia	120
Ananta apparels limited	Ashulia	147
Newage apparels limited	Ashulia	350
80, Donglian fashion Bd Ltd	Ashulia	80
57 Dip apparels ltd	Ashulia	57
75, Pearl Garments Company Ltd	Ashulia	75
81, Shin Shin Apparels Ltd	Savar	81
44, The Rose Dresses Ltd	Ashulia	44
99, Skyline Apparels Ltd	Ashulia	99
Al-Muslim apparels	Ashulia	437
Mandol Fashions	Ashulia	50
Nasa Group	Ashulia	260
Hi-Fashions Limited	Gazipur Sader	125
SM Knitwear Ltd, under section 26 of LL	Joydevpur, Gazipur	205
100, Tusuka Group	Gazipur	239
MM Knitwear limited	Konabari, Gazipur	100
Mamun Knitwear Limited	Konabari, Gazipur	100
Dekko Garments Limited	Gazipur	200
Mahmud Jeans of Gazipur	Gazipur	600
PN Composite	Gazipur	64
Beximco group	Gazipur	30,000

“They threw me out on October 8, I was then at my village home. Finally, they laid off 123 more workers”, said Mr. Alamgir, a sacked worker from the Dekko Garments.

“They fired us without any trouble in the factory. They fired everyone in the union and fired everyone in the leadership. They also fired our relatives. My sister-in-law and wife used to work at Dekko, they were fired just for being my wife and sister. 200 of us were fired”, said Mr. Shariful, a sacked worker from Dekko garments.

“The employer first laid off 300 workers who were in the most discussions with them. A few days later, they laid off 137 workers again on various pretexts”, said Mr. Tareq who works at Al-Muslim garment.

“New workers are mostly laid off. Every day 5-7 workers were laid off. In this way, about 500-700 workers were sacked”, said Mr. Ripon who works at Mahmud Jeans limited at Gazipur.

Shri Suk Charan, a worker from PN Composite said, “following our strike for some demands, they first sacked 32 workers. When we protested, they were bring-back. Later, we protested again. The employer then fired 64 staff. They are paid 3 months' salary.”

“They first gave a layoff notice to 160 people. The rest of us went inside, but those 160 people couldn't enter. The next day, 51 workers were laid off again. The next day, 11 more were laid off. On the 18th, they laid off 36 more. Then we, the staff workers, united. The workers stopped working again. Our demand was that no worker should be laid off.”, says Rezaul Karim from Nasa group.

“Approximately 1200-1300 workers work in our factory. 30-40 of the workers who were identified in the movement are out of work. We don't know exactly what they are doing now. If we would have said anything on their behalf, we too would lose our jobs. Many were dismissed in front of the army and sent away with some money”, said a worker from the Madaol group.

Indirect consequences

RMG stakeholders have reported a good number of indirect consequences too from the recent unrest. Our analysis suggests that indirect consequences are basically long-term consequences which have clear potentials to sustainably impact the industry in the long run. Among others, following indirect consequences are repeatedly reported:

- Few purchase orders were cancelled and few shifted to other countries. “15/20% purchase orders cancelled due to workers unrest”, said Mr. Asif Mahmud, Adviser, MoLE. A BHRRC administered survey claimed that out of 20 global clothing brands they surveyed 12 didn’t cancel or lower their work order during the unrest period. However, there is no reporting for the rest of the 8 brands out of 20, what they actually did⁵. Tapan Chowdhury, CEO, Square Group said in an interview with the Daily Star, “Some garment work orders were shifted to other countries due to labour unrest”.⁶
- Production loss is equivalent to 40 crore dollar during September and October 2024 due to workers unrest, said Khondker Rofiqul Islam, President BGMEA. New investment also halted down. This has clear long-term implications on the country’s economy and growth.
- Onward December 2024, many workers have reported serious work pressure. Employers are trying to cover-up the production and loss due to factory closing and interruption for the last couple of months. Many factories in Ashulia and Gazipur reportedly were open on the last few Fridays, the weekly holiday. In many factories, there is reported increasing emphasis on fast delivery to cover-up the delay and production loss. These are causing extra work-load to the workers and which have long-term health consequences to workers.
- Change and new air shipment is causing extra expenditure. Negative attitudes reportedly grow among some brands/buyers.
- Few factories shut down permanently. Many workers have lost their jobs

⁵ Kaler Kantho, 2 October 2024

⁶ The Daily Star, 10 October 2024

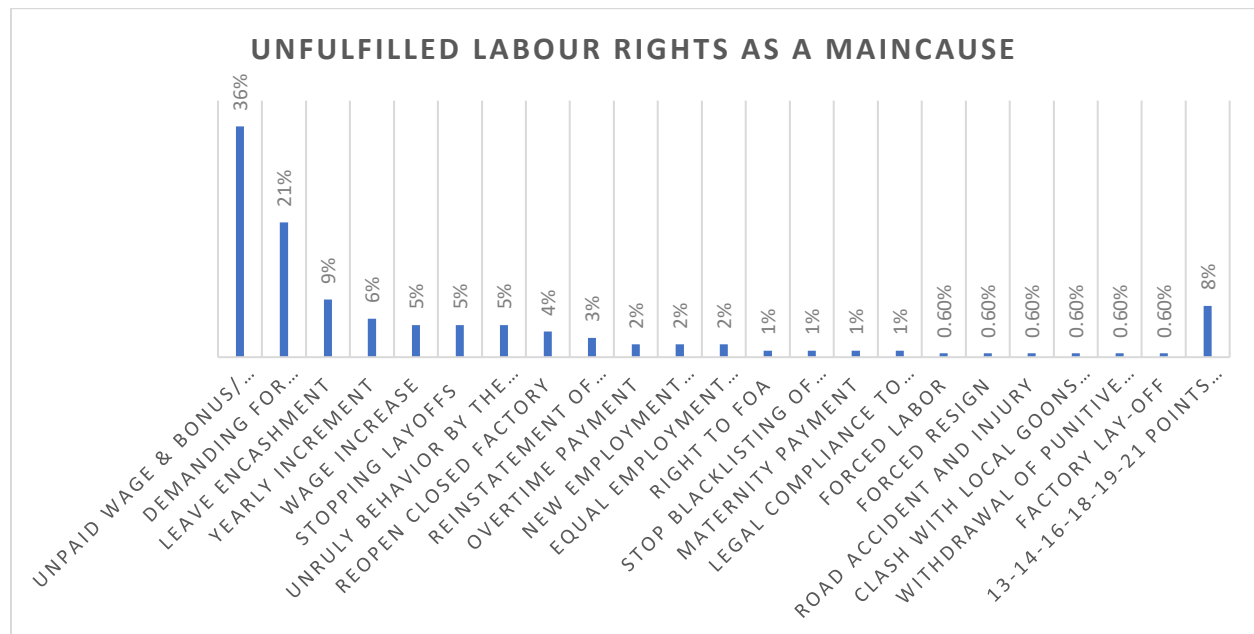
Section Four

Causes of Unrests

One of the core objectives of this research was to find out the causes of ‘after 5 of August’ labor unrest in the garment industry particularly in the country’s Gazipur and Ashulia regions. We have carefully scrutinized the information collected from newspapers, other secondary sources and every stakeholder related to the garment industry. The work of scrutinizing was done in several stages. The information obtained from the qualitative research was thoroughly analyzed and first drawn a comprehensive list of codes, then re-coded more precisely. At a later stage, triangulation was done between the scrutinized information obtained from above-mentioned three different sources. Having completed several stages of synthesis, the causes of labour unrests have been documented finally. From the research perspective, provided analysis is as accurate, authentic, reliable, and defensible as possible.

Unfulfilled labour-rights

The environment was already conducive for labour unrest. Poor and irregular wage payment, wage and overtime thefting, unpaid wage, bonus and arrears, meager attendance bonus, night bills, tiffin allowance, and yearly increment, widespread verbal abuses and forced laboring, arbitrary factory lay-off and firing and termination and blacklisting, restricted right to FoA and collective bargaining reportedly were common. About 37% of audits conducted in Bangladesh RMG factories during the period of January to September 2024 revealed critical violations related to working hours and wages, according to a QIMA report, a leading supply chain compliance provider. On the other hand, for the last several months and years, the rate of inflation was ever increasing.



Almost every previous research has warned of potential labor unrest. It was only needed to fuel the fire. 5 of August 2024, the falling of the government through countrywide movement caused fueling to the fire. Wherever workers got an opportunity, started demonstrating inside factories or came to the streets and protests. Opportunists may have taken the full advantage.

Causes	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Total
Unpaid wage, bonus, arrears	17	18	8	13	5	59 (36%)
Attendance bonus/night bills and tiffin allowance	1	29	4	2		36 (21%)
Leave encashment	1	13		1	1	16 (9%)
Yearly increment		9	1		1	11 (6%)
Wage increase		7			1	8 (5%)
Factory layoffs		8		1		9 (5%)
Unacceptable behavior by the supervisors/managers	2	3		1	2	8 (5%)
Reopen closed factory	1		2	2	2	7 (4%)
Reinstatement of dismissed workers		2	1	2	1	6 (3%)
Overtime payment	3	1				4 (2%)
New employment opportunity		3	1			4 (2%)
Equal employment opportunity		3				3 (2%)
Right to FoA		2				2 (1%)
Blacklisting of workers		1			1	2 (1%)
Maternity payment	1	1				2 (1%)
Legal compliance to dismissed workers		1			1	2 (1%)
Forced labor	1					1 (.6%)
Forced resign	1					1 (.6%)
Road accident and injury		1				1 (.6)
Clash with local goons and injury/death		1				1 (.6%)
Withdrawal of punitive measures		1				1 (.6%)
13/14/16/18/19/21 points of demands		10		3		13 (8%)

At least, some more than one-third (36%) instances our research finds unpaid wage, bonus and arrears as an apparent cause. For about one-fifth (21%) unrests, the main demand of the workers was to increasing attendance bonus, night bills and tiffin allowance. Nearly one-tenth (9%)

instances, no leave encashment triggers the unrests. 3 to 5 percent cases each, wage increase, no factory lay-off, removal of ill-mannered supervisors/managers, reopen factory, and reinstatement of the dismissed workers are analyzed as a publicly disclosing cause. Some 16 factories cases of unrests, overtime payment, right to FoA, maternity protection, no blacklisting of workers and withdrawn of punitive measures, legal compliance to dismissed workers, forced laboring and resign, casualties from clash with local goons and road accident and respective casualties are identified as the expressed causes.

Some around one-tenth cases (8%), workers were very much organized in submitting their demands. It was well-written with either 13 points of demands or 14 points, or 16 points, or 18 points, or 19 points, or 21 points. Workers leaders and community level stakeholders in a number of cases reported to us that in each of such well-articulating demands submission cases there were ½ self-claimed coordinator for each. One workers leader from the Gazipur area reported that few workers claimed to be connected with the national level student movement against discrimination. A number of community leaders however have claimed that these worker coordinators are backed by the local influential Awamileague leaders to create some chaos in the locality.

“We had many demands, including the rate of wages, annual increment for only old workers and not for new workers, removal of bad-mannered staff, the water filter is not safe, the factory is not clean, the washroom is dirty and salary increase, and some other issues. We started sitting at the machines regularly instead of working. Later, the factory was laid-off for several days. Then the movement continued in all the neighboring factories. We got in touch with the workers of other factories. They also told us that they had stopped working. They took to the streets, we also took to the streets.”, said to us a couple of workers from Mandol fashions lld.

“Workers work on 4 floors. They paid salaries only on 2 floors. The workers on the remaining 2 floors were not paid. Later, we stopped working. If you give money, everyone will have to pay it together. If you don't, no one will. We want to work, in return, we want salary on time. We have no profit by stopping work.”, said to us couple of workers from Mascot garments

“It was basically for an irregular salary payment. We want the salary to be received by the 8th of every month. But they didn't even pay the salary on the 12th. Later, they said that the salary would be deposited in everyone's account by Saturday. Finally, when we came on Saturday, we found that Mascot was closed for an indefinite period”, said a couple of garments workers from Gazipur.

“it was announced on the microphone that the 9% increment would be given only to the old workers, and the new ones would be given 4%. After a while, it was announced again that the new ones would not get the increment. Workers outburst. We stopped work. 200 workers were laid off”, says Amagir from Dekko garments

“The long-standing exploitation, torture, and discrimination among the workers, the anger in our hearts, was completely red hot, just waiting to be struck by a match, someone has shaken the match, it has started”, said Mr. Ashraf a union leader from Konabari of Gazipur.

“For long, the workers have been subjected to exploitation and torture; many pregnant workers have been thrown out; they did not see maternity leave; they were forced to take their signatures and throw them out; they did not give money. Now these angers have been expressed externally”, said a worker from Konabari, Gazipur.

“These are just workers, they do not understand any politics, they do not have their own bank balance. Their bank balance is that I have to send my son and daughter to school, whether it is a government school or an orphanage or a madrasa. I have old parents, they need medicine worth 4 thousand taka a month, no matter what, even if it is 1500 taka, I have to save it”, said Rozina Akhter Sumi, President of Green Bangla Garments Workers federation

“Oppression and torture existed as before. It has not decreased even a single point. Voicing for rights causes only blacklisting, which is even more negative. The owners say that we do not write anything, but because of the blacklisting, you shall not get any job in any other factories”, said Shahidul Alam, a worker from Gazipur

Table: Inflation Vs Wage Increase

Fiscal Year	Food Inflation	Wage increase (%)
2020-2021	5.73%	6.12%
2021-2022	6.05%	6.6%
2022-2023	8.71%	7.04%
2023-2024	10.65%	7.52%

Source: BBS, Wage rate index

Movement season

After 5 of August 2024, an interim government was formed, having human rights champion honourable Dr. Muhammad Yunus in the steering wheel. The use of force and inhuman practices are restrained. On the other hand, police and administrative machinery were in a loose state for the first couple of months. All in all, it was an ideal environment for the movement. Many stakeholders termed it as a movement season. Almost every day, the country experienced movement somewhere and in some places. Mr. Mizan, a community spokesperson from Charoborty of Gazipur said, “it was like that people are protesting in a festive mood”.

Garment workers have been deprived of their rights for a long period of time. Previously, their freedom of speech and protest would have been controlled strictly. They take this movement season as an opportunity and try to make the most out of it. "There were movements in every place. our morale increased, we started the movement. We demanded that we be given an annual 10% increment. We had 14-15 demands including vacation pay, overtime, night bill, tiffin bill and many more. We just stopped working. In the middle we took to the streets for 2/1 day.", said Rezaul Karim, a garment worker from Gazipur. Tareq, another worker from Ashulia said, "Our attendance bonus was 500 taka, later it was increased to 725 taka. The tiffin bill was increased. The holiday pay was increased. Seeing that, movement continued in the neighboring factory, many of us joined the movement again. We want more." Mr. Raju, Assistant Superintendent of Police based in the industrial Police Unit in Gazipur said, "the situation had gone towards disaster. The thinking was that if we get together and get our demands from the owner like a coordinator, if we get five taka more than ten taka, that's our profit. In this wind, they did all these".

Some factories are laid off for real reasons. Some factory owners go into hiding, causing their factories to be laid off. Workers in laid-off factories doubled their efforts in the movement. They even didn't bother to attack a neighboring factory, if workers of that factory didn't join them. Dobir, a local businessman from Chakraborty area of Gazipur said to us, "If one Garment factory closes, 10 more factories in the vicinity will close. The people of the closed factory are chasing other factories, if their factory is closed, no other factory can be run."

Poor governance, law and order breakdown

It was a different context. After 5 of August 2024, for about 10 days, it was totally a police-less state. Many police officers even disappeared with the falling of the authoritarian regime. Many police stations were attacked and destroyed by the mob. The interim-government initially emphasized on establishing a functional police system. Restructuring and reorganizing continued for several weeks.

In the meantime, existing local administration and law-enforcers were fully reluctant to control the unrest. Many of them instead reportedly help to further spread unrest. Since, they were still fully packed with the peoples and allies of the fallen government. Masud Mondal, a community representative from Gazipur said to us, "The bureaucracy, police and syndicate exist as before. Former Department of Factory league, former Police League, former business league, these league forces wanted to create discontent. These leagues communicated with the Industrial Police, the Department of Factories in various ways and using various tactics."

In the industrial zones like Ashulia and Gazipur, the military takes over the control. Public affairs controlled by the military, initially, it was completely a miss-match. One union leader said to us with enormity, "Military don't know about labour law". Some workers movements were spontaneous, still many may have been conspired by the ousted forces. Whatever the reason, because of long oppression, there has been developed in general an anti-employer sentiment among the workers. Military's first objective was to control the unrest. They fall into a trap by the conspirators. They didn't discuss either workers or their representatives. They didn't get required support from the

local administration and law-enforcers. They simply favoured the employers, shot and baton charged on workers. Many workers were arrested. Few workers died. *"The soldiers shot to stop the workers. They probably thought that throwing one body would cool the situation. Workers started throwing bricks and stones at the army vehicle. We heard, one worker from Mangotex was killed. The next day, we went to the factory only to see what happened yesterday, but no one was there to work. When they saw us, the army took many workers in trucks. They took everyone, men and women",* said Ms. Aklima, a RMG worker from Ashulia.

Military disallows union leaders to negotiate and settle. They indiscriminately arrested the union leaders. Initially, the unrest was confined in the Ashulia area only, Gazipur was not that much unsettled. They started random block-raid and arresting workers leaders in Gazipur so as to curb unrest well in advance in Gazipur. Instead, the unrest gets furthermore spreaded and stronger. Since, few benevolent union leaders were humiliated without true reasons, except the pro BNP-Jamat ones, mostly trade unions took them far away, rather to assist the military to truly address the unrest. *"There was movement in Ashulia, but no movement in Gazipur. The army arrested one after another labor leaders from Gazipur. Lutfar brother was arrested, then Moti brother, then me, then Jewel brother and many others. About 125-26 soldiers surrounded the two areas and arrested me. The state does not want the government to be in power. Initially, there was movement in Ashulia but no workers were arrested, but in Gazipur, the workers are being arrested because there was no movement",* Said Zubair Sarker, IBC regional committee president from Gazipur. Md. Foridul Islam, Vice President of National Garments Workers Federation said, "Employers or administration didn't bother to discuss with union leaders. They sit with the NGOs, they sit with the community peoples. I was arrested as a conspirator."

BGMEA is supposed to play the biggest role in resolving the industrial disputes. The board of directors of the BGMEA was also dissolved. So, it was not in a position to support that much. The police knew the workers' leaders but they didn't reportedly help the army. Md. Qayyum Ali, a union leader from Gazipur said to us, "The army is in the field now. Police are not helping them. The owners are making them understand wrongly." Another union leader Ms. Rozina Akhter from Gazipur said, "In certain instances, management people are beaten up. The MD of Denim was beaten. It is not that workers are doing these, but there was a failure of the local administration, they could not provide security."

Plot created by the political leaders and their associates

The former Prime Minister fled on August 5. Local Awamileague leaders and their associates went into hiding. In many industrial unrests in Ashulia and Gazipur, there is repeatedly reported an invisible hand by these hidden awamileague leaders and their associates. Multi-different RMG stakeholders including political leaders and trade unionists reported to us that local Awamileague leaders and their associate have taken RMG sector labor as a target since it is very easy to create tension in this sector. As for means, among others, 1) Mobilising through cash, 2) Threatening workers, 3) Withheld/stoppage Salary Payment, 4) Target-casualty (Injury/death) and 5) kidnapping are reported main. *"In the Savar EPZ area, during the EPZ-entrance blockade, a slogan being chanted, everyone should be given a job. The second slogan is that half women, half men should*

be hired. Only around 500 people were there. Jobs are not something that 500 people can suddenly march to, they cannot demand jobs by shouting slogans. In the name of the anti-discrimination workers' movement BAL agents must be working there", said a community key informant from Ashulia. Md. Qayyum Ali, a union leader from Gazipur said to us that mostly closed factory employers were involved in Awami League politics. Shewli, a worker from Keya Knit Composite of Gazipur said, *"there must be some political influence. In last September, I got 54,000 taka for my 2 children from the factory. There are many workers in the factory whose entire operating expenses are paid by the owner. Even then, few went to Konabari and protested. Awami League's propaganda was definitely fueling this".*

It is already a tense situation, unrest all around. In such a situation, threatening workers must be suicidal. But we find a couple of threatening instances. Every time the employer had an Awamileague affiliation. *"We presented our demands in writing. We were given a very big threat, saying that even if you run away from here, we have your biodata. I will also check your family. Later that day, there was a light-hearted riot in the factory. On the 10th, they put up an indefinite closure notice at the gate of our factory.",* said Mr. Rezaul Karim who works at Nasa group. Mentionable that Nasa group chairman is now in jail, and has a strong political ally with the Awamileague.

Thirdly, salary withheld, stoppage of salary payment, paying one unit and unpaid other two units were common. In most cases, we find the employer has a strong political ally with the Awamileague such as Beximco. *"Workers on the 2nd and 5th floor were paid on time, despite being in the same factory, we were not paid on that day. We started protesting",* said a worker from Ashulia whose factory belongs to an Awami League leader. *"Starting from Jirani Bazar to Bipile, there is a problem with many factories. Maximum employers' part of a gang, they are involved in some kind of conspiracy. The workers' strike happened after the 10th. Why didn't you pay the salary by then?"*, said Mr. Mizan who is a community key informant from Chakroborty of Gazipur.

Fourthly, our research finds a few target casualties in Ashulia and Gazipur unrest. *"There were 3 women standing in front of our factory. Someone threw a brick from the 6th floor from an adjacent factory, hit her on the head, Rokeya was spot dead",* says a couple of workers eye witness from Mascot garments. *"Everything was arranged. It was a planned attack on us. The Radiance people came and broke the glass of our factory with stones. All the neighboring factories are angry with our factory. Why don't we join the movement?"* says a couple of workers from a garments' in Ashulia. Mentionable that these workers have directly blamed an employer who was formerly an Awami League MP. Another worker from Ashulia said to us, *"my wife went to a shop near the Sawdan factory (former BAL MP) to buy something. Some people from Sawdan beat her a lot with sticks. They said that she had come to protest. But she did not go to protest. They beat her with rods and abused her in foul language."*

At least in one instance in Ashulia, our research finds kidnapping of two workers from an RMG factory whose employer has close ties with the Awamileague politics. *"One of our workers went missing. Her name was Ayesha. Later we found out that another one named Rubel was also missing. Everyone started a movement. Ayesha was missing for 3 days. She used to go to the front and speak in*

the movement. Our owner is a Awami League leader. We have not found any trace of Rubel. Ayesha has been given her dues, she is no longer working”, says couple of workers from Mandol fashions limited, Ashulia.

Third party influence

Third party influence is too widely reported. Because of limited time and resources, our research did not go very much deep into this. Our analysis suggests that some third party was equally present and tried to culminate some gains from the behind. Ripon, a worker from Mahmud Jeans of Gazipur said to us, “Many outsiders also joined our protest. Local people, bus staff, many others including Awami League peoples. Many workers close to employer started slapping him. The employer and army started running away. Everyone followed them. We workers were far behind. At one point, some workers of the Niagara factory rescued the employer”. Mr. Ashraf, a union leader from Konabari of Gazipur reported, “When there are people in front of a factory, few people go there and create a commotion and hold a procession-meeting. There are coordinators in some factories. Some have 15 points, some have 17 points, these demands are being uploaded on social media.”

This third party reportedly often gets support from the law enforcers. Shri Suk Charan from PN Composite, Gazipur stated, “Workers from other factories came and started throwing stones at our factory. Our management declared a general holiday. One day later, factory security caught 4 people who were lazing around our factory. They were handed over to the police. But the police took away 2 of our workers with them, for no reason. Later, following our protest, they withdrew the case and released 2 of our brothers.” Shewli, a worker from Keya Knit Composite said, “Around 8000 workers work in the factory. We have around 1500 disabled workers. It’s like a girls’ school. All are female workers. The supervisors are also girls. A few staff members are only boys. Not everyone came to the house to protest. How come so many boys come to join the movement? We don’t know many of them.”

This third party reportedly has a strong hold in the locality and are well connected. A group of workers from Ashulia’s Mandol garments stated, “The building owner beat some of our workers a lot. None of us understand why the building owner beat them.” A couple of workers from Mascot garments of Ashulia said to us that despite a tense situation and army being deployed in the factory, they were attacked and no journalists were there to cover up the story. they categorically said, “We asked the journalists where you were on the day we were killed. They said they didn’t get the news. But we think there could be some other reason behind it. There must be some mystery behind it. It seems to us that there is some politics here.” Mentionable that when to cross-check the issue with a national electronic media person, the concerned person straight refused to talk to our research team on the unrest matter. Rezaul Karim, a worker from Nasa group said, “There are some local thugs, drug addicts, who come and steal, vandalize the factory, and disturb the peaceful atmosphere. They are the ones who made the movement bloody by fighting. Again, the owners hired some people and made them loose and created a turbulent atmosphere in the movement. Then chaos was created.”

Jhoot business chain breakdown and employers in a dilemma

Jhoot is waste fabric locally known as garment leftovers. A typical Bangladeshi garment factory reportedly produces around 250 -300 kg of Jhoot per day⁷. Jhoots are widely used as an alternative to cotton. The local recycled yarn manufacturers use Jhoots to produce raw material for making and exporting towels, curtains and the likes. Usually, having completed production cycle for one brand/buyer, these leftover garment wastes are sold.

The politically backed local leaders and gang-stars controlled the Jhoot business. In a normal circumstance, garment workers are low paid and they are unattended of many of their rights in the workplace. So, disrespect, disobedience, unruliness and little unrest are common in the garment factories. Given these circumstances, in exchange of offering Jhoot businesses it is a common practice that employers have developed a deeper connection with the local political influential groups to tighten the unruly workers in the factory. Since, Jhoot businessmen have a great influence in the locality and in the workers living place, workers seldom dare to go outside the factory and protest. Whatever unrest there was, they were so far mostly inside the factories.

In the last over a decade, it was the same Awamileague backed political groups that controlled the entire Jhoot businesses. After 5 of August 2024, with the fleeing away of the Prime Minister, these Awamileague backed Jhoot businessmen just disappeared overnight. All of a sudden, employers' control in the community totally lost. Discontented workers from many factories came out in the streets and started protesting. Emerging context and situation were completely unanticipated to the employers even on 4 August night. No preparation was there. Many even hide themselves. It was totally a vacuum. Initially, local influential groups came to capture the Jhoot business. Gradually BNP backed political groups started influencing. Although, by the study time, it is already a changed group of Jhoot business peoples but given the situation total control like the past is analysed shall take extra time to settle. Since, a changed political government is uncertain till to date. Garments owners are equally in a dilemma which group to settle with Jhoot businesses.

Divided trade unions, undecided roles

Regarding basic union

We deliberately tried to see what the level of unrest was in factories where there were basic unions. The research hypothesis was that there would be less unrest in unionized factories. That is why we listed priority factories considering the severity of unrest for furthermore in-depth study. However, the issue of unrest this time was completely different, our research finds. There was no difference in unrest whether the factory had a union or not. Previously, in every section, we more or less have discussed these issues. The issue of industrial relations was not the main issue here. There was much more protest outside the factory than inside. It has happened time and again that workers from one factory or local third parties have attacked another factory. However, whenever there was a lawsuit, or a layoff, the workers associated with the union were the first targets. Since, in the emerging situation, the issue of their protection inside or outside the factory became a big issue, the

⁷ Sabbir Rahman Khan (24/03/2020), The story of waste fabric (Jhoot): Positioning Bangladesh, Textile Today, <https://www.textiletoday.com.bd/the-story-of-waste-fabric-jhoot-positioning-bangladesh>

unionized workers were largely silent. Their first target was to save their jobs. Some in the dedicated trade union lamented that the unruly workers had gone too far in many cases and had not listened to anything.

Regarding Trade Union Federations

Trade union federations have a strong presence and role in both the research locales Ashulia and Gazipur. Since, nature and extent of right violation are almost same and there is both a clear need and acceptance of trade unions among the workers.

Awamileague leaders and their relatives are in charge of around one-third Trade Union Federations existing in the RMG sector. Another around one-third are directly linked with the left leaning political parties, most of which further have direct connection with Awamileague. These TUFs are active in the field. It is repeatedly claimed by industry stakeholders that few of these organizations are working to cause unrest in the industry. *“Some labour leaders really want the problems to be solved. On the other hand, there are some labor leaders who are playing a negative role. We get all kinds of information about how they are working. But maybe there is no information directly against them, that's why we may not be able to take any steps”*, says a former police officer from Gazipur. Humayun Kabir Khan, a community key informant from Gazipur said to us, “there are 28 organizations in our garment sector, one directly controlled by the Awami League, many of which, like our transport sector, are presidents of one, and their sons and daughters are presidents of one each. Some TUFs are affiliated with left political parties have direct association with the Awami League. They are investing money. This is what came out in our investigation”.

Secondly, because of the authoritarian nature of the government for more than last over a decade and local Awamileague leaders backed Jhoot businesses and control, many trade unions who work in the locality have deliberately developed a strong tie with these peoples and processes, for the shake of better performances. For long, they performed only a limited systematic role to decide labour relations inside factories.

This is a completely changed and unexpected situation. Trade unions could not take any united role. Although, they are often sitting together which is reportedly a long practice, their divided role has been furthermore bigger. Since, initially, military didn't bother to sit with the local TUFs and arrested indiscriminately the leaders, many of them who have a direct Awamileague affiliation engaged themselves negatively to influence the workers in favour of the unrest. These organizations have a strong organizing capacity and root in the research locales, it becomes easy for them to spread rumors and influence other communication means to fuel the unrest. “It is because of the wrong message by a few union leaders that the workers turned more violent. They engaged in rumor spreading. Losing influence and power after 16 years, they have engaged in creating mobs in the society”, said Md. Masud Rana Sultan, General Secretary of a local Trade Union Federation.

Despite strong political influence and role, BNP-minded and affiliated trade unions have only a very limited presence and role in the research locales. Even though very few BNP minded trade unions existed in the locality, the situation emerged all of a sudden. Mostly take a pro-interim-government

like role to assist local administration and employer to control the situation. This of their role to assist the employer is often reported as counterproductive since workers did not like this. On the other hand, in the central government machinery, there is a changed and strong presence of the Jamat Islam⁸ (Political party) back unions. But, because of the anti-Jamaat like opinion among many of the central level BNP leaders, local BNP affiliated trade unions were in a dilemma what to do. In many instances their counter political forces try to give them a bad image as friends of emerging Jhoot businessmen.

Poor financial management at macro level

State led poor financial management is reportedly one of the deep-rooted causes for the recent industrial unrest. Many industrial stakeholders including the law enforcers have claimed the same. Suppose, the value of the entire land property, infrastructure and machinery of a certain factory worth taka 50 million, it has been given a bank loan of taka 500 million. Political influence is reportedly one of the main causes of this. This is simply to loot the money. Now it is obvious that if such a factory has employed 3000 workers, has looted the money, and stopped paying workers their wage, workers unrest is a must. Unless there is proper financial reforms and regulations at macro-level, it is difficult for the local law-enforcers to deal with such a consequence. This is what happens in the Beximco case. A community key informant said to us, “They have employed around 40,000 workers. Their salary is 82 to 83 crore taka every month. They have taken loans from the bank every month to pay their workers. They have been running like this for a while but in the long run, it is not possible like this.”

Many factories reportedly do not have enough money in the bank to pay their workers even one month's salary. “You should have at least one month's salary in hand to run the factory. If this money was in the bank, then if the owner cannot pay salaries in any month, maybe he cannot pay due to shipment, in this case, the bank could have given that money. But now I see that there are many owners who are in this situation month after month”, said Mr. Raju who is an Assistant Superintendent of Police in the Gazipur Industrial Police Unit. Mr. Mizan, a community key informant from Chakraborty of Gazipur said to us with enormity, “It is not a problem of one factory. They have workers, say 2000/3000, they could not pay their salaries on time. They said the banks are closed. What have you been doing for so many years? If you can't pay a month's salary.”

Limited legal mandates by the industrial police

To ensure law and order in the manufacturing sector, industrial police have been deployed in the country's industrial zones. They have their specific infrastructural arrangements and manpower. However, the main problem lies with them is that their legal mandate to address industrial unrest is very limited. Despite being a special force, they perform like normal law enforcers and their mandate is very much reactive to situations. They cannot arrest the employers or cannot perform the role of negotiation. In many instances of unrest, our research finds the apparent cause is delayed and/or irregular wage payment. According to the labour law, employers must pay wages

⁸ Political party that promotes Islamic ideology and practices. During freedom of independence, they allegedly play a negative role.

by the first week of the next month. Now, if the employers don't pay in time and workers come to the streets and protest and demonstrate, industrial police have no legal mandate to either order the employers or take action against them. To clear demonstrations and to bring back normalcy in the industrial zones, they are heavily dependent on the local law enforcers since they have only limited manpower. "If workers cannot be paid within 7 working days, and they go to the streets and protest, we, the law enforcement agencies, harass them and apply force gradually. If they are aggressive, we treat them accordingly. But we cannot pressure the employer to pay wages. We cannot legally take them into our custody", said a former police officer from Gazipur.

Rumor spreading

Our research finds massive spreading of rumors in the industrial unrest in Gazipur and Ashulia during the unrest. Ridoy, who works in a garment factory in Ashulia said to us, "This incident started from Mandal Garments. They were saying that we were being detained, the army was spraying us with water and saying various things that you should come and rescue us. Workers from Natural Garments were coming and workers from 4/5 more garments came to one place." It is the legal mandate of the factory authority to lay-off the factory. Government has nothing to do with this. Mr. Mizan who is a well-known community level key informant from Chakraborty of Gazipur said to us, "On the last 20 December, the government has given a ban on Beximco for 45 days, after the ban people's work has stopped, this ban will probably not be lifted, that situation is going on, as far as I can tell. Government has closed the LC. They have closed all the accounts", said.

Legal loopholes

Bangladesh has a comprehensive labour law. After the formation and enactment of the law, it was amended several times. Still, there persisted many ambiguities. The main problem is that though it is detailed and large, regarding many of the labour rights related issues, it lacks specification and clarity. Apart from this, there is inconsistency regarding few matters like FoA and gender protection. This is one of the main causes of unrest, our research finds. "There is no specific amount in the labor law regarding the tiffin rate. A few days ago, the government issued a notice that 10 takas will be added to the tiffin rate. Those who have 20 takas will increase it to 30 taka and those who have 25 takas will increase it to 35 takas. Now in many unrest-occurred factories workers are demanding 50 taka as tiffin bill. They say that nearby factories are paying the same. Now, if it is determined by law, then many problems can be avoided", says a police officer from Gazipur.

Negotiation level loopholes

Negotiating and agreeing on 18 points of demand at the central level was a bit hurried as well as didn't calm down the situation. Rather, in some instances, it causes new unrest where there was no unrest previously. Many industrial stakeholders said to us that workers in many factories referred to the newly agreed demand and joined the protest claiming that agreed demands are unimplemented in their factories. One workers leader from Gazipur stated, "When the demands were accepted, they were accepted with contempt. It was necessary to explain to the neighboring factories that we are giving them mangoes so that there will be no new unrest."

Section Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

The recent unrest in the garment industry in Ghazipur and Ashulia since August 5th was huge and widespread. One of the most notable aspects of this movement is that it was by no means systematic and didn't follow any past trend. It increased suddenly, then decreased suddenly. Even positive steps have sometimes provoked negative results.

In some cases, the movement was spontaneous. Again, in some cases, there was clearly a third-party influence. An opportunity was created, and vested interests took advantage of it, this was the only natural thing to happen. However, the weakness and lack of coordination of the law enforcement agencies were obvious.

Although invisible, the impact of the recent movement on the national economy seems to be quite extensive. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs. Several factories have closed down permanently. Many owners are fleeing. Industrial relations have broken down. Above all, a lack of trust has developed at home and abroad about our RMG industry.

This situation needs to be overcome as soon as possible. However, on the positive side is that this movement has clearly exposed the weaknesses of the garment sector, especially the plight of the workers. One of our objectives should be to overcome these weaknesses and establish the garment industry on a solid foundation. Stakeholders involved in the ready-made garment industry have put forward several proposals in this regard. These proposals are recorded here for your kind consideration:

- ➡ In a statement issued on 30 September 2024, ILO has called for immediate reforms in wage structure and labour laws, and strong social and legal protections and industrial relations, and occupational safety and health to address the worker grievances and labour unrest.
- ➡ 20 members US delegation under the leadership of Kelly M F Rodriguez, Special International labour Correspondent from US Foreign Affairs Division on 25 November 2024 in a meeting with the Chief Adviser emphasized on the following three aspects:
 - Simplification of TU registration system
 - Increasing of minimum wage
 - Fast reforming of the labour law
- ➡ "LDC graduation needs to be delayed so that the country can enjoy preferential trade benefit for few more months", said Mr. Tapan Chowdhury, CEO, Square Group, on 10 October 2024 in an interview with the Daily Star

- ➡ The financial sector related to the ready-made garment sector needs extensive reforms. In particular, asset assessment, loan management, financial audit system, and monitoring need to be improved drastically. It is essential to ensure the accountability of the relevant institutions and authorities, otherwise no system will work.
- ➡ Horizontal expansion of the garment industry to be cautiously controlled. Changed emphasis to be placed on vertical expansion of RMG factories. Participatory decision making and benefit sharing among the contributory stakeholders to be given a top emphasis in all reform agenda. Profit taking by only a single family to be stopped rationally.
- ➡ Labour law reform deserves a special priority agenda. Qualitative improvement is more important than quantitative coverage. The core emphasis is to be given to bring about more unification and specifications in labour law on the crucial labour rights matters like employment security, termination and benefit settlement, wage and salary administration, industrial relation, and on employers accountability aspects.
- ➡ Make a legal basis for industrial police in the labour law to effectively handle labour unrest. Empower them to take legal action against the employer too when there is an employer's level breach. Allow them with legal means to bring the employers under the law like authority to seize passports and property.
- ➡ Drastic improvement in legal implementation is a must. Ensure sufficient manpower to the concerned authorities and proper functional cooperation and coordination between and among them. Above all, ensure legally that law enforcing agencies and authorities have a true legal accountability.
- ➡ Establish a mechanism to handle factory-based labour unrest on a case by case basis. As for a starter, take the Beximco case seriously as an independent case. The emphasis should be how to keep the employment of the workers active and solve the problem in a national way.
- ➡ Ensure that existing social dialogue institutions are truly functional, not a rhetoric settlement only. Ensure required infrastructure, resources and training.
- ➡ Establish a multi-stakeholder committee having true representation from the workers to check all filed cases and blacklisting of workers. Make this committee responsible and truly accountable to come-up with recommendations to withdraw harassing cases and blacklisting allegations within the least possible time. No more trouble. Take appropriate steps to ensure that closed factories are open and operational.
- ➡ Ensure that there are established institutional arrangements to address unrest sustainably in the industrial zones. It is a must that local law-enforcers and administration work closely with the workers and their representatives along with employers.

For Trade Unions

- ➡ First and foremost, united TUFs building should be given a top priority. Systematic and regular meetings deserve emphasis. There is mistrust, distrust between and among TUFs and its members. Regular act and functional TUFs is a must to resolve all these. Sooner is better.

- ➡ Secondly, initiate a listing of all cases and accused leaders. Document appropriately, who has been arrested, what is the status of cases filed, and what supports are necessary. Sit together, take planned time-bound actions, and implement. Act to influence respective authority to establish a multi-stakeholder committee having true representation from the workers to check all filed cases and blacklisting of workers.
- ➡ Doubling efforts to strengthen basic TU building and rebuilding inside factories. List all active and inactive unions in the factories. List, the union leaders and members who are still working and who have been sacked and blacklisted. Take time-bound planned and calculative actions to protect sacked and blacklisted workers and to activate employed leaders.
- ➡ Initiate act for improved implementation of labour law. TUF led social accountability of the law enforcing agencies and authorities can be a popular idea and effort at this stage.
- ➡ Take appropriate steps to ensure that closed factories are open and operational.
- ➡ Act to ensure an institutional arrangement in the locality to work together with the local law-enforcers and administration and with employers to solve RMG unrest.
- ➡ Put serious emphasis on labour law reform. The core emphasis is to be given to bring about more unification and specifications in labour law on the crucial labour rights matters like employment security, termination and benefit settlement, wage and salary administration, industrial relation, and on employers accountability aspects.
- ➡ Work with the existing social dialogue institutions on unrest aspects.
- ➡ Last but not the least, this might be the best situation and opportunity to initiate actions to ensure a changed mechanism that TUF no longer tails and serves the purpose of a political party and their vested interests.

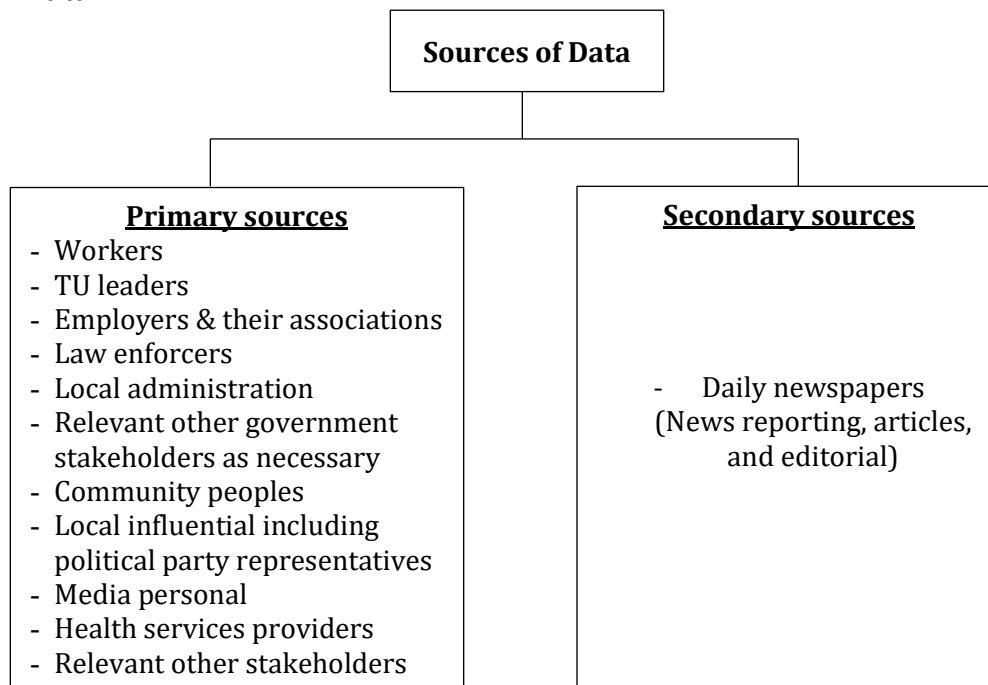
ANNEX I

Detailed Methodology

Area coverage

Study locales cover Gazipur and Ashulia industrial belt from Bangladesh. More specifically, two (2) locations from Gazipur-Ashulia industrial region are studied in-depth in which take place the recent (6th August to date) major industrial unrests. Unrest in the RMG industry was the only criteria for selecting two research locales. Having initial screening of reporting from thirteen (13) daily newspapers, research locales are selected.

Sources of Data



Data collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data collected from relevant direct stakeholders who were/are somehow parties to the unrest from primary to tertiary levels such as workers, TU leaders, Employers and their associations, law enforcers, local administration, local government and relevant other government stakeholders, community peoples, local influential including political parties representatives, media personal, health services providers, and relevant other stakeholders. Secondary data particularly sourced from the daily newspapers.

Research Methods

This research is predominantly premised on the qualitative paradigm of research. The research methods broadly include newspaper review, spot visit and observation, Focus Group Discussion, Consultation, Key informant Interview, Interview, and Case Study Collection. A set of pre-developed

checklists are used for collecting data from primary sources. Following table summarizes the methodology plan:

Methods	Number	Locations	Stakeholders
Spot visit & Observation	2	1 X 2 Research locales	All
FGD with workers	4	2 X 2 Research locales	Victim factory workers
FGD with community peoples	4	2 X 2 Research locales	Community peoples
Consultation	2	1 X 2 Research locales	Local TU leaders
Key Informant Interview (KII)	6	3 X 2 Research locales	Well-informed local influential and political leaders
Interview	20	10 X 2 Research locales	1) Employers and their associations, 2) law enforcers, 3) local administration, 4) media persons, 5) health services providers, and 6) relevant other government and non-government stakeholders
Case Study Collection	2	1 X 2 Research locales	Victim workers
Newspaper screening	2	First 1 to determine research locales and the second 1 comprehensive throughout entire research period	

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

FGD conducted to collect primary data particularly from victim factory workers and community level stakeholders. We have conducted four (4) FGDs with workers and four (4) FGDs with community peoples.

Consultation

Consultation is specifically planned to collect data from the TU leaders/workers representatives. TU leaders who have research locales in a base working area are invited to the consultation. One (1) consultation in each of two (2) research locales, thus a total of two consultations are conducted.

Key Informant Interview (KII)

KII conducted to collect primary information from the community level well-informed stakeholders on the unrest. Workers, community peoples, and local TU leaders in the FGDs and consultations are requested to nominate 5 key informants from each research locale. Key informants include among others local influential and local political party leaders. 3 key informants are interviewed from each research locale.

Interview

Interview was conducted to collect primary information from 1) employers and their associations, 2) law enforcers, 3) local administration, 4) media persons, 5) health services providers, and 6) relevant other government and non-government stakeholders. 5 interviews in each research locale, thus a total of 10 interviews have been conducted.

Case study collection

Case study is collected from the victim workers. 1 case study from each of the two research locales, thus a total of 2 case studies are collected.

Review of newspaper

Newspaper screening is done in two stages. In the very initial stage, a short screening of all BILS collected news items on the unrest covering Gazipur-Ashulia industrial belt is done. This help to determine the two (2) research locales. A detailed newspaper screening however continued throughout the entire life span of the research to collect necessary secondary information.

Research and Data Collection Plan

Research and data collection plan have been detailed in the following table:

What data		Who & where (Stakeholders)	How (Methods)	When (Time)
Objective	Issues to be covered			
Real situation	What, time span, demands, intimidation/force, casualties, follow-up actions, negotiation, role from the workers, role of the TUs, role from the law enforcers, legal consequences (Case filed/Arrest/Red/Bail), role from the local political parties, role from the local influential/communities, role of the employer, role of the media, unrest and the processes, current status	Workers, TU leaders, Employers & their associations, Law enforcers, Local administration & relevant other government stakeholders, Community peoples, local influential & political leaders, media personal, health services providers, and Daily Newspapers	- Observation - Newspaper review - FGD with workers & community peoples - Consultation - KII - Interview - Case study	15 December 2024 to 5 January 2024
Causes for unrest	Reasons known, Behind reasons, third elements/factors, (employers/TU/Workers), external elements/factors,	Workers, TU leaders, Employers, Law enforcers, Local administration,	- Newspaper review	15 December 2024 to 5 January 2024

	political elements/factors, source of information, key informant	Community peoples, local influential, political leaders, media personal, Daily Newspapers	- FGD (workers & community peoples) - Consultation - KII - Interview - Case study	
Consequences	Strike/movement/street movement, vandalisms inside factory, vandalisms outside factory, casualties, medical care and facilities, fire/Job loss and aftermath, current status of the victims, factory lay -off/closure and the aftermath, negotiation/ bargaining/social dialogue, monetary gain/loss	Workers, TU leaders, Employers, Law enforcers, Local administration, Community peoples, local influential, political leaders, media personal, Daily Newspapers	- Observation - Newspaper review - FGD (workers & community peoples) - Consultation - KII - Interview - Case study	15 December 2024 to 5 January 2024
Remedies/ solution from stakeholders	Remedies, best alternatives, best process, role for Government, Gaps, Role for Employers, role for TUs, role for Buyers, role for the CSOs, role for the law enforcers	Workers, TU leaders, Employers, Law enforcers, Community peoples, local influential, political leaders, media personal,	- FGD (workers & community peoples) - Consultation - KII - Interview - Case study	15 December 2024 to 5 January 2024

ANNEX II

Checklist

Research: RMG Industrial Zones Context Analysis

Persisting situation in the industrial zone

- Issue/problem/unrest (what-period-Demands)
- Implications (loss and damage in monetary terms/institutional/vehicle/other/) and follow-up initiatives
- Legal actions and results (case/arrest/sixty-eight drive/bail)
- Negotiation/consolidation
- Role of workers
- Role of owners
- Role of trade unions
- Role of law enforcement agencies
- Role of political parties
- Role of local residents and influential people
- Role of media
- Current situation and the future

Reasons and backdoor causes

- Causes and underlying causes
- Third factors (owners/trade unions/workers) and results
- External forces/factors and results
- Political factors/influences and results
- Source of information and key informants

Results/benefits and losses assessment

- Factory vandalism and strikes/movements/road blockades/others
- Injuries and deaths, types, care and treatment
- Factory closures/layoffs/dismissals/harassment/torture and reaction and current status and future of dismissed workers
- Social dialogue, collective bargaining and negotiation and results/achievements
- Financial assessment of benefits and losses

Recommendations/suggestions/opinions/Advice

- Role of the government
- Role of the owners and their organizations
- Role of trade unions
- Role of brands/buyers
- Role of NGOs/civil society
- Role of law and order forces

ANNEX III: ALL TRANSCRIPTS

FGD with Workers

Zirabo Ashulia

Date: 10.1.25

SL	Name	Garments Name	Designation
1	Kabir	Mangotex	Helper
2	Ridoy	Mangotex	Operator
3	Parvez	Stylent Knit	Plumber
4	Sadia	Natural Indigo	Helper
5	Kulsum	Natural Indigo	Operator
6	Russel	Natural Indigo	Operator
7	Aslam	Nasa Group	Operatort
8	Rezaul karim Shakil	Nasa group	Operator
9	Md. Alamgir	Deco group	Operator
10	Md. Shahrul	Deco group	Operator
11	Ms. Ruma Akhter	Deco group	Operator
12	Ms. Sumi	Deco group	Operator
13	Md. Zakir Hossain	Deco group	Operator
14	Md. Sujon Miah	Deco group	Operator
15	Abu Tarek	Deco Group	Operator
16	Kajol	Agami Apparels	Operator
17	Md. Khokon	Agami Apparels	Operator

Dekko Design

Alamgir: The first movement at Deco started on December 9th. We stopped work after lunch that day. Because we were supposed to be paid our annual increment in December. The money was supposed to be paid on December 1st. But when the 9th came, they didn't pay us and the management didn't say anything about it. Then we stopped work after lunch. After half an hour, they announced our leave. We went to our respective homes. We came back to work the next day. After a while, it was announced on the microphone that the 9% increment would be given only to

the old workers, and the new ones would be given 4%. After a while, it was announced again that the new ones would not get the increment. The workers got angry. If the new ones won't get the increment, then why was the announcement made in the first place? The movement started around this issue. We only stopped work when we said we were protesting. We didn't do any vandalism. We didn't even move a single chair from one place to another. Even then, 200 workers were laid off. There is no solution for these 200 laid-off people so far. Even when they go to the factory gate, they are chased away and threatened. They are not getting work in any other factory either. We took the initiative to solve this problem. With Babul Akhter Bhai of the federation. Since we are a union. There is a trade union in the factory but no leader. All the leaders have been thrown out. I myself was the president of the trade union. They have thrown me out too. The local polapa owners are giving us money to beat us up. Seeing that our problem is not being solved, when we go to the factory gate, they even threaten to gouge out our eyes.

The locals in the area also take support from the owners. Law enforcement and the army were coming. The army had arrested many of our workers. They say that we do politics in the factory. We lead the way. I am the president of the union, but I myself could not sleep peacefully in my house. The army was coming to my house too and arrested me. The police also came with us. Later I called Babul Akhter Bhai and told him. He told me to talk to him. Later he did not take me to the police station. A case was filed against all of us. It was later resolved. The trade union in the factory could not play any role in this problem. They had already thrown us out. We could not even talk to the management.

Shaharul: There is a trade union in our factory. The company formed it. But the list of trade unions that we workers submitted has not been confirmed yet. The company is forming its own trade union with its own people. A case is still going on about this. If there is a meeting, they hold a meeting and decide. They threw me out on October 8. I was at my village house. Even then they suspended me. Later they explained the money I was owed. Later I told Babul Bhai. He said to return the salary. Later I rejoined the job with the money in installments. Later in December, there was another problem over the 9% increment. This problem would not have happened if the management could not properly explain to the workers. The workers also misunderstood and stopped work. The next day, when they went to work, they saw the stoppage notice. Then 123 more people were being laid off. We did not cause any damage. The workers of other factories protested on the road. All the factories are on the side of the road. They block the road whenever something happens. But we did not block the road or anything. We did not protest.

None of us were injured or killed. Those of us who have not yet got our jobs back are trying to find a solution. I have informed Babul Bhai. No third party incited us to stop work. Our UAG Iqbal Sahib, this is completely his game. Iqbal Sahib is also harassing the workers. All the problems at Deco Garments are because of Ina. There were no problems before she came. She used to make trouble about the workers' annual leave money. Because of her, each worker used to get 1000 taka less. 1000 taka is a lot for a worker. He also used to make trouble for the workers' dismissal. He used to work in a factory near Ghazipur, but now that factory is locked. It has completely closed. Despite all our troubles, we are holding peaceful protests. The law enforcement agencies and the army have also said that there is no one better than Polapan of the Doko Group. They fired us without any

trouble in the factory. They fired everyone in the union and fired everyone in the leadership. And they also fired our relatives who worked in the factory. My sister-in-law and wife used to work at Deco, they did nothing. They were fired just for being my wife and sister. More than 6,000 workers work at Deco Design. When 200 of us were fired, the rest of the workers stopped working for a few days demanding our reinstatement. Then the company brought in the police and made the workers work by having the police stationed in front of every machine on every floor. When we, the laid-off workers, went to the factory, they beat us up with local hired thugs. We want a solution to this.

Al-Muslim

Tarek: Our factory was the most neglected in the whole of Ashulia. Here our bonuses and various bills and allowances were lower than everyone else. If anyone talks about this issue, there are no jobs. There is a trade union in the factory, but it is created by the owners. Then, to take up these issues, movements started in other factories in Ashulia. The NASA Group was the first to start the movement. Because this was our opportunity. At one stage of the movement, the owners wanted to sit with us. We also sat with the owners. We were all able to come up with a solution later. Our attendance bonus was 500 taka, later it was increased to 725 taka. The tiffin bill was increased. The festival bonus was made equal to the basic salary. The holiday pay was increased. We had no intention of stopping our work. If our demands were met, we would be able to work properly. The workers would also be able to understand it then. Later, we got all our demands passed. And work started in the factory. But the movement continued in the neighboring factory. They want more than what they got. Seeing that movement, many of us joined the movement again. Seeing this situation, the owner made a list and first laid off 300 of the people who were in the most discussion on that list. Seeing this, many joined the work again. The work continued as before. Later, we demanded that those who had been laid off be brought back. I said that they should bring them back or they would throw us out too. Later, the owner took them back without seeing any way out. A few days later, they laid off 137 people again on various pretexts. If they cut the leave, they would lay them off. They would intentionally give more work pressure. They would put them on the backlist. We did not sabotage the movement. One of our leaders was being threatened and beaten by outsiders. His head was also cracked. Later, we reported this to the news. He was given a pass after lunch. After he went outside, he was beaten up by people hired by the staff. He used to lead us. He used to speak from the front. Only he was killed. Later, the workers got angry and vandalized the factory. No case was filed.

Zakir: There are 4 categories of people inside the factory. Some start the movement, some instigate, some side with the staff, some side with the owner. The factory still does not agree. The future is dark. Those who have been laid off are now working in different places. Most of those who are now in Al-Muslim are new. Not even 10% of the old workers are there. The problem of worker layoffs has not been solved. Al-Muslim Group has 3 more factories. There are only 2500 workers in our factory. He has no problem if our factory is closed. The owner of our factory is associated with BNP and Jamaat. We have heard that workers are also protesting in another factory of his. Now we are in this situation.

NASA Group

Rezaul Karim: Each factory has its own policy. The incident started after lunch on August 31. Our staff first called for the movement. The reason was that NASA staff were not given any salary increase in places where they were paying 23% all over Bangladesh. Seeing the student movement on August 5, their morale increased. Seeing the student movement, there were movements in every place. When the staff started the movement, they were not able to do anything individually. Then they called for the workers to join the movement. Then the movement started in 3 factories. There are about 1200 workers in the 3 factories. There is no union in the factory, but we are working. Later, we workers held a meeting. After the meeting, we also joined their movement and added some of our demands to their demands. The staff demanded that we be given an annual 10% increment. We had 14-15 demands including vacation pay, overtime, night bill, tiffin bill and many more. We continued the movement with these until September 74. The movement was a strike, in the middle of which we took to the streets for 2/1 day. We did not vandalize the factory. No one stole, there was no fight. We just stopped working. And we presented our demands in writing, they did not accept it or not, but at one point they entered us and raised our top management, Iftekhar Tofazzal Helal. No one stole, there was no fight.

We just stopped working. And we presented our demands in writing, they did not accept it or not, but at one point they entered us and raised our top management, Iftekhar Tofazzal Helal. He was a cow. He called some of our boys and held a meeting and threatened them there. He gave a very big threat, saying that even if you run away from here, we have your biodata. I will also check your family. Later, we put pressure on the staff that we are in danger because of you. Now what do you do? Later that day, there was a light-hearted riot in the factory. Gau Sir also left. Later, on the 8th, our full team from the head office was coming. The vice chairman of the company entered the factory with full protection from the police and army. Then we told him about our 14 demands. They cut it into 24 demands and accepted the demands. We were happy with that. We also started working. But most of these demands were not implemented. Later, a month ago, we saw how they were doing, and after a month, we talked about them again. We are making a team of 16-20 people, at least one person from each line. From there, 8-10 people meet with the management every week and tell them that our demands were accepted. Then why are they doing this? Why are they not implementing them? It seems to us that the owners do not consider us as people. A month and a half goes by like this, but nothing is being done. Later, we, the workers of the three factories, sit down again. We sit down and discuss what can be done. We later told the GM of our floor that there were protests going on in the factories next door, and if our demands were not implemented, we would not sit down either. We would not tolerate them any longer.

At one point, he said, "We will see what can be done." But no work was done during the day. Later, on Sunday, we came to the factory and sat next to the machines instead of working. Later, when the management came and asked us why we had stopped working, we said that our demands had been accepted, but they had not been implemented, no decision had been made. You make a decision, we will start working. They did not listen to any of this, they just kept saying the same thing over and over again, "Work. If you don't work, there will be problems." Staff members roamed around all the floors. Officers from the head office came and security personnel roamed around. It seemed as if the wind of an election was blowing in the factory. We also agreed that we should stop working. Since we are on strike, we will not work until a decision is made. In this way, the 8th and 9th passed. On

the 10th, they put up an indefinite closure notice at the gate of our factory. Later, we went to each other's homes. After that, the harassment started. The police came and searched some of our homes, harassed our relatives. They threatened and intimidated the young drug addicts in the area, and even picked up the two of us and kept us there until 2-3 am. The joint forces conducted a raid on everyone's homes. The police and the army spoke to the additional superintendent of police about this. Sir, we haven't done anything, so why are we being harassed? We can't even stay at home. Later, he said that he can't say anything about this. The joint forces are conducting a raid for the nearby Ganjam. In this situation, it has become difficult for us to stay in Dhaka. I myself have been forced to go to my village home. All of us used to leave our homes and live outside. Those who get a chance have gone home. Our target was one thing, no matter what, we will not move from the area. Later, we couldn't stay and went home. Come back on the 16th. On the 17th, only 1 out of 3 factories opened.

There, they gave a layoff notice to 160 people. The rest of us went inside, but those 160 people couldn't enter. Then we, the staff workers, united. Our demand was that no worker should be laid off. So why were they laid off? We won't work if the laid-off workers aren't brought back. The rest of the workers will come and then we'll start working. That day, everyone was on a work break. The next day, 51 workers were laid off again. Of the 160 people who spoke on behalf of them, 51 were laid off. The next day, 11 more were laid off. The workers stopped working again. Why are they laying off? On the 18th, they laid off 36 more. On the 19th, the police, army, and RAB were brought inside the factory. They went to every floor and every line and monitored them. In this way, they are forcing us to work by pressuring the administration. Then, they took our salaries and started working for nine or six months. They are not paying us any price. Later we went to the police, and let them talk to those who were a little educated. Later the police threatened us with various words that if we do this, we will get into trouble and later we will face legal problems. Later we left from there. Because we did not like what they said. We did not talk about it anymore. We are still in the same situation. They did not give us the money properly. There are other problems too. The staff behave very badly with the workers. They cannot just raise their hands. If the workers get angry again, we are in this situation now. Garment workers in Bangladesh are neglected everywhere. 60% of the income in Bangladesh in the 2023-24 fiscal year came from the garment sector. We do not even get the minimum wage there. We are neglected in every way. There were cases in the name of our workers and there were cases under all such sections, but our workers were not involved in them. There is no case in the name of anyone, but there are unknown cases. If those who are outside the factory, those who have been dismissed from work, sit together for 8-10 hours, then they talk about it again inside the factory, and it seems like they are holding a meeting about it again. The dismissed workers are in a lot of trouble.

They are not able to join anywhere else. Many have been blacklisted and when they hear that they are working in NASA Group, they do not take them anymore. There have been no casualties or vandalism in our movement. Not a single worker has been injured. We have not blocked the road. The workers of Beximco Garments did. And if they take to the streets, we will take to the streets with them. Because we do not accept any word of advice. Either the factory will continue, or it will be closed down altogether. There have been many movements in Ashulia too. When a movement starts, it is no longer in their hands. It goes to a third party. By third party, there are some local

thugs, drug addicts, they come and steal, vandalize the factory, and disturb the peaceful atmosphere. They are the ones who made the movement bloody by fighting. Again, the owners hired some people and made them loose and created a turbulent atmosphere in the movement. Then a chaos was created. I don't know if there was any political issue or fuel. However, there was no problem during the Awami government. NASA Group Chairman Nazrul Islam Majumdar. He was a close friend of Sheikh Hasina. He had an influence for so long. He would bring something to the administration and get involved. Now he doesn't have that much influence. But he is cheating the workers. Unlike many other factories, NASA Group has fewer facilities. Our factory owner is now in police custody. The movement started before he was arrested. The movement is going on like a movement. Many problems have not been resolved yet. I don't know if there will be more movements in the future. Because we are fired. None of those who will talk about or lead the movement are employed in the factory. Now those who are there work under extra pressure. I don't know if they will protest again. Our point is that we are satisfied as long as we get what we deserve as workers. To our knowledge, no political party or Jamaat-BNP was behind our movement.

Mangotex Group

Kabir: The incident is the day when there was firing in our factory. That day we left the factory by 10:30. Around 10:45, the army announced that something would happen there.

Hridoy: It is completely the fault of the management. If the management had left half an hour earlier, then that story would not have happened in that place and no one would have been killed.

This incident started from Mandal Garments. They were saying that we were being detained, the army was spraying us with water and saying various things that you should come and rescue us. They did not let us leave first. Natural Garments was coming and 4/5 more garments came to one place and then they left us. Because we left after half an hour, we got stuck in Ganjam. 5 people were injured and killed there. The company bore their medical expenses. Some of the injured left their jobs and went to their village homes, while some are still working. One person was shot by the army. He died. One of the injured had his hand broken. One had his head cracked. These were done by the police administration and local hired men. Rajiv and Sajib, the building owners of the Mandal Group, beat up the workers. They even made two workers disappear. A boy and a girl. The boy was not found at that time. But the girl was brought before Aman. Later it was learned that the boy was sent home after being threatened. This was done by the people hired by the company. These are the local bosses. We are now working with white paper signatures. If it is 19 to 20, then there will be no jobs. Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League were present in this movement. They used to incite. Again, the owners also fueled the local people. They hired local cadres of political parties and created chaos inside the movement. This will make the workers afraid. The workers do not need to pay the additional money demanded by the workers. This is the owners' profit.

Agami Apparels

Kajal: In November, we stopped working due to attendance bonus, tiffin bill and all that. We did not do any work due to the stoppage. Later, we were told that you work and we will pay your written

demands. Hearing this, we started working again. The next month, everything was fine with us. They also paid the tiffin bill, paid the attendance allowance. In December, they announced that a 5% annual increment would be increased. But we did not accept only the 5% increment. Later, they told us that if you work, you will be paid. The owner closed the office, later they told us that we will get the basic salary for the number of days the office will be closed. We said that even before this, we were supposed to get an increase of 500 taka and they did not give that either. Then they will not give it to us this time either. It is 5 o'clock to do all this. The management came and kept telling us that you work. We said that if we do not get our dues, we will not work. Seeing this situation, they announced through a microphone at around 9 pm that it was your general holiday. After giving the holiday, we went to our respective homes. The next day we came to the office again. Later, we were asked to work and told that the owner had accepted your demands and that you would get the action that the government would take. Hearing this, we started working. That day, we worked till 8 pm and went home. The next day, when we entered the factory, I saw many people standing in front of the gate. Later, I saw that the layoff notices had been drawn up. 65 people had been laid off. Later, when I entered the factory, the supervisor stopped me. Later, he said, "Go out, you have been laid off." Later, I went out. I didn't stand there anymore and went home. The next day, those who went to work said that we had all stopped working, and if they were fired, they would fire all of us. Why are you only firing them? If necessary, you can check on the CCTV cameras why they are doing the ganjam. Why were you firing only 65 people? If you don't take them back, we won't work. Later the owner said that we are suspending them for 7 days. You work. Later they started working thinking that they would bring them back after 7 days. Later they worked that day and went home and came the next day and found that 12 more people were being laid off. And they had not paid any of their dues. Seeing my poor family, I joined a garment company called 'Ajmal Group'. And I also did duty for a few days. Later my line supervisor called me and said that you don't need to come anymore. The list of your name with your photo is coming from Deco. We can't keep you. Since the notice with my photo has gone to all the garments, I have nothing else to do. This is how I am now.

Khokon: During the agitation, the owner hired outsiders to stand in front of the gate. If something went wrong, they would beat the workers. Both ghettos were set up by people. Now, those of us who have been laid off will either be reinstated or our dues will be paid. No one else should be included in the blacklist. This will prevent them from working anywhere else. This should not be done. Since August 5, many workers in the Ashulia area have lost their jobs. There must be more than 5-7 thousand who have lost their jobs. Out of these, 90% of the workers have not got their jobs back. Those who have not got their jobs back do not even think about what to do. Those who have not got their jobs back are unemployed. Even if there is a movement, it may not happen again. For this reason, when you push me against the wall to move, I will not move anymore. Then I will be forced to do something.

Many unknown cases have been filed against the workers in this Ashulia agitation. Many were injured, I cannot say the exact number of injured. Approximately 8-10 people were killed. Many were arrested. We think the reasons behind these incidents are:

1. Owner's problems, not accepting demands, not giving fair compensation.

2. Why do we want it?
3. Even though the owner is good, the management does not implement it.
4. Political reasons.
5. Enthusiasm after seeing the movement.

Transcript

Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Interview with Industrial Police ASP Raju

ASP Raju

A common problem in many factories is that they are getting less orders. Due to less orders, the amount of work is decreasing and due to less work, their salary is naturally decreasing. LC related problems are the common statements in the factories where these are.

Number two, since there are no orders due to this problem and there were problems in various places in July and August, it has affected the Gazipur Garment area. It was seen in many factories at that time, the factory did not work properly and as a result, the shipment was canceled. Due to the cancellation of the shipment, it is also one of the reasons why foreign buyers turned away. Because they were planning that maybe we will take the shipment by August 10, but there was less work in July. It was seen that in 25 days, seven days/eight days/ten days of work were done, because many people could not come to work during that movement. This could be one of the reasons for the decrease in orders. After the 5th, salary allowances were temporarily stopped in several factories. Some were also permanently stopped. I can't give you the exact data on which factories have been closed like this, I don't have it now. Maybe we can find out if we can provide specific data. But that's the main problem.

Some problems remain with the previous government. For example, let's talk about Beximco, as you know, Salman F. Rahman's Beximco, since he went to jail, his garments are not running smoothly like before. Due to which they are not able to pay the workers' salaries properly and they have taken a lot of loans from them. They have no orders other than the buyers they have. Beximco has a few types such as garments, ceramics, textiles. Textiles and ceramics are running but the garments sector is completely closed. Now an ordinary worker here is completely out of work and cannot be paid his salary. The government has taken various initiatives to help them. By taking loans through banks or through some other means. They have been running like this for a while but in the long run, it is not possible like this. Their salary is 82 to 83 crore taka every month. It is no longer possible to pay this in the long run. There are many more problems like this.

For example, the leader of the Awami League has several garments. But he himself is not in the country now, due to which his factories are naturally facing problems. And a common thing in

garments is that there are problems with salaries, money, allowances. These have happened before and have happened even after the 5th. But after the 5th, the problems are increasing a little. This is the reason why they could not pay them salaries. And we, the industrial police, will tell you a little about our role, since you have come from the commission, you need to know about this. And I think it is important to present these issues to you with some seriousness. I will pay a little attention to this issue, because you will also know about the issue of salaries and allowances from outside.

Let me tell you about our role play assessment, for example, in the beginning, one issue was very public that various conspiracies are going on in it. Now you see when two parties create a problem, naturally if the workers' side creates a problem, the third party might try to take advantage of it. Now our first question is why should we give them that scope? Now you see there are about 2,200 registered garment factories in Gazipur and some unregistered factories outside of them. Out of these, there are not more than 30-50 problems. But the thing is seen on a large scale when they block the road. Let me give you two examples: Beximco workers blocked the road at Chakraborty for three days straight, and here there is a factory called T&Z, they blocked the road here for 54 hours straight. That factory was unable to pay the salary, later the government gave them a loan of 16 crore taka to this T&Z group so that they could somehow pay the salary. And after running for two months, they are still under some kind of pressure.

Now look, if a third party comes and takes advantage of them while they are blocking the road, I don't know what opportunity they want to take and I don't want to say even after making an assessment, because it would not be right for me to say that. Now if they take advantage like this, it becomes difficult for us to identify and find out. So if the demands of those who are protesting here, if their salaries are paid properly first, then there is no scope for the third party to take advantage here.

Then another incident has been seen more often, workers have protested with some unreasonable demands and are trying to force the owners to fulfill those demands. Let me tell you, then it will be clear. There is an issue of cashing out leave, those who work the whole year, get 1 for every 18 days of leave, divide it by 18 and pay half of what is deposited and add the remaining half later, this is the system. There is a factory here called Target Fine, they pay 12 holidays and pay the same amount, but their demand is that 365 should be divided by 18, but this is calculated excluding holidays and other closed days because this is the rule of the labor law. They are stopping work on this unreasonable demand.

The day before yesterday, I held a meeting at Mouchak Army Camp, there they said that the tiffin rate should be paid at 50 taka, there is no specific amount in the labor law regarding the tiffin rate. A few days ago, the IGWA government issued a notice that 10 taka will be added to the tiffin rate of those who have 15 taka, that is, those who have 20 taka will increase it to 30 taka and those who have 25 taka will increase it to 35 taka. Now they had 18 taka, they increase it to 35 taka, almost double it. Now the workers are saying that it should be 50 taka, now how do they demand it? They say that the tiffin rates of the factories nearby are as high as 50 taka/55 taka/60 taka.

Now the ambiguity here is that there is no specific amount in the labor law in this regard, so if this thing is there, all these problems can be eliminated in some places. That is, if the sectors in which the workers get money are determined by law, then many problems will not arise. This is a very important point.

Secondly, suppose the labor law says that the salary should be paid within 7 working days, if it cannot be paid within 7 working days, the workers will go to the factory and complain, the factory department may sit in discussion with various kinds of cooperation, sit in discussion and take such actions as to how to solve it, this is very difficult for the workers to understand, so they are forced to do so. Since there is a rule to pay salary within 7 working days and the owner could not pay, in that case the workers take to the streets and protest. We, the law enforcement agencies, harass them and apply force gradually. Because we have our own rules, we explain and talk to them according to those rules. If they are aggressive, we treat them accordingly.

But, you see, what we can do to the owner is to put pressure on them over the phone. Why aren't you paying them? Your workers are now coming out on the streets. But the fact that we can legally take them into our custody is not in the labor law, which is a big weakness for us. I told you very clearly. This is a big weakness of our industrial police. These IGW factories, the Ndhavparadashshu factories have their legal system, so they don't have the manpower to remove them if they take to the streets. Then they organize meetings and assemblies in various ways to remove them. But you see, when the workers take to the streets, thousands of people suffer or they vandalize. For example, they get very angry and vandalize, there is a factory next to T&Z, they haven't paid their salaries for November. Then the workers go and break the gate of T&Z. Why? The reason is that you are running a sister concern company of ours, are you not paying us the salary of 200 workers? Yet you are running this company of 2800 workers. We will not let this company run. Now they are vandalizing and breaking the two gates of T&Z. Now if the owner of T&Z files a case in their name, of course it is a criminal offense. Then legally we are obliged to arrest those people or we can bring them under the law, we can solve it through the law. But the point is if we could bring the owner under the law like this. That I will seize your passport, seize your property. I am saying these things in a simple way, the senior officers will take better steps then.

The point is, to bring the owner under accountability to us. To give us the tools to arrest them. Since we do not have these tools, we cannot do many things even if we want to. All we do is apply force diplomatically. Here, force application means through tactics, friendship, threats or mental pressure. The main thing is that apart from tactics, if the labor law gives us the tools that we can force the owner to pay the workers, I think it is very important to include this in the labor law.

And if this one thing is done, brother, then I am saying with responsibility that the performance of the police will increase, number one.

Number two, labor dissatisfaction will decrease to a large extent. Now they are giving us the responsibility, if you go out on the street, you should remove it, if you break the gate, you should remove it. Because we cannot pay the salary, it is the owner's job. And I know that the owner is in Uttara. I know his location. I can catch him. But the workers are suffering on the street. I am a junior

officer, so I may not know the appointments. I only said about the demand. Maybe my seniors will think about it and give their opinion.

The thing is, we don't have the tools we need to bring the owner to us. Not even in the law. That is, in a word, that. How the tools are made will be determined by those at the top. If we had these tools, labor dissatisfaction would not be 50%. I can guarantee this. The first place the workers still go is to us. And they are the ones who communicate with us the most.

The police have built a good reputation in the Gazipur area. For a few years, due to our activities, all the industries or industry-related people, whether workers or owners, are the first to inform us of any trouble. Because they know that the first light they come to is the industrial police and our manpower is also a little more. If you contact the police station, maybe an SI goes on a motorcycle, but if there is trouble somewhere, we take a force of at least 10 to 15 people or a car. This is my demand as a police officer in labor law, it is more important to involve those tools. And it is also more important to incorporate them. If you do this, labor dissatisfaction will not be 50%. I believe this wholeheartedly, number one.

Number two, we will then be able to work more openly and properly. And regarding the issue of salary allowance, the owners who cannot or do not pay salaries, legal and various arrangements can be made. So that they are forced to pay salaries. And in order to run the factory, one must keep one month's salary in hand and run it. So see, if this money was in the bank, then if the owner cannot pay salaries in any month, maybe he cannot pay due to shipment. In these cases, the bank could have given that money. But now I see that there are many owners who are in this situation day by day.

Let me tell you another related point, this is that there has been so much looting, there is so much talk of reforms, there has been no talk of reforms in financial management. As far as I know or have an idea. Suppose these factories are properties worth 50 crores but they have taken a loan of 500 crores against it. Doesn't this matter fall under management?

What is the role of labor leaders, those who are good are good. Let's call them the characteristics of the good and the characteristics of the bad. I mean, there are two types and there are two negative sides. Some leaders really want the problems to be solved. They are playing a positive role as our labor, our industry. On the other hand, there are some labor leaders who are playing a negative role. We get all kinds of information about how they are working. But maybe there is no information directly against them, that's why we may not be able to take any steps. There are two types, positive and negative, that's the point.

Now the state situation has gone towards disaster, and industry is not outside of it. I mean, you understand what I'm saying. But that kind of wind is blowing everywhere in the country. Industry or those who work here are not outside of it. They think that if we get together and get our demands from the owner like a coordinator, if we get five taka more than ten taka, that's our profit. In this wind, they are doing this.

I have not seen any such incidents of BNP, Jamaat, Awami League being arrested. Why have I not seen any? Because I told you at the beginning that Maximum Factory is good. 30-40 problems. Why the problems? Take the problems, you are Ecofan next to my office, they have been coming for one and a half years and have not had any problems. Now if this factory does not pay salaries for the next two months, when the workers take to the streets in that second month, what can I say that there was a conspiracy here? Because they could not pay salaries. Now some third party is trying to take advantage of this, what did they do? I do not have any such record.

What happened now, the change of posts after the 5th has already changed. Those who were there before have also understood that now we are no longer eating or they are not in the area. And those who were deprived before are now getting opportunities. Naturally, this is how it is that whoever needs to be replaced has become. Maybe there was no much trouble, it could be in 2/4/10 places, it is normal. But the workers' unrest, this unrest related to salary and allowances has nothing to do with it. It is completely different.

Now let me say one thing, the first thing is that the army is now in the field in civil act. Because these civil activities are definitely supposed to be done by our police and all the civilian work. The work of the army is prescribed work, right? The work of the military is like that. Now the army is coming to the field for a national need and there is a hope for the army among the general public, this is one thing. And the second thing is, the word of inactivity after the 5th was not very much for the industrial police. When there was a mess on the 5th, the trouble happened, due to that change in the context, the factory was closed for 2-3 days. We do our deployment on the 9th. So, even if there was a deployment outside on the 9th, we might not have had much work for those 5-7 days. Now, naturally, there was no trouble in the factory at that time. So I completely denied it. Because I myself have been working here for a year and a half. In no way have I seen my activities or those of my team decrease in any way, but rather it is increasing. Why is it increasing? Because there was a negative perception among people about the police.

My personal opinion is that no one related to the industry can say that our activity has decreased. Or that inactivity is increasing compared to before. I think there is no chance of this happening.

The sincerity of the government saves the institution, this is the real thing. Those who are in the business community, the well-wishers of the government sit together with that business community. Now everyone no longer understands business. You may be a scholar but it will be seen that if you are given a small factory, you will not be able to run it. Again, you may see that someone with little education but he runs a factory and becomes an industrialist. This is a totally different matter. I may have an opinion for Beximco or such institutions, that is, I think that it is necessary to take all the necessary steps to save this institution in the national interest with all the business people whom the government can trust. This is a huge matter, a huge matter. The one at the top is doing the wrong, okay, he will be punished according to his fault, whatever happens according to the law will happen. But the families that are involved with these 40-50-60 thousand workers, even if Beximco is closed, the shops and businesses around it will decrease. So, directly and indirectly, many economic sectors are involved here. So, I think the government needs to do whatever needs to be done with such business experts to save it. Even if the government has to take action of 20-50

thousand crore taka, it should be done. Otherwise, there will be a loss for the country. The reason is that these people will be unemployed, but will they stay unemployed? Many of them will then commit crimes. They will be a threat to national security. When these people cannot function, it will be seen that people will harm it after the evening. So, the government should take maximum steps to save the institution in the interests of national interest, security and industry, in various interests. And the second thing is to do asset assessment of industrialists and give them loans accordingly. This should be properly assessed and the loans they are taking from banks in the financial sector should be identified with whose help they are taking them.

As a police officer, one recommendation for my own department is to involve the police in labor law in such a way that it creates a legal basis for taking effective steps to mitigate or resolve the causes of labor dissatisfaction. This is my last recommendation.

Shop Owner
Chakraborty Tech Area
Gazipur, 12.01.25
Shahadat and Dohir, Businessman

Over 30,000 workers in Garments. After the army patrols, the vandalism of garment workers has decreased. It will take 90 days, after 90 days, a system will be in place. Garments will be opened after 3 months. Workers will be given money for their hardship. This is how the workers are being stopped. Basic money is being given as expenses. The factory has been closed for the last 2 months. No one knows when it will open.

What they wrote in their notice is that there will be a lay-off this month too. We businessmen are also in a lot of trouble. There has been no fight, no vandalism, but the people of Beximco have been asked to close all the factories in the vicinity. If one Garment factory closes, 10 more factories in the vicinity will close. I have been here for 10 years. Our current situation is bad. All the factories are closed, there are no people, we have no business. There are limited people around. But thousands of people in the factory. Only Beximco has closed. There are about 40,000 workers in Beximco. The area was very crowded. The workers are now on leave, everyone has gone to the country and village. Earlier, there were drivers for various officers, but now they are not there either, because the officers have no jobs.

The workers are fighting for their salaries, they are paying them a little late. They said that they would pay the workers by the 12th of last month. The workers waited till the 12th. Then, on the morning of the 13th, the workers waited. Then, until the 13th, the workers went inside and said, "If you pay us our salaries, we will work." Then, all the workers came out and went home, each to his own. The factory was open every month, but now it is completely closed. Now, 4 BTLs are running, it is running for nine months. Again, some SS lines are being made to work. The workers are demanding that the salaries be paid late? Their salaries should be paid by the 10th. Before the fall of the government, they used to pay salaries by the 8th. After the fall of the government, the owners are also in jail.

I understand that the workers misunderstood that the owners are in jail, the workers have to wait for a few days, the salaries of one month have not been paid in another month. They are giving it every month. Now that the factory is closed, the salary has been paid in this factory on the 9th, the basic system salary has been paid, there has been no strike for the past one and a half months.

However, the month before last, I think the workers took to the streets. Last month, most of the people were at home. Now we are also involved with these 40,000 workers. We, the shopkeepers, the landlords, everyone is involved. This banana seller used to sell 2 maunds of bananas every day, but now he can't sell even 5 maunds. I used to sell cigarettes for 8-10 thousand taka a day, but now tea and cigarettes together are sold for 2 thousand taka a day.

We, the businessmen, are in a very tight spot. I think there will be 700 people in the two factories now. Next to it is the "dewan". There will be about 5 thousand people in the dewan. These few people are staying now. There are no people in the factory, Beximco is closed in this place, all the other factories are open. The people of the closed factory are chasing other factories, if their factory is closed, no other factory can be run. A few days ago, last month, the workers had a procession from 9:00-1:00 in the morning.

Bixmco is closed for salary and there is no work in the factory, those who are employed also say that there is no work so the factory is closed. When work comes, then they will run the factory. They will pay salaries on the basic system as per the rules. When the factory was running, the whole area was bustling. Now it is not bustling. There are no people, we do not sell. My house is in Shibalo police station of Manikganj.

Shahadat: The workers have been in arrears of house rent for two-three months. The workers' salary is 12 thousand-20 thousand. The house rent is 1 thousand to 5 thousand taka including bills. After a month, they get a salary of 5 thousand to 10 thousand taka, from there they give 3 thousand taka to the landlord, 2-3 thousand taka to the shop, and 1-2 thousand taka to the school children. At this stage, they are not able to pay the arrears of house rent to the landlord.

Shahadat: I live in 4 rooms in my house, excluding my room. There are also 36 rooms for rent. We have been given loans, we have houses. The workers are protesting justly, they are not doing anything unjust.

They are not demanding anything else, they are only demanding salaries. We cannot pay the installments, we cannot get water, we cannot get loans from the bank. There has been trouble for the past one and a half years. This is APRIL 8, there are over 100 workers here. The factory has closed but is not paying salaries. However, the factory's gas and electricity lines are disconnected. The factory closed a few days ago. Some money was paid by selling goods. APRIL 8 paid 3000-3500 taka. TNG paid a lot of money. Workers took to the streets even before August 5. The labor leaders went to talk but the owners did not listen. That is why the labor leaders stopped going. Later, the army of the interim government went and did not keep their promises. The workers have not yet received their December salaries. None of the TNG workers could clear the house rent. They could not pay the shop's arrears. TNG has 3000 workers. The unions are closed on the way to closing the basics, the unemployed cannot get any work but cannot pay their salaries. The owner gives money but it is not certain whether the person to whom the money is given gives money to the workers or not. The workers do not accept anyone as a leader. They are themselves protesting.

Humayun Kabir Khan

Community Key Informant

Gazipur

Date: 12.01.25

The most notable among the industrial factories in Bangladesh is Gazipur. Savar Ashulia is notable as a part of Dhaka district. I will shed light on the issues after August 5. The former Prime Minister fled on August 5. But none of those who are in different sectors could escape. They went into hiding. They have taken this labor sector as a target. According to our calculations and through various intelligence agencies, various reports are available. It is very easy to create tension in the garment sector, create chaos in the transport, port/harbor sectors. Again, if the workers can be dissatisfied, then the victory that the anti-discrimination students have achieved, they think, could not bring down Hasina for 16/17 years, but the anti-discrimination student movement has gained support in the country while holding the quota movement and changes have also taken place. This is the first time that a high-ranking government official from Dhaka has asked to inquire into the EPZ. I went there in person.

When I went, I saw a slogan being chanted there. Everyone should be given a job. The second slogan is that half women, half men should be hired and we do not accept worker discrimination. What is the source of these 500 people suddenly coming to an important institution of EPZ, which is directly controlled by the government from the Prime Minister's Office and where the Brigadier General of the Army is in charge? Jobs are not something that 500 people can suddenly march to, they cannot demand jobs by shouting slogans. I reported this report. The anti-discrimination workers' movement is working behind a curtain to eliminate discrimination against workers by name, to organize workers. Along with this work, there are 28 organizations in our garment sector, one of which is the Awami League, many of which, like our transport leaders, are presidents of one, and their sons and daughters are presidents of one each. Habibur Rahman Siraj is the president of the National Workers' League, he is associated with several national federations. Some of us used to organize left organizations but are associated with the parapast whole of the Awami League. They are doing a job. Those who were associated with the JOD Awami League are investing money in various colonies. They are bringing ISKCON with them. This has come out in our investigation. This is an EPZ incident.

Among them, take Square as an institution. The workers in this institution have suddenly stopped working. They will talk to the owner about their demands. Here their salary is paid by the 5th of the month. They are provided with lunch, health, clothing, and transportation facilities. The owner goes there and says that they will have to pay them attendance bonus. The owner has accepted in one word. A group from behind is saying, "You didn't say anything about us." These are people from the

sweeper class. Hindus are more among the sweeper class. The previous day, some people from ISKCON said that they will hold a procession the next day so that no Hindu can get a job here. We need to expel Indian people from our country. Then 20-23 people from the sweeper class say that they are not accepting any of our demands. These 20-23 people have demolished the Tk 10 crore laboratory of Square. Within moments, news came that Ibnesina Pharmaceutical was vandalized. Apex Pharmaceutical was vandalized next to it. On the same day, an Acme company was vandalized in Dhamrai. Again, a Hindu man killed an intern doctor at a medical college in Dhaka. The movement stopped after he was arrested. Starting from Square, all the pharmaceutical factories were vandalized, except Beximco. With the industrial sector in turmoil, I have never heard of any vandalism in a pharmaceutical company. There have been protests in factories, and we organized workers at the field level by holding purposeful meetings with our labor advisors on the demands. We organized it in 40 meetings in Gazipur, EPZ, Dhamrai, Savar, Narsingdi, Narayanganj, Sreepur, and most recently, a workers' rally with the BNP General Secretary.

These institutions are the national assets of our country, they are not party assets. If these institutions are closed, the people of our country will suffer the most. People will become unemployed. They will be economically destroyed. There are two objectives behind doing this.

First, the former government will gain political advantage by dissatisfying the workers in our country, saying that the interim government has failed.

Second, if they take these factories to neighboring countries, they will create instability in our country. For this reason, they started these works through the JOD of India and through the people of the former government of our country. Two or three meetings have already been called in the ministry. In this meeting, the leader of the National Federation of Garments, Japra, called them after CBA. Their registration was through the Awami League. I said through Haji Rahman Siraj, those who have come here have no work at the field level, no work anywhere. Their people are creating chaos. They are taking benefits from the government but are being vandalized. If this long-standing gap cannot be identified correctly, it will go to the worse. One company is paying salaries on time, another company next door is not paying salaries on the 5th but on the 20th. This company belongs to an Awami League leader. He is deliberately delaying the payment of salaries to bring the workers out on the streets. The workers are taking to the streets without getting their salaries. The workers are taking to the streets without getting their salaries and they are breaking the gates of the company next door that is doing well to bring the workers out on the streets.

In order to protect their assets, the owners are giving the workers leave. The target of this worker dissatisfaction is to fail the interim government and the second target is to close the factories in our country. India will take advantage of this. This is the final target. Let me tell you how it is related to the sector we have mentioned. Ziaur Rahman Saheb had given the workers' appointment letter verdict. After Ziaur Rahman's death, the Awami League has completed 15 years but the federation president never spoke about the issue of workers' appointment letters. The workers will have to be given appointment letters and the owners' association will give these appointment letters. Nothing has been said about this for the last 15-20 years. Suddenly, the port workers have protested and distributed leaflets to close the Chittagong port saying that they will not drive without an

appointment letter. If you want to make a creative demand, you have to give the demand to the authorities. They will give an ultimatum and if the demand is not met within this time, they can give an action plan. If you make any demand, you have to give a demand letter and if it is not implemented, the action plan can be given later. 10,000 vehicles had stopped going to the port. This has stopped all domestic and foreign import-export systems. We brought them to Dhaka within 6 hours and took a decision with the labor advisor at night. We have controlled the issues of stopping vehicles, creating unrest in transport and stopping garments. Garments are closed from Nabinagar to Chandra for 15 days a month. Suddenly, the Garments of Chowrasta and Tongi were closed. The police were also unable to take any action, because they were also afraid. In the meantime, the Dhaka SP called and said that we could not charge any lathi. I said that you are doing this deliberately, to maintain the unrest. Perhaps it is your fault.

The Beximco Group did not take to the streets to demand salaries or facilities, they want the release of the owner. Now the point is, worker dissatisfaction means putting the government in the bag, wasting the country's resources, and benefiting the neighboring country. For this, the main policy of the government level, which is to initially kill the garment sector by forming trade unions, is that of the Awami League. That is why it took time for this statement to be made. If we, including Shimul Bhai, had not taken a strong stand on this, it would have become more problematic.

Key Informant Interview

Mizanur Rahman

Community focal person

Chakraborty Tech Area, Gazipur

There were 42,000 workers in Beximco. Out of 42,000, at least 50% of them are not there. They may have transferred the area. Some may have taken jobs somewhere. And out of that, let's say 30% of them are looking for jobs. That our company will stand. We will work here. We will not go out, that's what it is. The movement started on August 3. Major Arif was the chief among the senior GMs of Beximco. The workers were from different factories, Beximco had a yellow showroom at the Beximco bus stand, it had a signboard and some glass was broken. That's why they are keeping it open. They didn't close it. At that time, Beximco was providing security for the Prime Minister, the Minister's office, and later they were vandalizing there. They didn't come here. They vandalized the Narban gate. There was a situation where the road was blocked in the afternoon, there were about eight to nine hundred people, it gradually became about two thousand people. These are not actually workers, they are national activists, they are actually student activists, what did Major Arif Sahen do here, there are some dogs in Beximco again. Taking these trained dogs with them, they went to the Narban gate and went to Fazilatunnesa and attacked there. Major Arif attacked. Due to the attack, there was a chase and a chase with the students, at one point they were entering Beximco. The crowd left after some chase and a chase, on August 4th there was another chase and a chase. They were entering Beximco itself. It was calculated why they were beaten. They were beating them severely, Arif Saheb was beating them, and the administration was with them. Then there is some personal administration here too. There was a battalion, then there is security. There is one force, about 200-300 people. They came again on August 4 because of the food shortage that day, there was some movement, there was a riot, I could stop some, I could not. On August 5, when the shooting happened, Mejab Arif fired at the students here, the factory was not under attack at that time, he took some people with him and started shooting at the students. His personal revolver was firing, then the police said that if you shoot, we are not with you. Because all the bullets will fall on us, we are not shooting, if you shoot, I heard about the incident later, I did not know about it in August either. The government fled on August 5. After fleeing, you can go in any way you want, I will go in any way I can. There is no opponent anymore. They are fleeing. Meanwhile, worker dissatisfaction began, not just at Beximco but at 8/10 other factories around me. I was a participant in every movement.

The real truth is that the workers are the ones who are carrying out the movement. On the 6th, they set fire to Beximco again, because of the shooting, the students are from different places. At one point, the current senior GM of Beximco called me, brother, the workers will protest and vandalize the factory, or they may set fire. Don't you see if the factory can be saved? When the fire was set on the 6th, we came together and helped put out the fire. The reason for that is, if there was a fire there, there is a possibility that our house would burn down. But I went to put out the fire, I myself survived. After that, he started calling me. Because when I was on the front line, I was watching the fire. I have some brothers and sisters, who have been trained as firefighters. I am using them. You see, I am giving good leadership there. And I already had a bill, I was familiar with it, I would go and talk to the workers when they called me. They also did not listen to anyone, they were very rude, they talked about their problems. At one point, I got to know them by explaining to them. I mean, if you didn't know them, if you talked to them in one place, at least two to one hundred people would see them, so the workers who didn't know me, if there were at least 100 people, 150 would know me, because of that movement, at least 80 out of 100 people knew me. So anyway, no abusive language with them, no words, just comforting, we are patient, this factory exists. If we work hard, we can get our salary, if not, what should we do, be patient, maybe they will pay us after 5 more days. After explaining like this, they showed that the maximum worker is in my favor, we have been negotiating for such salary three-four times. I was the first to break the gate of Beximco several times. At that time, I was the first to go and give them a riddle. Because no Beximco officer dared to do that. Because the workers will be fine, since at least 50% of the people know me, if I go and talk to them, some of them get angry, many get angry with me too, but the rest of them say, don't you know me? Brother, I have given my pocket money to at least 20/50 families for treatment. Halim Sahib was the president of the ward Awami League. After that, those who were in the Awami League also called, the current situation, in this situation, it is actually a disastrous time for my area in this Chakraborty village. Earlier, there was work on subcontract. The salary was supposed to be paid on the 12th, but they could not pay. The workers are opening from the night of the 11th, they will not be able to pay the salary, they are starting a movement. All the work in the sub-contractors has stopped. I said that if you do this, there will be no work, because of the closure, the cane is no more. By 20/12/23, after that gang, the government has given this a ban, 45 days, that is, on December 13, the ban was announced, after giving the ban, people's work has stopped, almost half the houses in my area are empty, this ban will probably not be lifted, that situation is going on, as far as I can tell, I was going along with GM Saheb.

We are very hopeful. It will be operational one day. There is a lot of doubt whether this will be operational at all. This government can give 15 more days of medicine, it can also give 60 days, medicine has given 45 days. So these workers are actually 40/42 thousand people, first of all the company is asking for medicine. They are asking for no work. They have closed the LC. They have closed all the accounts. If they close the LC, there will be no work. In the factory. Then we discussed, who will open our factory. They did not give, then Aisa gave medicine on the day of the fall of the government, the army itself gave medicine to the people. The government has given medicine. There is a letter from that. I might be able to arrange that, so this Sadhu is in the Ravhav Mall, they are also holding meetings. Again, the workers, those at the worker level, those who are junior officers, they are holding a meeting in one place yesterday, 1,120 in a group. The meeting is being held in Sripur, about 1 kilometer ahead of here, on the south side. It was decided in the meeting that

they will form a human chain. They will not create any kind of obstacle in the market. They will be peaceful, they will take care that there is no threat to anyone's life or property.

And at least 15-20 thousand workers will form a human chain. Let the closed institutions be opened, let our work be arranged, if the LC is opened, the government will not have to pay salaries, it will not have to pay anything. It is written that, a human chain demanding the opening of all factories located in Beximco Industrial Park with banking facilities, all officials, employees, workers, brothers and sisters and people from all walks of life are requesting, this is one, opening LC is the banking facility. Banking facilities. Open the Sabal factory located in Beximco Industrial Park, let the Asads live with their families. There will be leaflets, banners, they will do this, the day after tomorrow on Tuesday they will do a human chain. Perhaps the problem will intensify. Actually, it is not a problem of one factory. There are 2/4 more factories like this. Starting from Jibani Bazar to Bipel, there is a problem of 2/4 more factories. It is a problem. Some other factories have workers, say 2000/3000, they cannot pay their salaries on time, that is why the movement started, Sathi Fashion was closed long ago. This was owned by an Awami League MP, Mokh Hasina was a brother-in-law, and her house is in Rangpube. Maximus is a gang, they are involved in some kind of conspiracy. Otherwise, why won't the government release them? The workers' strike happened after the 10th. This started when they started the movement in August 55, the salary is maximum on the 8th or 10th. So because of this movement, no one can pay the salary. They are the ones who are starting the movement without getting the salary. Will they pay the salary, were the banks open? What have you been doing for so many years? If you can't pay a month's salary, I won't pay, give me my money, I don't know if the bank is closed, in fact, since this movement started, it has been seen that people are protesting in a festive mood. And otherwise, there was no need for the movement, someone or the other may have been angry. But I don't know this. Major Arif is shooting, I have proof, I have footage, I have pictures, he is wearing a helmet, a check captain is wearing a shirt and he is shooting. I have sat with Major Arif many times, talked many times, tried to lobby many times about a certain issue. I know him because he is the one who looks after the land-related issues of the company. Not only me, many people know him. The people here did not take over by force.

There is 1200/1300 bighas of land. Kalibuddin Sahib had this loan. I heard and saw that they did some movements, they were not students and they were not workers. There were no students in the workers' movement. There were workers of the Tokai class. When these Tokai class workers were caught and given a bribe, they became slaves, they were given money, so they are coming. Someone or something sent them away. I am a resident of ward no. 2. I know 2 Jamaat workers in this area, but I do not know their names. They are members of Jamaat, but not leaders. I think they have no connection with BNP. There are also 10 other organizations in Beximalaya. Here are 16 institutions Industrial Park, multiple institutions inside 16 institutions If this is the case, our former chairman is the current Gazipur Metropolitan BNP President 'Sabhakat Hossain Sarshar' When he was the chairman in 2001, I elected him. His house is in our union. This Aurat Hossain Sarlar is rich from Purbapurum. Are they big names like industrialists in this country since my grandfather's time. The first Union Parishad was formed in Bangladesh, Kashimpur was chaired by Roy Bahadur Aban Prabhad Bas Chowdhury Zamindar, then from Anar to Gudamani, Javed Ali Sarkar, this Sankat

Hossain Sanchar's grandfather. Ara is a domineering person from his ancestors. I gave him 2-3 years of time during the time of Maukat Hossain's election.

According to my knowledge, he is a very good person. Since I have been with him for 3-4 years. However, in my view, he is a very good person. And a person I like very much. I also expect him to be an MP. The workers will protest and vandalize, close, set fire to, and burn factories, this Sawkat Hossain government was not in favor of that. He said that those who protest, those who are more disorderly, live in our neighborhood. If there is someone like that, he would tell them not to do these things. If the institutions are damaged, then the country will not survive. If anyone thinks about saving the country, the institutions must be saved first. Since Sawkat Hossain himself was in favor of saving the institutions. It can be said that there were no casualties here.

Later, cases were filed in the names of many people. At least 200-300 people from Kashimpur Union filed cases in 6 wards. All those who filed cases were of high rank, some of them were named in the post of a leader of the Awami organization. No case was filed against them for the sake of the riots, they shot some Polapan students. They were not rent-seeking about the garment industry. For example, Big Boss filed a case about the garment industry. I don't think any garment worker from Gazipur. Maybe no one was killed. Estimated injuries: As far as I know, none of the workers were injured. The workers had no opponents, they were chased and counter-chased, and no one was injured in the incident. One day, the army killed them. There was a brickbat fight with the army. That day, the army killed some people. But as far as I know, no such worker was injured. He had to get medical treatment. For me, there is trouble in Beximco now. Because there is no peace anywhere else. A mess in Beximco means there will be unrest in 10 other factories nearby. There are 40,000 workers in 10 factories, but there are 40,000 in Beximco alone.

Transcript

Key Informant Interview

Konabari, Gazipur

Ashraf: The unrest started in MM Net and is still going on. If there was a political issue in the real unrest, if there was an issue, those who were in control earlier did not let the other party control it, the other party kept it or did something. But nothing like that happened. The government has fallen. They have also left. The factory owners are now inviting them. I will not forget to mention that there is something political here. Friend, you have said something bold that people are like that, then there is a possibility of a suppressed explosion these days. When we are given too much freedom, it is completely uprooted. The demands that were there for a long time have now emerged. This has happened because of the unrest. And if I say, here. The mid-management is trying to change our perspective. And the owners think that we ourselves are the owners of the factory, the unrest is the workers that they are misusing. When the demands were accepted, they were accepted with contempt. It was necessary to explain to the neighboring factories that we are giving them mangoes so that the ganjam do not start. At that time, the workers were making demands on Facebook and YouTube. Another thing here is that they do not know anything about the labor market, just by looking at the demands, it is clear that they do not know anything. When they used to say 3 months and 13 days, we understood these Facebook rumors. They presented the demands to the high level through the mid-level. That is when the unrest started. Then they said that during the salary increase, the government would give you the same as what was said in the neighboring factories. Now the government is accepting it.

Why were we not informed? What is the theft? It is only because of such words. As the political matter is being said, the matter is No. Actually, the visiting government was a small government, all the factory votes were from Awami League. The alliance was a blow to Awami League. Some factories could not even bring in Awami League. For example, Bhatahin Mia could not even try. When the Awami League fell, a gap was created. This gap was filled by the people themselves. Awami League councilor number 10 in TN was unable to get votes. After the fall of the Awami League government, he was not there. He is absconding. Now who is he? BNP itself has filled the gap, he is the one who has filled up the gap, that is, there are Hanil Parments here. Who would have taken it? Jubo League's Tofazzal. He is absconding, Roni is taking it. What happened? BNP people in the factory did not pull the alliance. Then there was a fight between the two groups. He was admitted to the hospital. Prothom Alo only reported everything in the news. A grab poverty was going on.

After the fall of the Awami League government, the BNP's competition with Bishnu Abati became a joke and a lot of fun was created. But suddenly the interest in the alliance decreased. Because the army or other forces, as far as they could, gave it to the mall just for the sake of doing business. Where are the alliance businessmen? Start listing them - who is in which factory, who used to eat mangoes before, who eats now. Then their money was stolen.

There was another problem. BNP thought they had come after the Awami League government. But now they are thinking that they have given up. Jamaat wants

A solution to the problem, BNP wants elections. This is one thing. After that, the momentum of BNP decreased. Or they had a plan. Again, I know about some business disputes, fights, hospitalisations, newspaper news, all this. Besides, the American NGOs in our country should give their views. This is the NGO government. Besides, the issue of ANSEST has been raised. Earlier, there was a matter of keeping the workers' salary grades for a long time. A worker was a senior officer in one factory, and in another, he was not given senior status. Juniors were given. There was a matter of keeping such grades. We used to do counseling on these things, perhaps they think that it has taken them to a certain place. I have also talked about the fact that they did not get increments in Cotton Textile. The issue of ANSEST, who were the workers after the fall of the government? The workers may have to increase my allowance, my increment, comments, attendance bonus. But the workers will not talk about the Rana Plaza issue. We will tell you this.

Trade union leaders. Who made these demands? Those who are doing the anti-discrimination movement are getting a lot of money. Some workers have links with them, there are some such things on Messenger and WhatsApp. Above all, we think that the long-standing exploitation, torture, and discrimination among the workers, the anger in our hearts, was completely red hot, just waiting to be struck by a match, someone has shaken the match, it has started. It started from the Ashwalas. We have searched a lot and are doing it. We have now found people who are organizing the unemployed. Some were dismissed by the army. They said they did not come for the purpose of employment, nor will they do it. Not even for money. When there are people in front of a factory, they go there and create a commotion and hold a procession-meeting. In various ways, various people are trying to change this situation in the country. We come to the Pashapati Pramukhi by counseling, the factory runs. Suddenly, the work stops from some source. The column incidents took such a form in the Padma Paush movement that every floor became proud to talk to the workers' minister and the money coordinators. Who made you the coordinator of the Biyasa terror? Gave you a position? They said, brother, we have become a leader for the workers' problems. I said, "What do you understand by being a coordinator? And the workers don't want a coordinator, I have taken their opinion. You don't work. Instead, go to the manager and tell him to bring tea." Re- "Tell them to change their grades. I will let someone recommend me, no matter if they come with a bank loan. Everyone who gives their skills test will have to take Amazon's recommendation. From junior to senior, the remaining 20 are juniors. This cannot happen to me. One can work on four machines, another can only pay him money, why should we give equal wages to people who do not work on four machines? The workers say the coordinators have made us a union. The workers say we want a coordinator. We don't want one. The brothers are expelling the coordinators. The coordinators say get this stuff out, this won't work. Look at the list of union workers. I talked to the owners, the owners said we didn't make a union. I won't give anyone a political tag here. There are people from the branch in Untrail too, they will get this out. -We see that we are agitating with our demands. We are going. They are making this demand, making this demand. A night bill should be made - some have 15 points, some have 17 points, these demands are being made by a new method. They gave a tip. The factory owner doesn't know, no one knows. They uploaded it on social media. They made it known that our demand was in the company. Slowly

it spread on social media. Suddenly it came down. The coordinators organized the movement through messenger and WhatsApp groups - this is how they manage all this. The groups of workers on different floors, I talked to them about the demands - what are your demands, what are your demands, where do you get the information about your demands. Then they showed a snapshot of the group discussion. Here are all the workers and staff. These workers and workers are doing it. Now if you say that the law and order forces did it, we can't say that. But we have never seen such courage of the workers. The owner says we are the third party/do not do any fraud, the worker says we are the third party fraud. They lock the factory gate, no one from outside can enter, they will not talk to any administrative officer. Who needs it? Malek. And they also check where the owner needs it. He will tell him to come there. We do not know if they are political or not. We know them as workers. Now if any political party uses the chat for their own personal gain, we do not know. Someone who has personal interest can give fuel. But we did not get any such crude. I followed the van a few times. I saw them taking papers and going somewhere else. Look at the demands, see the promises. I was living among some of them. I am trying to find out from where and who are doing these tricks. You are talking about the law enforcement agencies. This is actually beyond our knowledge. I see that the workers were happy with the fall of the Awami League government. Because the voting center was empty in front of their eyes, but they could not vote.

They elected with demi-candidates. There was a lot of anger in the minds of the workers about this. After the fall of the Awami League government, the workers, not only the workers but all the people of the country, have become more courageous. They think that now we can speak openly. The workers have been subjected to exploitation and torture, they have been subjected to oppression, for example, many pregnant workers have been thrown out, they did not see maternity leave, they were forced to take their signatures and throw them out, they did not give money, they took out instant orders with a resignation, they threw them out by keeping the gate closed. They were deeply angry about this. Now this anger has been expressed externally. But these 18-point demands, who or who gave it, who only did it. We saw that it only happened from Ashulia. Again, there was a commotion in the Konabari region. Oshuk Factory is making this demand. They are bringing these vases and adding 2-4 more to their demands. Cotton Club BD Limited had 23 demands. Among them, it is seen that there is a demand to remove Ditshabat. Staff, H-

And those who used to work with them were unhappy. Behind every movement, there is a visible or invisible lever. There is definitely a lever here too. We know that MS Knit, Mamun, PN Composite Limited, Islam Garments are unrest. The workers are talking about some basic demands. Now we do not know who is instigating or instigating them. I myself have also investigated this matter. But I have not been able to find out anything clear yet. The leaders and activists of the Awami League have all gone into anarchy. It is the responsibility of the state to find out whether they are creating disorder from the slums. We have seen the unemployed unions who have done such things in various factories. Besides, whether anyone is involved in personal interests here, whether anyone from home and abroad is instigating them, we are not leaving anyone outside the doubt, whether domestic or foreign vested interests, IBAS or anyone else. We have also kept them in doubt as citizens of this country. America can also conspire to take advantage of them. OEI said we suspect them too. They can also do all this to take advantage of them.

Transcript

FGD with Trade Union Leaders

Gazipur, 15.01.25

No	Name	Organizational Name	Designation
1	Rozina Akter Sumi	Green Bangla Garments	President
2	Kulsum	BNTUF	President
3	Masud Mondol	JSJ	
4	Md. Jubair Sarkar	Bangladesh Sromik Songhoti Federation	
5	Md. Sofiul Alam	BGSSF	
6	Md. Kaiyum Ali	GBSOF	
7	Md. Manjurul Islam	FGW	
8	Rani Akter	BGLC	

Rozina Akhter Sumi: Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation's Gazishru District

Representative: If we look at the picture after August 5th, just as it is seen that everyone was protesting for reforms, for their democratic rights and for various demands. Similarly, our workers were also on the streets with their demands. Because the sector is not new, this garment sector has been a sector for 35-40 years. The workers also took to the streets with their just demands. What we saw in the initial situation was that earlier, there was one thing in common, the workers did not tolerate the workers. The workers could not keep their promises to the workers. The workers did this. They did that, and as a result, an anti-workers anger has been created in the minds of the workers. We can see the same in the current situation, but now the workers are also angry with the army, but the source of it is the owners.

When we, the leaders of the federation, go, the workers sometimes take it constructively and sometimes negatively, and they support them. I will say that the reason for this is that the owner, the patron, mentioned Beximco. I will start with Beximco first. The owner of Beximco is involved in politics, he has embezzled money, he has looted. But the 35 to 38 thousand workers working in Beximco. There are about 40 thousand workers including staff. These are just workers, they do not understand any politics, they do not have their own bank balance. Their bank balance is that I have to send my son and daughter to school, whether it is a government school or an orphanage or a

madrasa, that is what I have to do. I have old parents, they need medicine worth 4 thousand taka a month, no matter what, even if it is 1500 taka, I have to save it. The workers understand this. Since you have started the research work, we are very happy that our respected leader Sultan Bhai has a responsibility from the place of our working people, we have not been able to talk for so long, a place to talk has been created.

The Beximco issue should not be made a national issue, thinking about the Beximco workers, we do not know which political party the owner belongs to. You will work on how to keep the employment of the workers here active and solve the problem in a national way.

After August 5, you saw how our female workers fought for their unpaid wages. One of our ladies in Ashulia gave her life, but it was said that after August 5, when the government fell, they said that no one would actually shoot or kill anyone for speaking about their rights. If we go further,

we will see that an owner harasses and tortures workers for years, when they do not pay their salaries, the workers block the road and question that owner. Labor leaders like us were arrested by the army in the dead of night for speaking on behalf of a worker like my brother and took him to the police station. This is very sad. It has not been reformed yet, let the government change, let there be a new independence, there are gaps in these places. But now a sufficient number of workers have been affected. After the August 5th movement, both the owners and the workers have been affected. After this movement, I will say that the workers have not benefited in the slightest and the owners have not benefited either because the owners have lost their skilled workers.

When I speak about my fair rights, if I am a member or a low-level worker, they will not let me last even for a second. I will say, you are talking about rights again. And when I become a skilled worker, I will have experience, but then I will speak about my rights because if I am deprived here, I will get a job somewhere else. Thinking about this, he said, then how do the owners target them and terminate them, then one thing is that a few days ago a video went viral after my 5th August, it was like, in 15 minutes, Dr. Yunus's downfall was edited by journalists and made it viral. But the thing is, who did I talk about there, termination is not like a thorn in the throat of such a worker, he cannot digest it well. Termination happened after 5th August, you are Islam. Tusuka, Konabari AVM, S. M Knitwear, S. M. High fashion, there are many factories that we have worked in, there are many unknown factories that have identified and terminated the workers who have spoken out. Termination means that a worker has been blacklisted. When you go to take a job somewhere, these workers are told that you have worked illegally in the previous factory, you have protested. So we cannot take you. You should first settle there. The total number of this is 180,000, which I knew a month ago that this number of workers have been blacklisted. But now the number is about 200,000 skilled workers are unemployed. Among our 18-point demands, there was a demand that blacklisting has been done in the name of termination. In that place, I am saying that this movement has not benefited the workers, the 18-point has not been implemented yet. After August 5, they assured us that they would give rationing to the garment workers. This was already the case, we, the leaders, protested and made demands to the Awami League government. They also said that when the workers protested in Mirpur, they said that they would give rationing to the workers; except for this, because the fascist government had reversed everything, but those who made

reforms, who took responsibility for the safety of the lives and property of the workers, the state and the people, also evaded the workers. The issue of rationing for our workers has not been clarified yet. Will they actually get it or not?

Here, the workers had a few more demands, one of which was the annual increment, which is currently being discussed, we demanded 15% instead of 4%, they said they increased it by 9%, but in reality it was not 5%, we already had a new 4%, they added 4%; among these 4%, there are some owners who say that if it is written as an annual increment, then it will be after a year, it is seen that many factories that have been there for a year have not given it, many factories have still increased it by 5%. But again, there are some factories that have given 4% increment to those who have been working for less than a year, saying that when you are a year old, we will increase the 5% to 9%. Most factories have not been able to give any increment. Here, if we say in broad strokes, our workers have not yet reached their rightful place. Meanwhile, the workers are being beaten a lot for their movement, earlier the police used to beat them, now the army beats them. But the workers beat them. Earlier the leaders were afraid of the police, now they are afraid of the army. The next day, some of us were called to the army camp in Moucha, where we had a female officer, and there they discussed and analyzed very calmly, all of which were like threats that they had made in a very elaborate manner.

If we look at the picture of that place, in this movement, but again the management is being beaten, I will always speak for the workers; I will also speak if the management is deprived. Speaking of S. M Group, 2 of their factories were entered and the management was beaten. We have seen that after August 5, many of our big institutions have closed, such as Mahmud Jeans, Mahmud Denim, starting with Nagra Garments. We have seen how the MD of Denim was beaten. It is not what the workers are doing here, but there was also a failure of the administration because they could not provide security. All in all, the position we are in now is not that we, the workers, are good. How will we pass another 2-1 months in the future or in the future, the price of daily necessities is coming up. They did not give it by talking about rationing. If the wage increases by 2 taka, then earlier the auto fare was 5 taka, now the auto fare is 10 taka. The garments that we had of Kaya Cosmetics have closed. But many speech-impaired workers used to work there. Most of the workers there were hearing-impaired and could not do any other work. But they became unemployed. In turn, the workers are the ones who are suffering.

Kulsoom Akhter, President of IG: After August 5, factories are closing one by one, so it is not beneficial for us, the workers and the labor market. So far, we have seen that around 30 pm, another factory has been given a notice to close, that is, a factory of Dr. Yunus's Grameen Telecom in Tongi Board Bazar, 2 days ago they gave a notice that they will shift the factory but the workers have been working for many years and they will not go to Mymensingh to work. It is 40 km. away but they will not go. Then this factory will also be closed. The reason for the closure of factories is that there is no work, no one can pay salaries, but in fact, this is not it. We have talked to all the factories and reached a settlement. They said that we have been doing business for so long, we will not do it now and we will do it later.

Jubair Sarker: The main source of instigating the movement is the state. I am giving you proof. We have seen that there is movement in all the factories in Ashulia, while there is no movement in Gazipur, Gazipur is doing very well with salary increases or various demands. All the factories in Ashulia are doing well, the army has arrested one after another labor leaders, such as first our Lutfar brother (labor leader) United Federation) then they see that there is no movement here, then our Gazipur IBC regional committee general secretary Motir brother (Swadhin Bangla) then they arrested me (I am Jubair Sarker, IBC regional, committee president, Bangladesh Sramik Samhati Federation). Then they arrested Jewel brother. They arrested some of our labor leaders. Numerous workers have been arrested. Approximately, more than a hundred workers have been arrested from all the factories. Such as Tusuka, Fullever, SM Knitwear, High Fashion, etc.

If we go deeper, the army has arrested them for creating chaos in the factory. This is evidenced by the fact that when the Fullever workers were on the street, I sent a voice message to the department, I told the workers, why are the workers on the street, the workers will surround the factory department, if necessary, we will set up khichdi pots, we will not come back from the strike until a solution is found. My theory was that if they are on the street, the workers of the surrounding factories will come down to the street. The road will be blocked. The labor leaders of Gazipur want there to be no chaos, we will surround the department and sit here. I am sending a voice message to the factory inspector, tomorrow, I will come to the factory with the Fullever workers and arrange for a solution, we are making arrangements to stay there until a solution is found. But we will not let the workers go on the streets. They are sending this voice to the army, on the day they sent me to the army, the army arrested me from my house at 3 am. About 125-26 soldiers surrounded the two areas and then took me away. I asked what my crime was; they showed me two proofs. I said, the workers will not surround the factories on the streets. Then they said can you surround the government office. I said we can because the 24 have been given the power to settle their problems with the factories. Now if the workers are on the streets, the factories in the vicinity will come down, creating suffering for the people. We will surround the factories as a trusted place. Look, I am sending the department, they are sending the army. The DG of this factories department was the former BD of the Chhatra League. He knows that we have a few leaders in Gazipur, if I give a program, the procession meeting will have a lot of people. He was 100% sure that if Jubai's Sahib is arrested, then all the workers will take to the streets. We have made preparations to go down, then we realized that the writ petition is going on and I cannot prove any crime. Then I said that if the workers take to the streets, they will not let me go, the day they took me away, the workers surrounded the police station. Then I said that not a single worker should take to the streets, if they take to the streets, they will not give me bail. The workers will try to make me guilty, but they did not go.

Another video shows me that about a year ago today, I surrounded the house of an owner in Uttara. They asked me if you could surround the owner's house or not. I said that if I am arrested for that, then the first accused will be the DC, the second accused will be Belal Saher of the factory, the third industrial police and then I will be the fourth. They fixed my car. They gave me the address and advice to the owner of the house, starting from DC Saher. They will be responsible for this, not me. They told me to go there.

Then you see that after August 5, the army took power, in other cases when the police could not arrest the owner, the workers discussed with the leader. The workers of Csandres took to the streets, then beat them up and admitted them to the hospital. The owners did not say anything. They claimed that they had blocked the road for 3 months' salary and the army beat them up. When I was arrested, after bail, the TilonZ group was completely under our control.

I have given the workers a few signals and they have gone. The workers have come on the streets to put pressure on the owners. There is no union in Season Dress, it was under our control. The biggest movement after the country became independent was in the Garments sector, Team Z, where the workers were on the streets for 4 days and 3 nights. The industrial police called me and said, make arrangements to get the workers up. Then I said that I was arrested for getting the workers up and a case has been filed. I don't want to be a defendant in the case anymore. I didn't say so, so the workers didn't get up. Then he said - the army is on your side now. Then I said that the army is the embezzler who stole my phone. There is all this anarchy, the state does not want the government to be in power. You see that there is a movement in Ashulia but the workers are not being arrested, but in Gazipur, the workers are being arrested because there is no movement. In Gazipur, the workers are not taking to the streets with any demands; those who are coming out are coming out with their salaries.

Before August 5, every garment owner used to launder money abroad, when a government was in power in the country, the garment owners were able to pay their salaries in any way. And after August 5, they did not get that support from the bank. [Is the outstanding wages now or before] It was before and it is now. Before August 5, when the workers took to the streets, the labor leaders were able to convince them. The administration was able to convince the workers. But the army cannot convince the workers, now the army is beating the workers and yet they are still on the streets, no matter who came down before] They came down before but they are able to convince them. The TNZ group has also been on the streets many times, they have been given a signal and they have gone down.

Nazrul Islam (V. A. D.): After August 5, the workers got freedom of speech, that is why they have come down on the streets in such large numbers.

Md. Shafidl Alam (EAJJH) In the Moderate Committee of Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation, I have now asked you to find out the reason why the movement planned after August 5th is still ongoing. Now, what we have noticed after August 5th is that the movement has started from an unemployed organization. When the unemployed organization planned, they were workers going to work in different factories, many factories were closed after August 5th, as a result of which many workers became unemployed. As a result, those workers went to different factories for work. After not getting jobs, the workers of different factories came together and occupied the bypass intersection and held meetings and processions for a few days. We had never heard of this unemployed organization before. They were approximately 40 people; one of them was also arrested. Then what we noticed was that the police were not on the ground, which means that there was an accumulated anger from the previous year. You will know that after August 5th, the prices of commodities have been increasing uncontrollably. When these workers went home with

the wages they were getting, their heads would catch fire. This is a big reason. It was becoming very difficult for them to live on this wage. And the biggest problem was that we did not find the police in the field. Many of us, the workers of the organization, who worked in Gazipur, were not in the field and many were not allowed to go out into the field. The reason for this is that we, who work in the organization, are not affiliated with any party, but when we do what we do, we work together with the government that is in power to achieve our demands, so many people tagged us since the police were not in the field. The police knew us but the army did not know us. When the workers were taking to the streets, 2/3 of us from the organization went, fearing that the army was saying that we had gone to provoke them and that they had arrested many, but we did not go. And the biggest thing that we noticed. Whenever a worker has taken to the streets after August 5, no government department or BGMEA has received help to resolve it. BGMEA is supposed to play the biggest role in resolving the labor movement.

When the Department of Factories came up with a solution, they contacted BGMEA. But we did not get that support from anyone at that time. And the board of directors of BGMEA was also dissolved. The biggest reason for the movement is that the workers did not get their 2/3 months' salary and there is no other reason. When the workers took to the streets due to non-payment of salary, the army, without discussing with the owners, federation, and factories, announced to the workers that you will get your salary tomorrow. You leave the streets. The workers were given a date of tomorrow, but the workers did not get their salary that day, so the workers took to the streets again. Then even when the army went, the workers did not listen to them anymore because the army had given a date several times and it was not implemented, so they did not listen to the army anymore. This is an establishment called Apparel Class Limited of the TrinZ Group. They blocked a road like a thousand roads for 72 hours, no administration, factory authorities, BGMEA came there. The workers did not listen to anyone. In this apparel plus, about 1800 workers, I mean a factory of the TrinZ Group, workers from other factories also protested. There were approximately 200 to 250 workers. They did not vandalize the factory. The reason they blocked the road is that they were given multiple dates to pay their salaries. We have noticed that a group called the Anti-Discrimination Workers' Movement is working here and they have created the biggest problem. They do not have any organization name, they are anti-discrimination leaders, none of us know them. But now the workers have developed a trust in the students that the students have liberated the country. The workers listened to what the students said and did not listen to any of us. This organization still exists. They went to the factory with the workers of the apparel factory, an agreement was made with the factory, the factory was closed through a tripartite agreement in the presence of the owner's representative. A compromise agreement was reached regarding the outstanding salaries of the workers and compensation for damages. According to this agreement, there were separate dates for arrears and dues. When the workers were paid according to these dates, the workers no longer listened to the factory or the student organization against discrimination, and they didn't listen to us. Because the owners didn't implement it by giving a date, they said we are brokers, we take money. But we didn't take any money from the apparel class or from the workers. They think we don't get the money from the owners, which was given to them, so they don't get the money.

But the real problem is, what role did the factory play in the original agreement they made? What role did the army play? But in the end, we see that the army took the owner of Apparel Plus to Basa Police Station and made him sign 10,000 at once. They gave some more money, but the workers still haven't received the money, so they can take to the streets again at any moment.

If these workers block the roads for 72 hours and 48 hours and throw stones at 50 other factories, then can't they take any action against these people? It's not that the owners should be arrested and taken to the police station. We don't see the steps that the state should take to pay the workers' dues and that the administration is supporting them. Another thing that we have seen is that the workers who have been working in the factories for 16 years were angry, they couldn't speak, whether they were afraid or afraid of their jobs. They have announced a wage of 12,500 taka and announced 15,500 taka for seniors. But the workers did not accept this. They did not accept the demands, they did not tell anyone because if they said nothing would happen, they would lose their jobs, there would be a case, etc. They kept the wheels of production running with anger in their hearts. After August 5, they got an opportunity to say that we raise our demands, our demands can be met. And at the rate at which the price of raw materials is increasing, it is normal to demand cotton. It is not unusual. We have been demanding rations on behalf of the workers since the previous government. They have not implemented this rationing demand by making agreements multiple times, and the current government has not implemented it either.

Why do we promise something that we cannot implement? This is the basic problem, and another issue is that there is no Tiffin Bill, oppression and torture in factories existed before, and still exist. It has not decreased even a single point, it has only increased. The obstacle to realizing workers' rights is the blacklist, which is even more negative than the previous government's tenure. The owners say that we do not write anything, but because of the termination written next to the name, the job is not being done. This is a negative statement. Because of this negative statement, the finger is being pointed at by the workers who go to other factories and write there, they are terminated. As a result, the jobs are not being done. In all the factories that are members of BGMEA, jobs are not being done in any factory. This has affected the lives and livelihoods of the workers. Which is a violation of human rights. Now, let's talk about the movement that is happening in Beximco, Apparel Plus, Barco MS have been closed, Sweaters, Mahmud Jeans, Nagra Textile have been closed. The workers and the owners have been beaten. We want the security of the employer, the workers and the industry, the payment of the arrears that the workers are not getting and the agreements that have been made now are the agreements of the workers who made the previous agreements of most of the factories. If these agreements are implemented, the agreements on factory closure and arrears of wages.

Then this dissatisfaction will not remain at all. And the 18-point agreement that is in place is being implemented in many factories. And we have increments now becoming an issue. This is an annual increment. It is stated in the Labor Law that a worker who has completed a year will get the increment. Here, if an employer gives it to someone who has completed 5/6 years, he can go beyond the law. Now we have to see if he is getting a 9% increment.

Now, the workers who are in the movement are the ones who accept the Beximco issue politically; we do not support it from our own policy point of view. It is the responsibility of the state to maintain the employment of the workers, it is the state that must make arrangements to maintain it. If necessary, the state should take control of this scarce resource and sustain it. Employment for millions of people. Since Salman F. Rahman, the owner of Beximco, is involved in Awami League politics and has laundered money abroad. The main thing is that where there is no buyer organization, the thing to see is that those who have been working with Beximco for so long, whether out of fear or political reasons or for any reason, have withdrawn work from these companies. They must have broken the policy agreement that the buyers have with the Bangladesh government. Our bands at the national level. Politically, the organizations that exist and all of you who are present must apply pressure on them so that they give work to those factories. And the government should ensure that the biases that you give work to our workers will continue their production and the government will adopt the policies that are necessary to pay the wages of the workers.

Masud Mondal (Aujhao): The main reason for instability in the garment sector in Gazipur after August 5th is bureaucracy. As long as this bureaucracy and syndicate exist, they will be able to create this anarchy whenever they want. Because I am talking about Gazipur. The entire administrative aspect of Gazipur, including the DC office, the factories office, the industrial area, such as the administrative group that Gazipur has. DCF, CTSB, police station, metro, DC office, factories office, the entire aspect that exists is a syndicate. The issue that was after the 5th was not a big one, it was a minor issue. Now the main area of the movement is coming. In the past, the agreements that were made with the factories office, the labor ministry, many of those agreements have not been implemented. The reason for their non-implementation is that there is a gap among the workers. Due to this gap, the decline has started again.

Those who come to office from a political party will definitely support the political party. There was no unity in the field to play any role for the leaders here, at that time because they always gave wrong information in messages against the leaders. All these arrest cases were given wrong information by the Department of Factories, former Chhatra League, DC Office Industrial, former Police League, these league forces wanted to create discontent in the industrial area of Gazipur. This is the first idea. The second reason is the business policy, which is the business league who are from the Awami League, Awami League leaders like the owner of a factory in Shahjadpur who first became SP and then built a factory in this place, but now he is not there. When such businessmen were working in a party way, now they have fled the country.

This is a problem. And this problem has been solved by the VCs, the Industrial Police, the Department of Factories, who have been communicating with them in various ways and using various tactics to bring the workers to the streets. This is another problem. After such a change in the state, some people, former Chhatra League members, in the name of the anti-discrimination student movement, have again brought the workers to the streets by holding provocative discussions in various factories. This was another problem. Then again, this was all a syndicate cycle, everything here has been done for the bureaucracy. The first thing is the problem of the case, because the bureaucrats always create trouble by giving people intelligence. A labor leader cannot

create anarchy if he wants. Because when they give intelligence to the owner, the owner gets 2 crores by doing this work, so they go after 2 crores and then this anarchy is created. And in those anarchies, our workers told us, we can tell them that you can do whatever you want. This is all we have the power to do.

Another person, says,

Let me add a little more to what he said, this is Dark Composite Textiles Limited; Dark Group has a total of 5 factories, one unit in Gazipur and 4 units in Savar, Ashulia, during the Hasina government, but all 50 units were closed in November 2023, this is what was closed, the workers were owed wages for 5 months and 6 months during the working period. At that time, an agreement was made under the chairmanship of the former State Minister of Labor during the previous Hasina government. And according to the government's information, the workers will receive 27 crore taka. Now, a meeting was held during the interim government, in that meeting, it was seen that the agreement made during the previous Hasina government was made entirely outside the labor law. The agreement was made with half of what the workers would get. I think I used to get 1 lakh taka but according to the schedule. I will get 50 thousand. Now, 14 crore taka has disappeared in a day, for this the workers are protesting. The government has given 13 crore taka loan to the owner, the money from that loan has not been distributed among the workers till now. The main reason for this dissatisfaction is that they have not kept their promises.

Md. Qayyum Ali (E.A.J.N.R.I) Bangladesh, the garment workers who are there are first of all not well. Of all the people we blame, the Police League, Chhatra League, bureaucrats and factory owners are the main ones. Now why am I not well, these 7/8 people lost their lives for the wage movement, are wages really increasing. In our Gazipur. The deaths are on the list. 7-8 people were killed there, there were attempts to kill 35-36 people because no one has eyes, no one has hands. In exchange for all this, our salary has not increased. (You said 35-35 people were murdered, where and how did they happen?)

This happened during the wage movement in police firing which happened before August 5th. After August 5th, various workers were tortured from different factories. For example, 35-40 workers were beaten and taken out of one factory here, which is the Master Sale Factory. The factory gate was closed, they were beaten, and the salary they were paid was paid and they were sent away. And they signed a white paper so that they could not take any legal action. This factory never gives any maternity pay, leave pay, attendance bonus, production money or any kind of service benefit.

When everyone here became open after August 5th, they demanded because if they talked about these things before, they used to beat them. Earlier, Awami League people used to run this factory. After August 5th, when the Awami League leaders fled, on August 9th, they wrote a written statement on the table while they were working and they are working. Sir, please consider it and let us know. But Sir. The idea is, after working all day, they say you stay, there is a meeting with you. Then they call people to the factory and lock the door in the dark and beat them out. They are all unemployed now.

After complaining to BGMEA about this, BGMEA factories have taken away the signatures of every worker and BGMEA has caught it.

[Are those who beat up the workers the owners of Awami League] No, Awami League has fled, they are locals. The owner of Master Sem is a foreigner but there are 2 Bangladeshi directors here who have 10%. They beat them up with outsiders. (Did the workers not go there later?) The workers were not allowed to enter and they did not do any vandalism. Then we filed a complaint but they did not go there and could not provide any documents. BGMEA is also calling for documents and they have taken away fake documents; BGSE also said what action was taken against the workers, they brought their documents and then they took away all the papers with the same signature written by the same hand, BGMEA was able to catch them. They said these are frauds, if they leave them alone, they will pay the workers' dues or they will be in danger. They have dismissed them from BGMEA and said that they can go to the high court because there is no electronic machine to test the signatures in BGMEA, so they have submitted a report. [How many people beat up 40/50 workers] There were 38/40 workers here, among them were women workers. They are hiring around 100 people from outside the locality, they may be involved in BNP politics. After August 5, only the chairperson has changed. Earlier, they used to give me 50 thousand every month, now they are giving me 50 thousand or 1 lakh. I am providing shelter. After August 5, we have not had any discrimination or reforms here, but the prices of goods have increased and the workers have been in more danger. Of the workers who got jobs after August 5, not one of them has got a job yet due to the closure of the factory. They are all unemployed. The gate of every factory says recruitment is closed, no posts are vacant. No one is giving them jobs.

The administration is also negligent in the anarchy that is going on now, it has been seen that the army is in the field now, they do not know about the labor law, they are not aware. The workers of Basic Clothing Average Limited Company are coming to the field: Since the workers are aware of the labor law, they are saying that we have to pay them at most under Section 26 of the labor law; then the army says not Section 26, but increase it by one more section and take your money under Section 27. But the army says that they do not know what the workers get under Section 26 and what they get under Section 27, so they say that the workers get compensation under Section 26 and the workers have to pay compensation to the company under Section 27. They do not know, so they have a gap. And from where the police are not helping them, the police are not helping them. The industrial police know that they get help from us. But they do not cooperate in this way. Due to which it is seen that the owners are making them understand wrongly, which is why they are saying the workers are wrong. The workers are again understanding our mistakes. Due to which we are forced to work on the streets.

Not everyone in the closed factory is involved in politics, most of them were involved in Awami League politics.

The local influential people who used to watch and listen to the lies were the ones who used to watch and listen to the lies, earlier they were looked after by Awami League people, now BNP or other party people are looking after them, this is normal. This is the incident of the day after yesterday, Meem Sweater and Fashion Limited did not pay the workers. As a result, the workers

have observed a complete strike. There is a club in front of the factory, there are local people sitting there, here are their elder brothers, they are the ones who work with lies. Those who used to do that are running away, now a new group is taking over. They are the ones who are beating a worker; the worker went to the police station but did not take a case; they could not even file a case. Our labor leader Harun Sahib is there and he went and settled it. So the worker who beat up the worker is one of our Harul's workers, so we were able to control him by explaining it. So they didn't go on the streets anymore. He beat one person, the owner will judge him, but the owner won't judge him. The owner made this happen. Because he demanded holiday pay, he tried to organize everyone on behalf of everyone, so the owner made it happen. So, why shouldn't there be external fuel, of course there is external fuel? You had another question, is there a union? TNZ Group, Basic Clothing have a union. As a legal representative, they will settle it through bargaining, why would they come on the streets? In reality, those workers were not under the control of the union. Another problem we are seeing is that when the factory workers did not get their wages, they went on the streets, then the owner gave them some money to get them off the streets. For example, I did not get my salary and went on the streets, they gave me 10,000 taka and I got off the streets. It has spread that I get paid only when I go out on the streets. It has spread after August 5th. And before August 5th, when there was dissatisfaction in a factory, the workers who are stakeholders, the organization BGMEA, factories, industrial unions, workers, industrial police, all of them immediately found a way to solve it, which means there was an importance. Now such an environment has arisen that we have become opponents to the army. It is natural that the army will not recognize us. If I tell them that I am the leader of the federation and I have come to convince the workers, they will not listen. And they have not listened. They are the ones who settled with the workers. The workers did not get their salaries and they are taking to the streets again.

It has spread everywhere, resulting in prolonged anarchy. And the influence of the fake traders was there before and still is; now it has been seen that I am a fake trader, 50 people live in my house, there are local people like that, he used to be an Awami League worker, 50 people live in his house or the officers of the Department of Factories during the previous government. I will talk about our Belal Saheb. He is a relative of the former Labor Minister. We do not know whether the Awami League people still talk to him, who is the DAC of Gazipur, but he is still in charge of Gazipur. The leadership has changed but the set-up is still there. It is difficult to understand who is fueling whom here because we are taking to the streets, complaining, no solution is being found, no initiative is being taken. These are the things that are worrying. Our suggestion would be to create an opportunity for the stakeholders involved in this consulting industry to deal with any situation, so that they can work without any hindrance. We who are directly involved with the workers should not be subjected to harassment so that they can use us. If such a situation exists, we trade union workers will disappear. There will be no one to represent the workers. If there were factory-based unions, the situation would not be so chaotic. There are no free trade unions in our country, the trade unions that do exist are uncontrolled. They have a trade union in Colombia, on Joyder Pur Road, we have not heard that their workers have taken to the streets because they have a union and they are in control.

And this is being controlled by the workers themselves. The owner has formed a commission with the workers. But the movement did not take place in Colombia. Then why did the basic clothes

become dirty because they were not in control. Those who say they have a union should be ashamed because if there is a union, why would the workers be on the streets for 72 hours? If they are owed any salary, then what role has the union played? The workers of Apparel Plus have a reason to take to the streets because the agreement was made and the factory was closed but they did not get their salaries. Why would the workers of Basic Clothing take to the streets? Their salaries were not even that much due, and the union is not dissatisfied with their wages or any other demands. What we are observing is that either the agreement was not implemented, or the agreement was made but the money was not paid. Or the owner is not accepting a demand in the 18-point agreement and is playing tricks, and is throwing them out whenever he wants. Due to these demands, a distance has been created between the owner and the workers. This distance must be reduced. Earlier, we used to sit in discussions and say that if they cannot pay the salary tomorrow, they will pay it after ten days. We were able to convince the workers. But now it is not like that. Now the army is giving an immediate date, it is not being accepted, the workers are not being brought into a quality chain. Controlling the workers is a very difficult matter.

Md. Manjurul Islam (R.A.D.) Federation of Garments Workers: The recruitment of male workers has stopped and this is the only issue of the movement. The second issue is that the army has no experience in coming with the workers and understanding their problems and resolving them, but they are not accepting anyone. According to this, the labor leader went to Alamin Gate and said, "I am a worker, I am the representative of the workers, I will talk to the workers." Then they detained him in Ashulia for the whole day and released him in the evening. We work with whoever we need to achieve the interests of the workers. From here, a party path (name not mentioned) has tagged us. When we go to the field, they incite the workers, saying that they used to do Awami League. As a result, a gap has been created with the NOTA. If the workers are out of the discussion, then anarchy will be created.

Another person says, another issue here is that now we see that all the committees of the Ministry of Labor that are being formed have been formed through party affiliation. Those who led the field earlier are not in those places now. The workers will go to the Maidan and the people who have connections with them should be given responsibility. The committees should be formed in such a way. As they said earlier, one party is what we have heard for 16 years, one party is what we have heard and now after August 5th we are seeing that in these few days everything has been partyized. What we are saying is that we do not do politics; we take steps according to what is timely in the interest of the industry. Let us do our work and we will be able to eliminate this anarchy.

Another person said, even if the owner of Beximco Group is in jail, his people can take advice from him and they can incite the workers to protest and ask the government to release their owner. But he once asked him to release me and I will provide employment to 45,000 workers.

Another person said, here the workers of Beximco Group do not want the factory to close, the owner closed the factory because he showed that he does not have an LC, where will he pay the salary. He closed it because of these things. Here the government did not close the factory, the owner did. The workers did not take to the streets, they did not do any vandalism. They said, give

us work, give us an order, we will work. Here the owner is saying that the government has sued him to fire him.

After August 5th, there was a problem at Mustard's factory. There was an incident between Mustard and Clostus. The environment was cold. Then, probably, someone from JIZ was coming to inspect the factory. Then they stopped them in that factory. And for some time now, everything is fine. The factory opens in the morning, but around 10 or 11 am, the workers are being thrown out or not allowed to enter. And then, a lot of people gather. When the workers enter in the morning, the organization called the Unemployed Council is holding banners and saying, "Why don't you hire us? We need jobs?" They are saying, "We don't have any jobs now." That's how problems started in several factories.

During the Likhi Group movement, they issued a notice to about 70 factories that we support the students' movement. But there was a movement in the Lithi Group as well. Then, let's talk about SM Knitwear, there was a movement here too.

Another person is saying,

After the 18-point movement that took place after August 5, a female worker gave birth to a child on the street and one died, many people were injured; in return, a 10 taka tiffin bill is coming. The owners of factories like Tusuka, Islam, Keya Garments, SM Knitwear, etc. were Awami League members.

[The Rose Adds Dresses Car]

The Rose could probably belong to an Awami League leader.

According to my brother:

From what we have received, you think that the reason for the workers' dissatisfaction is:-

First of all, I will say that the legitimate rights of the workers, such as the dissatisfaction with wages and other issues, have been there for a long time, are still there, and will be there in the future. Among them, they considered the environment suitable after August 5, so they started the movement.

Secondly, you said that after August 5, there was a shortage of food, which affected the movement.

Third, the laws that still exist are not suitable for the MG sector.

Fourth, the place of real onions is still not free.

In short; if trouble starts in one factory, they have again provoked others.

Sixth: Previously, the locals who were part of the Awami League also had an influence, such as their unemployment organization, and their people wanted to do this in the name of students against discrimination.

Seventh; Other parties like BNP and Jamaat also wanted to take the opportunity after August 5 to see if they could take over the business establishments.

Eighth: The owners also had a grudge, they are evicting the workers after getting such an opportunity.

Ninth: The suppressed anger among the workers is that they can protest at any time regarding their termination and salary, blacklisting.

Another person said; The workers who will not protest, only those who are on the blacklist can.

Tenth:- The factories that belonged to the Awami League were closed after the owners fled after August 5th.

Transcript

FGD with Workers

Gazipur Area, 17.01.25

No	Name	Garments Name	Designation
1	Md. Ripon Mia	Mahmud Jeans	Operator
2	Kolpona Akter	Mahmud Jeans	Operator
3	Md. Masud Rana	Mahmud Jeans	Ironman

Ripon: On August 4, when the procession to topple the government came out, a huge procession came out from Konabari. Every factory said that the factory would continue until the procession arrived, and that everyone would be released from the factory as soon as the procession approached. For this movement, the factory declared a shutdown the next day and everyone was told to go home. The factory was closed on August 5. The factory said that it would inform them by message about the reopening of the factory. Thus, all the factories were closed for 2/3 days after the fall of the government. Later, when we went to the factory after it opened, we found that the atmosphere in the factory was very relaxed. Earlier, the staff's behavior was very bad, they used to abuse them in many vulgar languages. They used to speak to women in vulgar ways. If anyone protested, they threatened to throw them out. Later, it was seen that they were thrown out after 2/1 month. After August 5, problems started with salaries. Earlier, salaries were paid within 7 working days. But after August 5, salaries were paid even after 14 days. They even paid in 2/3 installments. Still, we accepted it considering the situation in the country. Basically, we had been having some problems with our salaries since the Corona. Seeing that the salaries were being paid late for 2/3 months, we went to the owner and told him why we were having so many problems with our salaries. Then they said that the bank was not paying the money, there was some trouble. Later, it turned out that the 20th was passing and we were not getting paid, and at one point, all of us workers started a movement. We said that we have to pay our salaries within 7 working days and the factory has to run as per the rules. Later, the owner came and told us that you are like my family, I am in a bit of a problem, try to understand my problem. Later, we said that we can accept it till the 10th, because we also have to run our family. So the owner accepted that and asked us to stop the movement and join the work. He also said that I had a problem with a bank and it was resolved. I left that bank and joined another bank. This probably happened in November or December. After this, we heard a rumor that the factory would close. Earlier, the workers had spoken to the owner once, where we asked whether the factory would be sold or closed. We could hear it from everyone's mouths. Later, he said that it was a lie, that he was going through a bad time, that's why others were condemning him. He told us to trust him. But the next month we didn't get our salary properly either. We were associated with the federation and later we told the

federation that if it goes on like this, we won't be able to run our family. What should we do now. (We were associated with the Ekta Federation). Later, the federation asked us about all our problems and said that they would look into the matter. I don't know if they did anything, but the next month we got our salary by the 10th. In this way, we got our salary properly for two months. Later, they started again as before. We heard rumors that the factory would close again. Even the senior staff said that the factory would close and many even left their jobs. Then everyone kept saying the same thing. What will happen to our creditors if the factory closes! Once, we saw the owner calling the name of the buyer and bringing the owners of various factories to show us the factory. Then we got suspicious and when we asked the management, they said, we don't know anything. In this way, the workload in our factory also decreased. We work 8 hours a day. They said there was no order for work. Later, the weekly holiday was changed from 1 day to 2 days due to less work. Mahmud Jeans was once number 4 in the denim industry in Bangladesh. Currently, there are about 3000 workers. Then it was seen that workers are being laid off every month. They hire and lay off workers as the owner wants without any reason. After 3/4 months of employment, they are fired with just their salary. There is workload. Production is also going on but where is the problem in paying us? Even then, the owner's various false excuses do not end. Slowly we saw that he was shifting the work of our factory to another factory of his. New workers were mostly laid off. He would lay off 5-7 people every day. In this way, about 500-700 workers were laid off. Later, the management explained to us that if there was no work, what would the owner do with so many workers? He even closed some lines. In the end, he stopped paying our salaries. Later, the owner called his management and said that he would close the factory. The factory would no longer run. The staff also had 4-5 months of unpaid salaries. Everyone from the supervisors to the seniors were owed their salaries. They blocked the road at first to demand their unpaid salaries. At first, no workers joined them. Later, when they did not find us in the movement, they were finally forced to use the lineman to shut down the line and machines. They asked us to join the movement. We did not go either. We said that when we protested in the factory, you were not with us. They also gave the list of our names to the owner. We refused to join them. The owner was supposed to come after lunch, but the army came instead. As soon as the army arrived, they gave us leave. The GM, PM, and admin were all involved in the movement. After the leave, the staff asked us to join their movement and they also said, along with our dues, we will get your dues. This is the opportunity. Hearing this, many agreed. Thinking that they were right. Almost half of the workers joined them and many stood on the overbridge and watched the joke. Later, the army came and took everyone inside the factory. They assured them of a solution. Later, the army said that they had talked to the owner. The owner asked for 1 month. They will pay everyone's dues from next month. If they don't, they won't stop us again if we protest and block the road next time. Later, we agreed with the staff that there was no time. The owner didn't keep his word the next month either. Later, we didn't listen to the army anymore. Later, we called the mayor of Kaliakoir. He was a BNP member, but he used to run for office as an independent. He came and talked to the owner. The owner said that he would pay the money by the 14th of this month and by the 10th of next month. The mayor assured us that if the owner did not keep his word, he would help in every way. Later, we asked for it in writing and the owner agreed to give it in writing. But no one is taking responsibility for it. The mayor also left, then the army did not sign and the army said that if you did not make a commitment, we would not let you out of the factory. Having no other choice, we finally accepted the owner's words and gave

up the movement on the mayor's assurance. Later, around 6 pm, the army let us go. As we went along, we heard that the factory would be closed. The staff openly said so and the owner also saw that various goods of his factory were being transferred to another factory. He was getting all his work done in the factory next door. It was called Mahmud Fashion. Mahmud Jeans became Mahmud Fashion. And now he is slowly closing that mother factory. At one point, he saw an order to vacate the godown next to the factory. There was more than one and a half lakhs of goods there. If they sell these goods too, it would be possible to pay our 3-4 months' salary. But they don't. The godown is like a whole house of mirrors. There is no good system of lights and fans. They work there in two shifts. They get sick while doing a lot of work. Later, they come out and drink water, take saline, and take rest. Later, I saw that the storeroom has also been emptied. In the meantime, I heard that the store manager was caught while trying to get goods and a case has been filed against him. After these incidents, the head of the factory came one day, called all of us and said that the owner will no longer run the factory. You should find a job somewhere else. The owner can no longer pay the workers. Then we fell into a confusion. The owner said that he would run the factory, now I hear that he will not run it. This had happened once before. Then we submitted the papers to form a union through the federation. Then the owner said that he would hold a meeting with the workers in Dhaka. About the issue of their dues if the factory was closed. But that meeting never happened. Seeing this, the staff started behaving badly with us regarding work. The reason is why the owner wants to have a meeting with the workers without calling the staff. They are angry about this. A month later, we heard that the factory will not close, they will lay off. We said how many days will the factory close if there is no work without laying off? The workers were not in favor of layoff. They wanted to know later. Later, the factory did not close, nor did they lay off. Later, they called another meeting. The owner asked 100 workers to go. When we went out to go, the factory management did not let us go. They said, you will go to a meeting with the owner, the owner did not tell us anything about this. Later, we went to the admin room. The admin called the owner. Then the owner said, yes, I asked them to come. Due to this, there was a misunderstanding with the staff. Later, they said, okay. You go, there was talk about us too. After we left, we heard that there was a big gang war in Ashulia. A garment worker also died there. Our meeting was supposed to be held at the Ministry of Labor. The owners, BGMEA, and workers were supposed to be there. Due to Ashulia's troubles, the Ministry of Labor and BGMEA people had to go there. Due to which the meeting was canceled. Later, we returned and joined the work. 2.5 weeks passed like this, no more meetings were held. A whole month passed like this. Then, after a few months, a meeting was held, we talked about our dues. The first installment of our dues will be paid on the 20th of the next month. The other dues will be paid on the 28th of November. We accepted it after much debate. The next day, a notice was put up at the factory gate, saying that the factory was closed. The gate was locked. The factory was suddenly locked without us telling the workers or the owner saying anything. Then, the money that was supposed to be paid on the 20th was also not given. Later, the owner said, I can't manage the money, give me another 2.5 days. When we didn't get the money on the 22nd, the workers decided to protest. Later, we were paid on the 23rd. Then, on the 27th, we received a message that the owner could not manage our money. So, he could not pay us on the 28th. But he did not clear when he would pay. The factory was also closed. Many workers had come to Dhaka two days ago to collect the money. They were reluctant to accept this message. They wanted to pay the money in cash on the 28th, but it had to be paid on the 28th. Later, we protested

since morning and blocked the highway. In the afternoon, we received news that the army was coming to the factory with the owner. Later, the owner came. The army then told the owner that when you will pay the money, tell the workers. Despite saying many things, the owner could not give the exact date when he would pay the money. Later, the army said, you stop your workers, we have no responsibility. Later, the federation proposed that if necessary, we would sit separately with the owner and the workers. Hopefully, that too will be resolved. That day, the PM, GM and all the high-ranking officials all came. Many outsiders also joined our protest. Local people, bus staff, many others. There were some Awami League and BNP people there, we don't know them properly. But I heard that they also provoked them. Later that day, the army asked the owner to handle the situation. Later, the owner himself came to talk. He said that we are from the same family. Hearing this, the workers got angry. The workers said, you have divorced us, today is the last day to pay the debts. How did we become your family! If the factory was running, we would have been your family. After talking about various things, at one point the owner said, are you going to kill me now and take the money? After saying this, the slapping started. The staff close to the owner were with him. Many of them slapped the owner. A commotion arose. The army was a little far away, when the owner went towards the army. The army should have stopped everyone and given safety to the owner. But the army ran with the owner. Because of running, all the workers also followed them. We have pictures and videos of it. The workers said that without paying us money, without resolving this issue, where are they going? Everyone chased the owner. Many workers then fell behind. Then it seems that a third party also chased the owner on the road. We don't know if they were workers or someone else. At one point, some workers of the Niagara factory pushed the owner and took him to the base of the flyover. The army was far behind. We felt that the owner was suffering because of the army's negligence that day. The owner's brother became the plaintiff and filed a case the next day. He named 21 people and filed an anonymous case against 600 people. Half of the 21 people were staff and the other half were workers. Since I am a union leader, a case has also been filed against me. My name has also been included in the list of those 21 people. My case has not been resolved yet. I am still like a fugitive. My family members are also terrified. That day, the workers rescued the owner. They brought him to the factory and gave him first aid. He called home and said that the situation here is not very good, none of you will come. Later, after 8 pm, the joint forces went into action. The workers were still on the streets. They fired TR shells, rubber bullets, and sound grenades. Many were injured and everyone left as they pleased. Later, after 12 midnight, raids were conducted at each person's house. We later learned that they arrested 7 people and sent them away. The news also mentioned 7 people. They are now on bail. We are not getting any jobs anywhere. Kalpana: When our factory was closed, I went to work in another factory. They asked me which factory I had worked in before, and I told the truth, Mahmud Jeans. Later, they fingerprinted me and told me to come with me to the gate. Later, they threw me out at the gate and said you won't get a job. Later, I wanted to know why I won't get a job? They said you won't get any job. They didn't say anything else.

Masud Rana: The local people of the area have not helped us at all. On the contrary, they are causing more harm. In a word, they are slandering the owner. Most of the landlords in our area are against the workers. They cannot last even for a month without paying our rent. Yet they cannot see us. During this incident, we heard that many landlords have also taken money from the company to hand over the workers. The army has been searching for me too. Many were taken to the police,

many of them were released after paying money. Only 7 people were given challans, the rest were released with money.

Our floor manager was also arrested. Journalists have also not played any role on behalf of the workers. Currently, our money is still stuck. We have not received the money yet. They just say that they cannot withdraw the money from the bank. They are not even giving us an exact date. Now we need the money. We want to understand our dues. Talking about the damage, only the workers have suffered, the owner has not suffered any loss. There has been no job for the past 4-5 months. I have not been able to get a job anywhere else yet.

We want the company to survive. All unknown cases in our name should be dropped. Our dues should be paid. We don't want any trouble. We want all institutions to remain operational. So that everyone can work everywhere. So that workers are not harassed or abused. We want equal employment for men and women in recruitment.

Transcript

FGD with Workers

Gazipur Area, 17.01.25

No	Name	Garments Name	Designation
1	Farhana	Keya Knit Composite	Operator
2	Sheuli	Keya Knit Composite	Operator
3	Sabina	TM fashion	Junior Operator
4	Sri Suk Charan	PN Composite	Packing man
5	Abdur Rob	PN Composite	Packing man

PN Composite

Shri Suk Charan: When the government fell on August 5, there was a strike in the garment factories over leave and salary. After August 5, all the garment factories were closed for 5/7 days due to the quota movement.

We had some demands, we protested for them. Attendance bonus, 10% increase in annual salary, 10 days of annual leave and some other issues. Garments were closed for 2/3 days during this strike. Attendance bonus was earlier given at 400 taka. Later, the government announced it at 750 taka. But we demanded 1000 taka. Eid leave and puja leave should be increased. Later, they accepted something. Attendance bonus was 750, next month it was increased to 850. Annual increment was 9% for the old workers. After a few days, 32 workers were laid off due to the movement. Later, we protested again to bring them back. Later, the owner announced that those who would return the termination money would be reinstated on the previous join date. And those who would not return it would have a new join date. Later, we again protested against some staff. The staff had instigated the workers while firing them. They always behaved badly. Later, the owner fired about 64 staff with 3 months' salary. The staff had completely exhausted us. We said that if they were not there, we would give more production. Supervisors, linemen, HR officers, PMs were also fired. Now the factory has been running without them for about 2 months. First, in our factory, PM and AGM had a fight inside the factory. After that incident, we presented our various demands and protested. We did not protest outside the factory. We stopped work and stayed inside the factory. We did not vandalize. None of our workers were beaten up. 2-4 staff were beaten up in this protest. There was no harassment by the police administration in this movement. However, there were movements in almost all the factories around with various demands. Workers from

other factories came and pelted stones in front of our factory. Then our management announced that today is your general holiday. Everyone go home as you wish. We also went to our respective places. Later one day, while people from another factory were lazing around in our factory, our factory security caught 4 people. Later they were detained in the factory. After the evening, the police came and took them away, along with 2 people from our factory from the street. They were arrested for no reason. Later we protested that our brothers should be released and the case against them should be withdrawn. Later, after getting the whole day, they released them and withdrew the case. After working for 4/5 days in this way, people from the neighboring factory gathered in front of our factory again. Later the management announced our holiday. Then we said, we don't need a holiday. You provide security at our workplace. We may get into accidents while commuting to work. Later, the management said that all the neighboring factories have declared closure. They were angry that we were keeping any open. Later, they declared a holiday without deducting our salary. After being closed for 2-3 days, our factory was reopened. We are in a very good condition now, Alhamdulillah. The BGME had increased our attendance bonus from 400 taka to 225 taka to 625 taka. Later, the owner increased it by another 100 taka to 725 taka. The neighboring factory also had an attendance bonus of 725 taka. Later, we peacefully demanded from the owner that even if it was 10 taka more than the neighboring factory, we should be given an attendance bonus. Later, our attendance bonus was increased to 750 taka. After a month, the attendance bonus was increased again by 100 taka to 850 taka. Now, Alhamdulillah, we are fine. There is no trade union in our factory. Our worker who was arrested was taken away from the factory on suspicion. I do not know whether there was any third party instigating this movement. Those who were terminated first have been reinstated and become coordinators. There are 2-1 coordinators on each floor. There are about 3500 workers in our garments. This is how the factory is running now. We have got what we demanded and more. Talking about the damage to the factory, it was closed for a total of 4-5 days and due to laxity, the factory window was vandalized. This is all the damage. Now everything is fine.

TM Fashion

Sabina: Our problem has been since the quota movement. We had 2/3 months of salary outstanding to our workers and staff. When we protested for salary, our PM sir said, there is a quota movement going on outside, that is why the money is not coming. We cannot even pay the salary. We protested, at one stage someone or something locked the gate. We were inside the factory from 12 am to 1 am. Our relatives gave us food from outside over the gate. Later, after we left that day, they locked the gate again. From the next day, everyone protested outside the factory because they were not paying salaries. Later, the army, police, administration, journalists and students also came. Later, we were given money through Vikas.

Our owner has two factories. When one was closed, the workers went to the other. Later, the people from the owner's side beat the workers a lot. 5/7 people were seriously injured. No one died. After this protest, we got money after 2/3 months. Even then, they gave it to Bikash in 2/3 installments. Those who have not completed their years of service have not received anything. Now I hear that

they have started a new factory again. But they will not hire any of us who were old workers. They only paid our salaries in 3 installments. They did not pay overtime pay. They did not pay termination pay. Even if we go to take a job elsewhere, we do not get a job. They say they are protesting in that factory because they will not take us. I took a job at Brothers, later the management held a meeting and said that those who are coming from that factory should leave on their own, it will not be good if we throw them out. Later, there were 2/3 of us, we left with our dues. 1700 workers used to work at T.M.Z Apparel. No one has a job now. Many of them have taken jobs elsewhere, while others have gone home. Many are not getting jobs because of their age. I myself am a victim of this. Many are getting jobs by going to distant factories. I do not know if any third party was involved in the movement. The administration and the army were coming to the movement. The army was bringing hot water to control the situation. Later, the administration announced; Don't do any violence, we will get your money from Bikash. Later, we went home as we pleased. During the movement, the Polapan factory was being vandalized. The rooms of the sirs were being vandalized. Nothing outside was broken, only the glass of the factory was being broken and the rooms of the sirs were being vandalized. Those who did not get jobs are still in a damaged state. Even after the police administration assured us, we did not get any money at first. Later, students joined us in the movement, and later we got money. No NGO helped. We are in this situation now.

Keya Knit Composite

Shiuli: There was a problem with salary in our factory since 2022. 1 month's salary was paid at the end of the other month. We have shift duty there. We work in 3 shifts of 8 hours each. Many staff had 7-8 months of unpaid salaries and workers had 1 month. They still paid us after 2.5 months. Our factory owner Khalek Saheb said that he would pay all our outstanding salaries within 3 months. He did it for BNP. When the Awami League was in power, his work was less. He did not pay the night bill because he saw that the night bill had to be paid. I think there was a political conspiracy behind our movement. On November 26, we stopped working because our dues were not paid. We sat inside the factory. There was no vandalism. Even then, we heard that he would not be able to pay the salaries, that he would throw us out, that he would close the factory. When we stopped working on the 26th, no one came to us till the 30th. That was due to absenteeism. Before that, we had also stopped working for salaries, and they did not come either. Then one day the owner said that he can't pay us the outstanding salary. He will pay when his factory is good. We don't know when or if his factory will be good. Just give us some time! Later, all of us workers came to Konabari and blocked the road. The road was blocked for about 3 hours. Later, the army came and moved us. The next day, the army brought her to the factory. We had a madam named Smriti, and she and the army had a meeting. Later, they paid one salary on the 7th, and another on the 12th. Now, they are saying that they will close the factory. My service period is 10 years. Now, if the factory is closed, where will we go? On average, 20 out of 100 workers in our factory will get jobs, while the remaining 80 will not. Because they are old. Many have been in service for 20 years. The owner has given notice that he will no longer run the factory from May 1st. Many staff members are owed 8-10 months of salary. They have been harassing the admin and accounts ladies again on the 9th. The lady is on duty with her child. She keeps her child in the daycare center. I also heard that one of our female supervisors is beating her. Later, 11 people are being laid off due to this. They will

be laid off by the 15th. Again, the owner's son is saying that those who are protesting in the corner of the house and those whose hair has grown will also be laid off. Now we feel like we won't get three months' pay, and we don't think we will get fair pay either.

Again, our MD sir is doing me a lot of good in some places. He is raising my two children. He is supporting me a lot during the Corona period. I have been hearing about many factories closing after the quota movement, but I have heard that our factory is running well now. So why did you decide to close it now? I think there must be a reason behind it. One day, he called the mothers of the children in our daycare and had a meeting. In that meeting too, he said that he would pay us back. He wanted to know what the problem was in the daycare center, and after we told him, he made arrangements for it. That is why I think there must be a reason behind it. There are about 8,000 workers in our factory in 3 shifts. But not everyone came to the house to protest. Our factory seems to be a girls' school. All are female workers. A few staff members are only boys. The supervisors are also girls. So where did so many boys come from in this movement? We don't know many of them. They even charged 10 taka to rent a microphone. There are about 500 speech-impaired workers in our factory. There are visually impaired workers. There are about 1500 disabled workers in total. What will happen to them if the factory closes now? I am either healthy or I will find a job somewhere else. Now I am worried, will I get the money for the 10 years I have been working? Will they give it to me? We are also mothers of 95 children, who leave their children in daycare and work. Everyone is more or less greedy for money. Many of us have taken money by phone on one number. It is maternity money. My child is 4 years old, I have not received money from the factory. Many people are receiving money by phone, so I am also taking money by phone. It is called Reechi/Joui. It was a record name before, I do not know exactly.

There is a madam named Sabina next to our MD sir. She said that if you get the yellow seal, you cannot get a job anymore. They will do that to us. It is scary. We don't know that. We know that if you go to the federation and pay money and complain to the owner, you get sued. We don't even know that that gets sued. We thought that if you call them, they will give you maternity money. We didn't know that much. Everyone is greedy for money. I got 54,000 taka for 2 children. I got this money in September. There is no trade union in our factory. It was 6/7 years ago. I haven't seen it since. Local people also had no role in our movement. Journalists are making videos of the processions and movements. All our movements are basically to demand arrears of wages. I think there must be some political influence involved in it. When we called that number to collect money for the child, Sabina madam called me and told me a lot.

In the meantime, the MD sir came. Later, Sabina madam told the MD sir that she should see what the mothers of the children in your factory are doing! Later, he laughed and said, "He is doing this work because he is hungry." Nothing else bothered him. He is a very good person. It seems that the Awami League's propaganda was definitely fueling this. Now there is a lot of work coming into the factory. There is no time to go to the bathroom. There is work, and the work line is growing. But still he says that he will close the factory. He also says that he will fire the old workers. Now many orders are coming in but he is not taking orders. He also says that there are about 300 workers in my factory who are always causing trouble. We talked about it, check and sort them out. We used to get a lot of benefits in our factory. We want the factory not to close, but to be like before. There are

people in the factory whose entire operating expenses are paid by the owner. Even then, he went to Konabari and protested. He joined the Awami League again. Our Smriti Madam spoke to the owner and explained that he will not close the factory. I myself have spoken to the owner twice. He told us that I am alive because of the prayers of your children. That man will now close the factory! Maybe he has a lot of pain in his heart. He has taken such a decision for that.

Now we want the factory to run. He should select and expel those who cause trouble. We don't want the factory to close. If I misbehave in the meantime, he should expel me too. No problem. Even then, the factory should run. If this factory closes, out of 8,000 workers, 2,000 will get jobs, while the remaining 6,000 will become unemployed. And even if he expels all of us, let us get our fair share. Appoint an educated in-charge or supervisor. Our supervisor can't even write a leave form. He writes it for me. Replace them and appoint good, educated people. There is no more movement now. However, if our fair share is not paid, there will be another movement.

Transcript

Discussion with workers

Mondol Knit Wear
Zirabo Ashulia, 10.01.25

SL	Name	Designation
01	Aklima	Operator
02	Morjina	Operator

Aklima: The trouble in our factory started 3 months ago. That month, there was a shooting in our factory. Due to which our work was stopped. We were not allowed to enter the factory. Basically, the movement started in August. We had many demands, including the rate of wages, annual salary increase for the old workers, but not for the new workers, the water filter is not safe, the factory is not clean, the washroom is dirty and salary increase, and some other issues. The workers started the movement. At first, many stopped working and sat down, while many left the factory in a noisy manner. Later, the management came and asked us why we were not working. We did not say anything in response. If we spoke, we all spoke together. If there was a possibility that anyone would be fired if they spoke alone. They targeted them. We started sitting at the machines regularly instead of working. Then the management said that if they did not work at all, then we would give the factory a holiday. Later, the factory was closed for a few days. Then the movement continued in all the neighboring factories. We got in touch with the workers of other factories. They also told us that they had stopped working. They took to the streets, we also took to the streets. Later, our factory management wanted to know our demands. If not verbally, at least give them in writing.

Later, we wrote them down. But they did not accept our demands. Because they did not accept, we stopped working again. After seeing the work stoppage, they said that it was okay to accept the demands. If the other factories could accept, then we could too. Later, we started working. However, we demanded the removal of some staff. Those who behaved badly with us. Even if they did not remove them, they should stop behaving badly. After working for a few days, we saw that they were not accepting our demands.

Later, we stopped working again. We did not work, but we did not work. If we worked for 1 hour, we would sit for 2 hours. This continued. The movement continued. The police and army presence increased in the neighboring factories. The army forbade us from blocking the road. We went home without blocking the road. Later, we received news from another factory that the army would pour hot water on them. The factory in front of us, Natural Indico and Mangotex Ltd., was a mess.

The people of Natural started throwing bricks and stones at our factory, as if we were going out on the streets to protest with them after leaving work. But we were not allowed to go out. There were soldiers in our factory and they had hot water in their vehicles. We know that and saw that. Then the vandalism started outside. There was shooting. The soldiers shot to stop the workers. They probably thought that throwing one body would cool the situation.

The shooting took place on the streets. There was no shooting inside the compound. Someone from Mangotex was allegedly throwing bricks and stones at the army vehicle. Then the car was destroyed, and later I heard that he was killed by the army. Later, the company and others gave money to the family of the deceased. The next day, many people from our factory came. But no one was there for work. They went to see what happened yesterday, there was shooting, people died. When they saw us, they thought that it was the factory management. They were happy with our absence and gave everyone some money to eat breakfast. Then we started working as usual. There was no more trouble afterwards. No one died in the mandal due to this trouble. Approximately 1200-1300 workers work in the mandal. There are labor leaders in the factory, but we don't know if there is a trade union. The trouble has been going on in the factory for about 3 months. Now the situation is calm. 30-40 of the workers who were identified in the movement are out of work. We don't know exactly what they are doing now.

If we were to say anything on their behalf, it would be seen that we would lose our jobs. Many were dismissed in front of the army and sent away with some money. Because of which no one dared to say anything about them. Basically, everyone is protesting because our demands were not met. But we did not suffer any damage in the movement. None of us died. If someone says that people died in the mandal, that is completely false. However, there was shooting that day and some workers were injured that day. Again, to control the situation, the army took many workers in trucks. They took everyone, men and women. Among them were our factory workers. Later they were released. Some were released with their own money. It wouldn't have happened if they had trusted the owner. So we were released with our own money. No one was injured in our factory due to bullets.

Margina: None of us were harmed. Because when the shooting happened, we were inside the factory. Now the factory is running very well. There is no reason for the factory to close. Many of our demands have been accepted. There were 18 points of demand, several of which have been accepted. There was one incident, on the day the shooting happened, one of our workers went missing. Her name was Ayesha. Later I found out that another one named Rubel was also missing. Seeing this, the union and PC committee workers leaders became very angry. Everyone started a movement. We thought that Ayesha had been kidnapped by the owner of our factory, Rajiv and Sajeeb. She was missing for 3 days. She used to go to the front and speak in the movement. The factory owner would come and attack us whenever something happened. I don't know why. Our owner used to do Awami League gigs. Maybe Rajib-Sajeeb were his puppets. They used to do all this on their own for that. We formed a human chain with a banner with Ayesha and Rubel's picture. Later, how are they trying to find Ayesha and present her in front of us? And Ayesha does not come and speak for the workers, but speaks for them. Later, we understand that she is being pressured or intimidated to say these things. At one point in the conversation, Ayesha faints and falls to the ground. Then we understand how she was tortured. Later, she is treated and sent home.

Aklima: We had a GM who used to torture us a lot. Because of him, the staff also mistreated us. The staff could not even go to the toilet with us. When we stopped working, they kept sticks loaded in the canteen to beat us. To punish us, because we did not work, the staff cooked khichuri and fed it. They sit in the canteen with sticks to beat us. The building owners, Rajiv-Sajeeb, are doing this. They intimidate us so much that no one can go in front of the factory. After Ayesha and Rubel went missing, we only found Ayesha. We have not found any trace of Rubel. Ayesha has been given her dues. She is no longer working.

Rubel used to talk about her demands on the microphone. That is why they are targeting her. Those who know or understand the labor law well and talk about the law are thrown out by the management. If there is any trouble in the factory, the owner does not do anything or say anything. The building owner causes trouble. He hires a beater and beats her. The owner looks good to us. We protested around several of our demands, we also went out with them. We protested about these for 3 months. Now everything is calm. There is no trouble. Nothing was vandalized inside the factory. The road was blocked for only 1 day. But that was for about half an hour. We once heard that the building owner beat some of our workers a lot with a beater. None of us understand why the building owner beat them. Maybe there is a reason or a mystery. I don't know that. Nothing else happened.

Transcript

Discussion with workers

Mascot Garments

Zirabo Ashulia

10.01.25

	Name	Garments	Destignation
	Md. Rezaul Karim	Mascot	Loader
	Jewel	Mascot	Cutting Assistant

Jewel: The movement in our factory was basically about the delay in salary. We want the salary to be received by the 8th of every month. But the owner pays the salary on the 12th or after. We argued with them about this. The movement started in September. On the 8th, we went to the management to talk about the salary, they said, our salary will be paid on the 12th. Later we said that the rule is to pay the salary on the 7th/8th, if they pay the salary on the 12th, how many days will we eat? They said it is the owner's problem. We cannot pay. Later we said that we will talk to the owner, I have been working for almost 8 years, we have not seen the MD.

He does not come to us, does not listen to us. He does not listen to us if we have any problems, does not inquire about any staff misbehaving, does not inquire about anything. We want to ask the owner about the salary, when will we pay the salary, they said that they will not listen. What we are saying is that later one of us stood up and told everyone that we want to meet the MD sir. Later one of the management brought him down and behaved very badly with him. He said you have such courage, you will not have a job. This is where the trouble started. Later we decided that we will not keep him. He behaved badly with all of us. That is why we get late salary, he does not want to give medical leave, sick leave, after 3 days of leave he takes 1 day off and makes the rest absent. He also behaves badly with women. We started a movement about all this. Everyone broke the camera. Everyone went to look for that sir. After that everyone was angry. He even went to beat up a female employee. Later we had a floor manager, he went and took that sir out. Later the police came and the army came. They came and told us that we will be paid after lunch. They will pay us after lunch, then there was no need to make up so many stories. We did not want this mess. The people from the factory next door protested and lashed out, but we still didn't leave. If we lashed out too much, we would leave. Because if they beat us again later, why don't we leave? Mascot has no bad name. All the factory owners say that there is no one like Mascot. All the polapans are much better than Mascot. Later, many were told that the money would be deposited in everyone's account by Saturday. Later, when we came on Saturday, we found that Mascot was closed for an indefinite period. Later, we stayed there and asked why the garment factory was closed. We only wanted our

salary on time. We had no other demands. Later, a local policeman or army officer came and told us, you go, your factory will be opened on Tuesday without any trouble.

Later, after listening to them, we all left. Then on Tuesday, the locals, on one side of the Sawdan factory and on the other side of the Radiance Garments, had prepared thick wood. We came and sat there because our office would be opened. We want to work, we have no demands. After a while, the local army entered the mascot. We were outside. After a while, I saw those two garment workers coming towards us. With sticks, sticks, bricks and stones in their hands, with the intention of beating us. They had already prepared the local police to beat us. We did not come to protest. They thought we had come to protest. They started throwing bricks and stones at us. The army did not come out of the factory either. Finding no other way, we also went towards them. There were 3 women standing in front of our mascot. One threw a brick from the 6th floor, and one of them hit her on the head, killing the female worker instantly. Her name was Rokeya Begum.

She was bricked right in front of me. I did not even get the chance to move her. After the brick hit her, her nose, mouth and head burst and blood started coming out. There was no chance that we would move her from that place. Radiance Garments Hey people kept throwing bricks. Later he died while taking him to the hospital. They were the supply of Radiance masons. They were told, paid, so they started throwing bricks from above. Later on the other side, the army was running to control the situation. They did not help us. And there were no journalists that day. Journalists come after people die and after taking PM to the hospital. Later we want to take his body in front of the factory. We were stopped. We took him by force and demanded that this attack should be properly judged and investigated. We want to talk to our MD. We will only talk, we will not harm him.

Why would people from the neighboring office attack and beat us, we didn't harm them. Later we kept his body in front of the mascot. Later, senior army officers and senior police officers came. They said we are making arrangements to bring your MD sir. You don't do anything wrong. Arrange to bring MD sir. We just want justice for this incident. Later, at around 3 pm, 2 senior officials came, along with 3 MDs, along with the army. They called 5 people from each floor, we went with about 20 workers, we went and talked to them. We expressed our thoughts and anger to them. Why didn't they inquire about us for so long. Later, they said we made a mistake. Put your demands in writing. We will sit in a meeting with BGMEA about them. And the factory will be opened from Saturday. Later, people died and I asked about Hasna. They said they would talk to the owner of the factory. There was no one from DB here and said that it would be investigated. Later, the husband of the deceased Rokeya Begum was given 5 lakh taka. The army gave 25 thousand taka. And her body was taken to her village home in an army vehicle. And she had two sons and a daughter. The army said that all their education expenses would be borne by them. Later, a few of us went to the BGMEA meeting. The company took us in a car. There we presented 14 demands. Among them were leave money, maternity allowance, travel expenses, tiffin bill, attendance bonus, festival bonus, workers should not be laid off. There were several other demands. Then, the salary grade of our old and senior workers should be changed, salaries should be increased, and night bills should be paid. Later, these demands were largely accepted. The office was opened from Saturday, and later one day, the MD sir came to meet us. Later, he did not come again.

The next month, there was another movement over salaries. Workers work on our 4 floors. That month, they paid salaries only on 2 floors. The workers on the remaining 2 floors were not paid. Later, we stopped working. We did not do any vandalism. Later, Zia Sir from the management came. The police and the army came and asked us why we were sitting and stopping work like this. Later, we told them that money was given to 2 floors and money was not given to the remaining 2 floors. That is why everyone is upset. If you give money, everyone will have to pay it together. If you don't, no one will. A demand has been submitted from BGMEA. Everyone's salary should be paid by the 7th-8th. Then why is the salary being delayed again. Later, they said, don't stop work. We will see what can be done. Later, we said, we don't want a movement. We want to work, in return, we want salary on time. We have no profit by stopping work.

There was a sir in the admin, Arif Sir. He created all the trouble. We wanted his release during the movement. He was the one who caused trouble over salary. He delayed the salary. The workers got angry because of him and started a movement. The company will get 7 million taka from him. He withheld all the salary and retirement money. Later, he was transferred to the head office after facing the fire of the workers. GMs of some floors have been asked to be removed. They treat the workers very badly. They abuse women and even touch them. Now the movement has stopped. If there is any problem, they call us. Call us and give us advice. More than 3000 workers work in Mascot Garments. The factory does not allow unionization. Even then, we unionized with great difficulty. Even now, the papers have not come. However, I can do union work. Due to which my salary does not increase. Let's talk about the rights of workers. No one's job will be lost due to this movement. It was our demand that no one's job should be lost. There was no vandalism in the factory. Only CCTV cameras and the door of the admin sir's room were rented on the 3rd and 6th floors. We did not vandalize outside.

A few days later, my wife went to a shop near the Sawdan factory to buy something. Some people from Sawdan beat her a lot with sticks. They said that she had come to protest. But she did not go to protest. They beat her with rods and abused her in foul language. Hey, there was so much trouble, the hired men of Sawdan and Radiance Garments attacked us unexpectedly, we think there must be some internal reason behind it. There were no journalists on the day of the main event. The army was also deployed, and then we were attacked. Someone must be inside. The owner of Sawdan always keeps hired men standing in front of his house with sticks and clubs. We asked the journalists where you were on the day we were killed. They said they didn't get the news. But we think there could be some other reason behind it. There must be some mystery behind it. But we haven't found that mystery. It seems to us that there is some politics here.

Everything was arranged in advance. It was a planned attack on us. Again, 4-5 days after the death of our worker, the Radiance people came and broke the glass of our factory with stones. All the neighboring factories are angry with our mascot. Why don't we join the movement with them? The owner of Sawdan was an Awami League MP. We think the owners themselves are causing these troubles. There was no proper trial for the death of one of our workers. Later, the day the Radiance people attacked, the BGB was there, they saw the whole incident. They also told the army that the mascot workers were not at fault. The Radiance people were the ones who threw bricks and stones

first. Even after all the trouble, the atmosphere in our factory calmed down very quickly. Because our main purpose was not to protest.

Rezaul: The union people are helping to calm the workers. Some union people may be taking money to calm the workers. Some of them may have formed a political party.

Jewel: I was once threatened by someone from our factory. He said that if I talked too much, he would hand me over to the police. He used to support the Awami League. But now that they don't have a party, I still don't tell him anything. They have accepted our demand for annual increment, but many factories still haven't. There are still problems in them. We want all the problems to be resolved quickly. Because if there is a Ganjam, there will be fights, people will die, and the factory will be damaged. We don't want all this.

Transcript

FGD With TU Leaders

Ashulia
14/01/2025

Participants

SL	Name	TUF	Position
1	Md. Al Kamran	SBGSKF	President
2	Shamim Hossain	BNTUF	Organizer
3	Md. Shahadat Hossain Shapon	NKGLF	President
4	Md. Masud Rana Sultan	National Federation	General Secretary
5	Md. Masud Rana	BGTLWF	Organizing Secretary
6	Md. Foridul Islam	NGWF	Vice-President

Kamran: After the new government came to power, the workers of EPZ in Ashulia started a movement. Because women were given more opportunities, men had less opportunities. The movement created solidarity in the area. After two or three days, it spread to the workers of NASA Group. Then the workers of Ashulia raised their demands. As the days went by, the demands increased. It started at 2 pm but by the end it increased to 10-15 pm/ The movement of NASA workers stopped their activities due to their demands for tiffin bill, night bill. At first they went inside the factory but later they went outside, but on the third day they ran well. The movement was very different from the previous movements. The previous movement was for national demands such as wages, which are applicable to everyone. After the fall of the government, the workers have come out of the oppression they have been subjected to for so long and have not got the right to speak. Solidarity has been created regarding the sale and purchase of jute. The owners themselves are not selling jute and are fueling the trouble. They are losing control. After the workers' demands were announced, such messages are heard among all the workers that the demands have been justified. Due to the demands of the workers, the factory owners, including the labor leaders, regional leaders, have suffered a lot. There is no labor leader who has given the message to the workers that they will stop the movement, which has created more chaos.

Kamal: Solidarity has increased due to the NASA Group's mistake because they have promoted it through TikTok, which is not the right way to express complaints. Solidarity has increased due to the NASA Group's misbehavior and taking extra time.

#Wages have increased towards the end of 2023. What happens if wages increase again after 6 months? Which will create concern. If it continues to increase like this, we really have to think about what the situation in the garment industry could be in the future. Currently, the biggest weakness of the labor union is that they are not united. Working together can do good things.

Md. Masud Rana Sultan: Workers become extremists due to wrong messages that reach through labor leaders. They do this due to lack of law. Most labor leaders tend to spread rumors. Workers themselves do not understand the law. Lack of unity among workers. Everyone is busy achieving their own demands. Workers are laid off at one stage. The movements are contagious. Problems created in one factory spread to others.

Masud Rana: We organized labor from 2000 to 2004. But now we have joined again. We used to help each other in the past. And now everyone is busy harming each other. There is a great lack of knowledge among labor leaders.

Reasons for instability in the garment industry: All these instability have arisen due to political reasons. After losing power after 16 long years, they have lost their power and created instability in the society.

Farid: The movement is the wind of change. During the previous government, their allies ruled and exploited the workers. After their fall, the movement started in the factories. Because they are deprived. EPZ and the movement were created. The main reason for that movement was the issue of gender inequality, only the jute traders. By creating trouble among the jute traders, the past improved themselves and took advantage. As a result, after the change, the workers did not want to stay under anyone's shadow. They wanted freedom from exploitation. The administration also made some mistakes. They controlled with a strong hand. They did not improve the quality of food, which has created various sufferings and created disunity. Which is damaging to business and industry, creating a bad name for Bangladesh in the outside world. I think all these are the creation of political leaders. Some workers were thrown out and blacklisted. Then I helped with human ties. But the administration accepted. However, they did not call the workers to work. At one point, they started a movement and the workers and the industry and the police created a ruckus at the factory gate. I was also arrested. I allegedly incited the workers. The workers did not have any demands, but they wanted to remove the people in positions. The situation in the country started to deteriorate. Traffic jams were created in the area. The administration's cooperation was limited to this movement, but the army was there to help. Even though the workers' salaries increased, the torture increased. Disunity was created. We have brought many political leaders to realize the interests of the workers, but we have no hand in any disunity. The jute traders have a hand in it. The vice chairmen are the reason for creating these problems. They incite the workers. When Shahadat Hossain spoke against the workers' organization, he incited the workers. The summoning youth gang group Rony Bhuiyan started a procession with firearms. They tortured the workers'

leaders and their aim was to kill the workers. As a result of the political conflict, the workers fled. The administration did not take action. Indifference to their work. I was arrested. I was insulted. And our pictures, videos, and were given to the RMG Group. (Arrested - Sarwar, Bachchu, Alamin and Farid)

Those who work in Ashulia factory do not get work in Gazipur. Currently, political leaders have exploited the workers as before. There was sexual harassment in the factory. Three workers protested and their salaries were stopped. "Lusaka Group". They went on strike. 5 people including the victim were thrown out. The real victims are not getting justice.

SL	Factory	Political affiliation	TU?
1	Nasa group	Awamileague	No
2	Al-Muslim	BNP	No
3	Natural Indigo		No
4	Mandol Knitwear	Awamileague	No
5	Mango Text		No
6	Mascot		No
7	Dekko Agami	Awamileague	Yes
8	Lusaka apperels		Yes

Kamrul: After August 5, the role of the labor organization could not be played. The administration's cooperation was not complete. That is why we also did not take any steps to stop the movement. The previous leaders took advice from us, but the current owners or leaders did not take any advice and increased the problems in our labor organization by creating groupings. Political issues have increased. Currently, Jamaat-e-Islam has provided unions. For example, it has provided unions in Incepta companies. Due to lack of coordination, problems in factories are increasing day by day. When regional problems arise, meetings were needed quickly.

We are paid 12,000 thousand but 25,000 thousand is taken from the buyers. So the workers leave after doing half-time duty because their salaries are paid half.

Shofiul: The way the layoffs are increasing day by day. The laid-off workers are protesting together. The laid-off workers are not getting new jobs properly. They are going to be blacklisted. This torture started since 2006.

Demand 1- Banks must be supported.

Claim 2- The government is closing the bank - it must be opened

Qamrul: There was an army meeting in Beximco yesterday, but other regions were given more priority than our region. After laying off the factory, the owner has two objectives. How long will one factory run, and the other factory is closed. The layoff has been going on for about a month. But they don't care. They can say how long it will take to open it. And if they close it, 42,000 workers will lose their jobs and create problems.

Reason:

- New trade union
- Awami League miscreants are responsible
- Problems with controlling the jute business, political reasons
- Workers have been given an opportunity
- Law and order forces' indifference and trade unions could not intervene

Farid: After the 5th, the NGO and others sat with the workers, but they did not pay any attention to the workers. They sat with them because the workers were protesting. In the last election, we supported the Independent Party because they wanted to build a hospital for the workers.

Masud Rana: I worked to achieve the rights of NASA workers. In 22-23, the workers' money was deposited in the factory. In October 23, there was supposed to be a meeting with the workers and owners. But I was arrested and no money was paid to the workers.

Salam Hossain is responsible for framing me.

Sultan: All the army personnel who are in charge should work on an equal footing with the workers' leaders and trade unions. But here the administration's approach was firm.