



22 November 2018

Press Release

Trade Union leaders call for commitments to ensure effective compensation for workers in the election manifestos of political parties contending for the upcoming general election

Trade Union leaders voiced this demand at a seminar on ‘Effective Compensation For Deaths and Injuries Caused by Accidents in the Workplace’, organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) on 22 November 2018 at the CIRDAP Auditorium, on the occasion of six years of the Tazreen Fashions tragedy.

Md Borkot Ali, Deputy Director (Legal), BLAST discussed provisions for compensation under existing labour laws and highlighted how these provisions, in reality, do not amount to adequate compensation. He explained that Taka 2 lakhs, the amount currently awarded in compensation for deaths caused by accidents at the workplace, is hardly sufficient. He also mentioned that the Labour Court has the discretion to order additional sums in compensation where it considers the fixed amount to be inadequate, but this discretion is rarely exercised..

Taqbir Huda, Research Specialist, BLAST conducted a presentation on High Court judgments and guidelines on compensation. He highlighted the grounds and factors taken into consideration by the court when deciding compensation. He mentioned that the amount of compensation awarded should be directly proportional to the worker’s wage, and that the lower the worker’s age, the higher the compensation should be in order for it to be adequate. High court directives on compensation were discussed in light of the Catherine Masood case, Bangladesh Beverage case and MV Nasreen launch capsized case.

Abul Kalam Azad, Joint General Secretary, Trade Union Center, remarked that labour organisations should support each other and work with the unity which will help promote their legitimate claims for compensation.

Tayebur Rahman, Project Coordinator, WEARS, BLAST, presented the mobile app ‘Shromik Jiggasha’ and explained how workers can benefit from this app.

Justice A F Abdur Rahman, Former Justice of High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Member, Board of Trustees, BLAST, commented that the amount of compensation awarded to workers remains evidently inadequate today, even after repeated amendments made to the Labour Act 2006. Even in the 2018 amendment, there is little reflection of the High Court directives beyond a provision to increase workplace compensation. . If any party does not comply with any of the High Court directives, the aggrieved party may file a petition against them for contempt of court. He also suggested that a public hearing should be organised with different stakeholders in order to take workable steps to achieve fair compensation for workers.

Justice Nizamul Huq, Former Justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Chief Legal Advisor, BLAST said that this discussion unveils new perspectives in the area of compensation. He stressed that BLAST will continue its efforts to bring about policy reforms to ensure sufficient and proportionate compensation for workers.



Dr Hameeda Hossain, eminent human rights activist and Convenor of the Workers' Safety Forum, remarked that the monetary compensation provided to workers injured during the Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashions disasters were grants at best, and could not be considered adequate compensation. Although the committee on compensation for victims of the Rana Plaza incident, set up under High Court orders, had proposed an award of Taka 15 lakh each in compensation, this is yet to be implemented. She recommended that it would be a good initiative to urge all election candidates and political parties to protect workers' right to compensation during their campaigns prior to the election date.

Sikander Ali Mian, Executive Director, Safety and Rights Forum, spoke about matters related to issues of workplace safety.

Noushin Shafinaz Shah, National Programme Officer, ILO stated that dialogue between employers and workers, and efforts to set up a permanent employment injury insurance scheme have been underway, but employers have yet to respond to the idea. .

Md Zafrul Hassan, Executive Director, BILS, highlighted the need to follow international standards when awarding compensation and imposed on the necessity of implementing insurance schemes for the workers. He also invited everyone to make good use of the upcoming election by urging political parties to uphold and legitimise workers' right to compensation.

To commemorate the Tazreen Fashions tragedy, BLAST, with the Workers' Safety Forum, will observe one minute of silence and lay wreaths in honour of the deceased at the Jurain graveyard at 9 am on 24 November 2018. BLAST has also participated in a rally and human chain in front of the National Press Club at 10:30 am today and will continue to do so in different parts of the country to commemorate the day. BLAST representatives will further take part in demands to ensure a safe working environment for workers, free of sexual harassment against women workers and other forms of discrimination, and to ensure that workers receive adequate compensation for workplace accidents leading to injuries or death in the course of employment.

For further information, please Contact:

Mahbuba Akhter

Deputy Director (Advocacy and Communication), BLAST

Email: mahbuba@blast.org.bd