



# LABOUR MANIFESTO

Securing national-level political commitments on labour issues and ensuring their inclusion in the manifestos of political parties in the National Parliamentary Election 2026

**National Advocacy Alliance for Workers' Rights**

(A joint platform of national trade union federations and labour rights organisations)

**Expectations of Working People from Political Parties and Civil Society  
in the 2026 National Parliamentary Election**

# **Labour Manifesto**

**for**

**Ensuring Social Justice through Dignity, Rights, and Protection of Workers**

## **Introduction**

For decades, the working people of Bangladesh have been subjected to various forms of deprivation, exploitation, and discrimination. These conditions have persistently hindered social progress, weakened the national economy, obstructed the establishment of social justice, and undermined efforts to build a dignified Bangladesh. In the struggle to eliminate discrimination, secure freedom from exploitation, protect rights, and ensure fair entitlements, working people have stood shoulder to shoulder with the general population of this country. They sacrificed their lives in the Language Movement of 1952; the mass uprisings of 1966 and 1969; the popular movements of 1990 and 2024; and they played a heroic role in the armed struggle of the Great Liberation War of 1971, shedding their blood to secure the country's independence. Over the past decade and a half, hundreds of workers have again laid down their lives in anti-fascist movements, becoming active participants in a historic transformation.

As a consequence of these struggles, Bangladesh today stands at the threshold of a new phase of change. The forthcoming national parliamentary election is not merely an election to change power. Rather, it represents a crucial opportunity to address long-standing inequalities, undemocratic practices, systems of deprivation, economic paralysis caused by plunder, processes of de-industrialisation, and externally dependent industrialisation. Through overcoming these challenges, the election offers the prospect of establishing a strong and sustainable economic system, ensuring social justice, and above all, fulfilling the pledge to build a discrimination-free Bangladesh. Without eliminating inequality, deprivation, and insecurity in the world of work, it is impossible to eradicate social inequality or to establish social justice. For the successful culmination of the long struggle to

realise the commitment to a discrimination-free Bangladesh, the leadership of political parties, together with coordinated and sincere collective efforts, is indispensable.

Realising the aspirations of working people is a political responsibility, and political parties today have a historic opportunity to fulfil that responsibility. The hopes and dreams of Bangladesh's working people surrounding the forthcoming election can be realised only through the genuine political will of political parties. Building a dignified and just Bangladesh for all, and establishing social justice, fundamentally requires political commitment, led by the country's political parties. It is imperative that the process of building a fair Bangladesh for working people through political commitment and goodwill begin without delay.

One of the most severe manifestations of inequality in Bangladeshi society lies in the labour sector. In a country with approximately 75 million working people, nearly 85 per cent of workers are engaged in the informal economy. The vast majority of workers lack legal recognition, fixed wages, and social protection, resulting in their deprivation of fair entitlements. The absence of effective rights to organise and to bargain collectively deprives workers of their legitimate rights and dues and disrupts sound industrial relations. Industrial zones are being established without ensuring minimum civic and social services. Due to shortsighted and flawed government policies, inadequate planning, and mismanagement, long-established and traditional industries are being forced to shut down. Workers continue to lose their lives in workplace accidents, yet there is no justice for such deaths caused by negligence, and compensation remains unreasonably low. Wage disparities, discrimination in maternity benefits, and inequalities in many other areas persist and are widening. Migrant workers, women workers, indigenous workers, and workers with disabilities face compounded and intensified forms of deprivation. A national minimum wage has yet to be determined. The free and effective development of trade unions and the healthy practice of collective bargaining are being constrained in various ways. The dignity of labour and of workers has been reduced to rhetoric. Internationally, Bangladesh has come to be known as a country of cheap labour.

Workers are increasingly being forced to find employment on their own in an evolving labour market. New forms of work are emerging, including freelancing through digital platforms, transport services, and the delivery of food and other goods, where millions of young people are working without any legal protection. At the same time, in a country with a large number of unemployed and underemployed people, more than 2.2 million new entrants join the labour force each year. This has intensified competition for livelihoods to an extreme degree. Exploiting this situation, widespread labour exploitation has become inevitable, while the State lacks any comprehensive plan to utilise the expanding youth workforce—the demographic dividend—effectively. Conversely, due to the absence of adequate employment opportunities at home, a significant number of workers are compelled to migrate abroad, where they are forced to undertake hazardous and risky work for lower wages compared to workers from other countries. Every day, the dead bodies of Bangladeshi migrant workers are returned home.

According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, one of the fundamental principles of State policy is the emancipation of the working people from all forms of exploitation. Article 14 of the Constitution commits the State to the liberation of "toiling masses—the peasants and workers—and the backward sections of the people from all forms of exploitation." Work is recognised as a matter of right and dignity for able-bodied citizens (Article 20). The Constitution further guarantees the provision of basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education, and healthcare; employment at reasonable wages; reasonable rest, recreation, and leisure; and the right to social security (Article 15). It pledges to eliminate economic inequality among citizens and ensure equality of opportunity (Article 19), prohibits all forms of forced labour (Article 34), and guarantees every citizen the right to form associations or unions (Article 38). The Proclamation of Independence pledged to establish equality, human dignity, and social justice for the people of Bangladesh. The July Proclamation acknowledged the contribution of workers' organisations and reaffirmed the commitment to building a democratic State and a society based on the rule of

law, human rights, freedom from corruption and exploitation, equality, and shared values.

As a Member State of the United Nations, Bangladesh is a signatory to numerous international treaties and instruments and is bound to fulfil the obligations arising from them. In particular, as a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangladesh is obligated to uphold and protect international labour standards. For the past 25 years, Bangladesh has also been a participating country in the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme. Bangladesh has made international commitments concerning human rights; women, children, and migrant workers; LDC graduation; corporate social responsibility; and economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. Although Bangladesh has ratified all ten ILO core conventions, national laws have not been adequately enacted or amended in line with those instruments. For example, in accordance with ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, the rights of workers to organise and to bargain collectively are still not fully guaranteed by national law. Legal restrictions remain, and structural complexities continue to impede the process. As a result, more than 80 per cent of workers remain deprived of their fundamental right to organise. Bangladesh has committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Proper implementation of commitments undertaken through the SDGs and other international instruments will significantly advance the country's development trajectory.

Numerous challenges lie ahead. Automation, artificial intelligence, and other technological changes, along with climate change, pose serious risks of instability and deterioration in future employment prospects in Bangladesh. Income inequality has widened, primarily due to wage disparities and the absence of social protection.

Bangladesh has already achieved some notable progress, particularly in the garment sector and with respect to women workers. However, in the absence of appropriate policies and sustained support, these gains have not become durable. Bangladesh is progressing towards graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. Incidents such as the Rana Plaza disaster have

tarnished the country's reputation, while at the same time, joint initiatives such as the Accord and the Alliance have created positive examples of improved safety in the garment sector. Similar progress, however, has not been achieved in other industries and labour sectors. In this context, we believe that further reforms in the labour sector are essential in the coming days.

It is noteworthy that the Labour Reform Commission, formed under the initiative of the interim government, has submitted a set of recommendations titled *Transforming the World of Work: A Visionary Roadmap* to the government on the basis of consensus. The government has already undertaken specific priority-based actions to implement these recommendations. At the same time, the Workers–Employees Unity Council (SKOP), which has played a leading role in the labour movement in Bangladesh, has been conducting various programmes for an extended period to realise its nine-point demands.

Against this backdrop, we— **the National Advocacy Alliance for Workers' Rights**— representing trade unions, workers' organisations and their various coalitions, as well as organisations, institutions, and individuals working to promote workers' rights and welfare, respectfully submit the following proposals on behalf of the working people of Bangladesh. These proposals are grounded in the recommendations of the Labour Reform Commission and the nine-point demands of SKOP. We urge political parties to incorporate them into their election manifestos as firm commitments and expect that, in the post-election period, the elected government—through the active cooperation and participation of working people—will take effective and concrete measures to ensure the full implementation of all the proposals outlined below.

## Proposals

### 1. Ensuring Legal Recognition, Registration, and Protection for All Workers through Necessary Amendments to Labour Laws:

- a. Legal recognition and protection should be ensured for all workers, including those in the formal and informal sectors, agriculture, home-based work, migrant labour, outsourcing arrangements, self-employment, and the service sector.
- b. Appointment letters and identity cards should be ensured for all workers in both the formal and informal sectors, and identity documentation should be provided for self-employed workers.
- c. On an urgent basis, a **National Labour Force Registration System and Integrated Labour Database** should be established to ensure occupational recognition and social security for all workers, including those in the informal and self-employed sectors.

### 2. Ensuring the Right to and Opportunities for Decent and Dignified Work

#### 2.1 Recognition of Basic Needs, Employment, and Social Security as Fundamental Rights:

- a. In line with Article 15 of the Constitution, which guarantees citizens' access to food, clothing, shelter, education, health-care, employment at reasonable wages, reasonable rest, recreation, leisure, and social security, these rights should be explicitly recognised as fundamental rights of workers. A national-level, integrated, and specific action plan should be formulated to ensure their effective implementation.
- b. At the same time, universal national standards should be developed to ensure maximum working-hour limits, occupational safety, fair entitlements, and effective remedies in cases of rights violations.

## **2.2 Ending Temporary Employment in Outsourced, Daily-Based, and Permanent Work:**

- a. Temporary appointments in permanent posts or jobs should be discontinued, and effective measures should be taken to prevent the growing trend of informalisation of employment through temporary, agency-based, or outsourced recruitment.
- b. Outsourcing should be discontinued across all public and private institutions, including banks and insurance companies, as well as state-owned and autonomous bodies.
- c. Measures should be taken to discontinue daily-based recruitment in educational institutions, hospitals, and other establishments.

## **2.3 Ensuring Job Security and Livelihood Protection for Working People:**

- a. Legal provisions and national policies should be introduced to regulate factory closures, lay-offs, and retrenchments that may affect employment. Such actions should require prior approval from the proposed National Labour Commission and/or the labour administration.
- b. No eviction of self-employed workers— including rickshaw pullers, battery-powered rickshaw and easy-bike operators, and street vendors— should take place without rehabilitation. The destruction or confiscation of livelihood assets, such as fishing nets or rickshaws, should be stopped. In enforcing the law, legal and administrative action should prioritise holding employers accountable rather than penalising workers.
- c. To ensure workers' well-being and productivity, the statutory eight-hour working day should be effectively enforced across all industries, sectors, specialised labour zones, and forms of employment, whether formal or informal, profit-oriented or non-profit. Workplaces requiring extended hours should be reorganised into eight-hour shift systems.

- d. During periods of unemployment, workers should be supported through re-skilling and up-skilling initiatives to enable access to alternative employment. In this regard, employment opportunities should be created by integrating affected workers into government development programmes.

#### **2.4 Taking Specific Measures to Eliminate Forced Labour, Compulsory Labour, and Modern Slavery:**

- a. Appropriate and effective measures should be taken to eliminate forced labour. In addition to the formal sector, high-risk informal labour sectors where forced labour and modern slavery exist or may exist should be identified through systematic surveys. A time-bound national action plan should be adopted to eradicate forced labour and modern slavery from all identified sectors.
- b. The Bangladesh Labour Act should explicitly define forced labour and modern slavery and ensure appropriate punitive provisions.
- c. Export-oriented industries, along with their informal suppliers and indirect supply-chain actors, should be identified, and necessary measures should be taken to eliminate forced labour and modern slavery throughout supply chains. Labour inspection checklists should be updated in line with internationally recognised indicators of modern slavery.

#### **2.5 Taking Initiatives for Employment Generation and Skills Development:**

- a. The National Employment Policy 2022 should be updated to address unemployment and expand employment opportunities both domestically and abroad. Specific strategies and action plans should be developed to ensure the effective utilisation of the labour force.
- b. To address the challenges and opportunities arising from automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, initiatives should be taken to develop short-, medium-, and long-term roadmaps for creating a skilled workforce, with special emphasis on productive youth labour and entrepreneurship.

- c. Special initiatives should be undertaken to promote labour-intensive industries, industrial and product diversification, small and medium enterprise development, protection of traditional home-based and family industries, and the establishment of industries based on domestic raw materials. A national employment-oriented industrial development plan should be formulated accordingly.
- d. Skill development centres should be upgraded, new centres should be established at district and sub-district levels, and foreign language education should be made mandatory for interested students in all public and private technical and vocational education institutions.
- e. All forms of government incentives and tax concessions should be linked to employment generation.
- f. Regular monitoring mechanisms should be established through coordination among the National Skills Development Authority, academic institutions, industrial and business organisations, and trade unions.
- g. Support should be provided to develop skills related to industrial management, global business operations, and negotiation.

## **2.6 Promoting National Industries and Revitalising the State-Owned Industrial Sector:**

- a. Initiatives should be taken to reopen closed state-owned jute mills, sugar mills, steel mills, hardboard factories, textile mills, and other public enterprises. Planned modernisation of jute mills, sugar mills, tanneries, and other potential industries should be undertaken in consultation with, and with the participation of, workers' representatives.
- b. A white paper should be prepared through an objective analysis of industrial, development, and employment policies to identify the underlying causes of the closure of state-owned industries.
- c. Lease arrangements should be cancelled, and closed public factories, including jute mills, should be reopened under

state supervision. Closed factories should be transformed into diversified, labour-intensive industries based on local needs and raw materials, in order to create employment opportunities for displaced workers.

- d. Previous recommendations made by trade unions, experts, and institutions regarding the effective operation of jute mills should be reviewed, and an integrated action plan should be adopted and implemented to ensure the sustainability of the jute industry and jute cultivation. Effective measures should also be taken to develop the tannery, footwear, agro-based, flower, and fruit-processing industries.
- e. Training and re-training opportunities should be provided for workers of closed factories and employable members of their families, with priority given to the re-employment of displaced workers and their dependants.

### **2.7 Expanding Apprenticeship Programmes**

Apprenticeship programmes should be widely implemented to provide career support for the labour force before and after entry into the labour market. This process should involve educational institutions from the higher secondary level onwards, as well as employers and training institutions.

### **2.8 Ensuring Sustainable Industrialisation, Productivity, and Inclusive Development:**

A comprehensive and planned action framework should be adopted to promote national industrial development, sustainable and labour-intensive industrialisation, entrepreneurship, and productivity, while encouraging social enterprises. An inter-ministerial task force should be formed, and regular coordination mechanisms should be institutionalised among the National Skills Development Authority, educational institutions, and relevant national and international organisations. Investment policies should be formulated with due emphasis on the agricultural sector.

### **3. Ensuring Fair Wages for All Workers that Uphold Human Dignity and Enable a Decent and Progressive Life**

#### **3.1 Ensuring National, Sectoral, and Occupation-Based Wages:**

- a. Wages are to be recognised as a fundamental right, and fair wages are to be established as a national priority through explicit and binding political commitments.
- b. In order to guarantee workers and their families a dignified and life-enhancing income, legally binding standards for national and sector-based minimum wages are to be established, together with the formal declaration of a National Minimum Wage. In determining the national minimum wage, the concept of a living wage, capable of ensuring a dignified standard of living and opportunities for human development, is to be adopted as the guiding benchmark.
- c. Taking the national minimum wage as the reference point, differentiated minimum wages are to be fixed for specific sectors and occupations, taking into account the nature of work, sector-specific requirements and challenges, occupational risks, and regional variations.
- d. The universal national minimum wage is to be reviewed and re-determined at three-year intervals, while annual adjustments are to be made in line with inflation, essential service costs, and changes in living standards.
- e. The early ratification of the ILO Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131) is urged.

#### **3.2 Eliminating Wage Inequality:**

- a. Effective measures are required to reduce disparities between the highest and lowest wages within wage structures and to ensure a fair and balanced wage hierarchy.
- b. Targeted policy initiatives are to be undertaken to narrow wage gaps between the public and private sectors.

- c. Equal remuneration for work of equal value is to be made legally enforceable for all workers, including women, men, persons with disabilities, and indigenous workers.
- d. (d) In the case of piece-rate or contract-based employment, wage-setting mechanisms are to be designed in such a manner that a worker can earn at least the minimum wage within a standard eight-hour working day.

### **3.3 Mandatory Emergency Wage Funds and Wage Insurance:**

- a. To safeguard workers against wage arrears, provision is to be made for the establishment of an emergency wage fund in all enterprises, requiring employers to deposit an amount equivalent to two months' wages for their workforce. In parallel, national emergency and contingency funds are to be established to ensure the continuity of wage payments, workers' entitlements, and production during domestic or global crises, natural disasters, pandemics, or sudden business disruptions. Appropriate mechanisms are also to be introduced to ensure compensation for workers in cases of unpaid wages.
- b. A National Wage Guarantee Insurance Scheme is to be introduced to enable the payment of wages where enterprises fail to meet wage obligations or where workers are retrenched.

## **4. Ensuring Safe and Healthy Working Conditions and Adequate Compensation**

### **4.1 Ensuring Safe Working Environments for All Workers:**

- a. The legal entitlement of all workers to safe and healthy working conditions, together with access to appropriate health-care services, is to be fully recognised and enforced.
- b. In conformity with international labour standards, unified and sector-specific National Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Standards, along with corresponding action plans, are to be developed and operationalised.

- c. In cases where workplace accidents occur due to negligence, legal provisions are to ensure the imposition of maximum penalties and fines on employers. At the same time, officials entrusted with workplace safety responsibilities are to be held accountable and subjected to disciplinary and legal action for dereliction of duty.
- d. Occupational health and safety policies are to be systematically revised and updated in order to address emerging challenges, including artificial intelligence, digitalisation, online platforms, pandemics such as COVID-19, communicable diseases, and the impacts of global climate change.
- e. A time-bound and results-oriented action plan is to be formulated to operationalise the National Industrial Health and Safety Council, with provisions for the inclusion of sector-specific experts as council members where necessary.
- f. For effective coordination among relevant authorities and oversight of implementation, the establishment of an independent Occupational Safety and Health Administration/Authority is required, with responsibility for monitoring and enforcing OSH policies, laws, regulations, and the national action plan (2021–2030).
- g. Accident prevention requires the development of an integrated inspection mechanism through structured coordination among the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, the Department of Explosives, the Boiler Inspectorate, the Fire Service, the Electricity Authority, and other relevant agencies.
- h. Area-based health centres for informal-sector workers and satellite clinics in labour-intensive zones are to be established to ensure accessible healthcare services aligned with workers' needs and working hours.
- i. Specialised OSH units or clinics dedicated to occupational diseases are to be established in industrial zones across all districts, as well as in major public and private hospitals.

- j. Occupational safety and health education is to be incorporated into medical education, with dedicated OSH components included in the academic curricula of doctors, nurses, and medical technicians.
- k. Labour Welfare Centres under the Department of Labour are to be modernised through the provision of qualified medical personnel, adequate staffing, and appropriate equipment, enabling the delivery of healthcare services, treatment for occupational diseases, counselling, and access to essential medicines at affordable prices.
- l. Following workplace accidents, independent and impartial investigation committees are to be constituted in all industrial establishments, and comprehensive investigation reports are to be publicly disclosed.
- m. Continuous research on occupational health and safety is to be undertaken under a National OSH Research and Training Institute, alongside the establishment of a centralised national OSH database.
- n. A specialised laboratory is to be established for the identification and diagnosis of occupational diseases among workers.

#### **4.2 Increasing Compensation for Workplace Accidents**

Given that existing compensation provisions under labour law are inadequate, compensation levels are to be revised upward and a clearly defined minimum threshold is to be introduced. Compensation standards are to be determined through a tripartite mechanism, taking into account ILO Convention No. 121 and the recommendations of the High Court-appointed committee on financial assistance for Rana Plaza victims.

#### **4.3 Justice for Workplace Accidents, Public Disclosure of Investigation Reports, and Institutional Measures:**

- a. Judicial processes relating to workplace accidents are to be ensured, investigation reports are to be made public, and corrective actions are to be taken in accordance with the findings and recommendations given in those reports.

- b. Institutional frameworks dedicated to improving workplace safety are to be strengthened and expanded to ensure sustained enforcement and oversight.

## **5. Social Security and Welfare**

### **5.1 Taking Institutional Measures to Ensure Social Security:**

- a. Measures should be taken to ensure that all workers are able to exercise their universal right to social security, including protection against workplace accidents, death, disability, illness, retirement-related risks, maternity, and other adverse contingencies.
- b. In order to secure protection throughout workers' working lives, retirement, and future well-being, and to safeguard the welfare of workers and their families, a rights-based and life-cycle-based social protection system needs to be established. To this end, a comprehensive social protection law covering all workers—formal, informal, self-employed, agricultural, and those engaged in small and cottage industries—should be enacted. This framework should include the introduction of social insurance schemes and the creation of a mandatory social security fund to which employers, the State, and workers contribute jointly according to their respective capacities.
- c. Under the National Pension Scheme, worker-friendly arrangements should be introduced by integrating factories and establishments in the formal sector, accompanied by special government incentives for participating enterprises. At the same time, appropriate measures need to be taken to expand access for informal-sector workers through State subsidies and co-contribution mechanisms.
- d. Adequate budgetary allocations should be made for employment programmes targeting seasonal and unemployed workers, and provisions need to be introduced for unemployment benefits during periods of joblessness.

## **5.2 Ensuring Social Protection for Working People, Including Rationing, Housing, and Healthcare:**

- a. Subsidised rationing facilities should be ensured for working people in both rural and urban areas, along with the gradual provision of housing for all. Until a formal rationing system is introduced, access to essential commodities for workers needs to be ensured through permanent fair-price shops operated by TCB and through Open Market Sales (OMS) in major cities, factories, and industrially concentrated areas.
- b. Medical treatment facilities and long-term allowances following workplace accidents or illness should be ensured. Workers who are injured or rendered disabled as a result of accidents require lifelong medical care, maintenance support, and rehabilitation arrangements.
- c. Industrial- and industrial-zone-based dormitories and day-care centres need to be established for women workers.
- d. Hospitals equipped with diagnostic services should be established in every industrial zone for working people. Based on workers' needs, hospitals should also introduce free evening healthcare services.
- e. A Workers' Health Card system should be introduced to protect workers' health and to facilitate access to health records and entitled services. In addition, a 24-hour toll-free telemedicine service should be provided to enable workers to receive health advice at any time.
- f. The prompt ratification of the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), is strongly urged.

## **5.3 Ensuring Civic Amenities in Industrial and Labour-Intensive Areas and Establishing Labour Welfare Centres:**

- a. Civic amenities and services for workers and their families in industrial areas—including education, healthcare, housing, health insurance, road infrastructure, and adequate supplies of gas, electricity, and water—need to be ensured.
- b. Modern, well-equipped labour welfare centres should be established in industrial zones.

#### **5.4 Strengthening and Expanding the Scope of the Bangladesh Workers' Welfare Foundation:**

The scope of assistance provided by the Bangladesh Workers' Welfare Foundation needs to be expanded. Application procedures should be further simplified. Special support programmes should be introduced for specific groups of working people, including women workers and workers with disabilities in the informal sector. Wide-ranging awareness campaigns are required to inform workers about the Foundation's activities and available services.

### **6. Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining**

Irrespective of the nature of work, mode of recruitment, or job designation, the right of every worker to form organisations and to engage in collective bargaining should be ensured in accordance with the Constitution of Bangladesh and ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98.

#### **Ensuring the Rights of All Workers and Working People to Organise and Bargain Collectively:**

- a. Existing labour laws need to be amended to relax conditions for the formation and registration of trade unions and to expand the exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. Obstacles and procedural complexities faced by workers in organising, raising demands, and seeking redress should be removed.
- b. Collective bargaining processes should be structured to ensure participation, transparency, and accountability. Institutional arrangements need to be developed to enable all working people, including the self-employed, to negotiate and articulate their concerns effectively.
- c. In line with ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, the rights to freely form organisations, elect leaders of choice, adopt and implement programmes, and engage in collective bargaining need to be guaranteed.

- d. Adequate protection should be ensured for trade union activists. Criminal cases filed against trade union leaders and workers for participation in labour movements require urgent review and withdrawal where appropriate.

## **7. Promotion of Industrial Relations, Workers' Participation in Policy-Making, and Establishment of a National Social Dialogue Forum**

### **7.1 Practising Harmonious Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue:**

- a. Responsible conduct by workers, employers, and all relevant stakeholders is required to ensure a harmonious and cooperative working environment, supported by effective frameworks and processes for dialogue.
- b. The process of establishing the National Social Dialogue Forum, as stipulated in the Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, needs to be expedited.

### **7.2 Ensuring the Participation of Women and Men Workers in Decision-Making and Representation:**

- a. The participation of both women and men workers and their representatives should be ensured in the formulation and implementation of labour-related policies, annual budgets, Five-Year Plans, and national initiatives aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- b. Political parties should give nomination to candidates who represent the interests of working people in national parliamentary elections.
- c. Government policies need to be formulated to ensure organised workers' representation in all representative institutions and forums.

### **7.3 Establishing a National Labour Advisory Committee:**

A national advisory, review, and monitoring committee should be established, comprising representatives of workers, employers, and experienced labour experts. This committee would be responsible for facilitating information exchange, coordination, review, guidance, monitoring of welfare initiatives, and the examination of complaints involving service-providing departments, with recommendations submitted to the relevant ministry.

### **7.4 Strengthening Tripartite Processes and Structures**

Transparency in the nomination of representatives to national and sector-level tripartite bodies needs to be ensured, and due consideration should be given to the implementation of their recommendations.

## **8. Establishing Administrative and Judicial Mechanisms to Address Violations of Workers' Rights and Ensure Fair Entitlements**

- a. To ensure access to justice for workers, government initiatives are required to increase the number of labour courts, expand the use of information technology, introduce virtual hearings, expedite case disposal, and provide free legal aid to workers. Appropriate mechanisms and institutional frameworks need to be ensured to remedy violations of legal rights.
- b. Complaint resolution and assistance desks should be established in district and regional offices of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, including the Department of Labour and the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, to ensure fair entitlements for informal-sector workers.
- c. The use of the Bangla language should be ensured at all levels of adjudication, from labour courts and labour appellate tribunals to the High Court Division and the Appellate Division.

## 9. Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Inclusion

### 9.1 Ensuring Equal Rights and Eliminating Violence and Discrimination:

- a. Measures should be undertaken across the labour sector to ensure equal rights without discrimination in recruitment, wages, promotion, trade union participation, and decision-making processes, irrespective of gender, other gender identities, ethnicity, religion, caste, or community. Particular attention needs to be given to ensure security and employment for disadvantaged, marginalised, and persons with disabilities in hill and plain regions, as well as in rural and urban areas.
- b. All forms of discriminatory practices are required to be identified, and effective measures need to be taken to protect affected individuals and groups.
- c. Policies governing both formal and informal workplaces should be reviewed and reformed to ensure equal pay for work of equal value for women workers. In determining wages for piece-rate and contract work, natural differences in physical capacity between women and men, along with women's legally recognised entitlements—such as exemptions from heavy lifting, reasonable piece-rate targets, and the right to lighter work during pregnancy—need to be duly considered while ensuring wage equality.
- d. Necessary steps should be taken to recognise unpaid care and service work performed by women as work at the State level, and to eliminate the gender-based division of such labour.
- e. Effective complaint-handling and redress mechanisms are required for persons subjected to sexual harassment in workplaces, commuting routes, and public spaces. To ensure safety in public places and industrial zones, practical measures need to be implemented, including the installation of CCTV cameras and the development of community-based support mechanisms.

- f. Alongside the implementation of international labour conventions, the early enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation is required to reduce social exclusion and marginalisation faced by Dalit workers in the country.

## **9.2 Preventing All Forms of Harassment and Violence, Including Sexual Harassment, and Ensuring Women-Friendly Workplaces:**

- a. Special measures need to be adopted to ensure the right of working people to protection from all forms of harassment and violence in workplaces and during commuting.
- b. In accordance with labour laws and the 2009 High Court directives, all factories and establishments are required to formulate anti-sexual harassment and violence policies, establish complaint cells and redress committees on an urgent basis, and ensure compliance through the formation of monitoring committees.
- c. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure compliance with ILO Convention No. 190 ratified by the State, and the prompt ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), is strongly urged.
- d. The expeditious enactment of the draft Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Protection Act for Workplaces and Educational Institutions, finalised by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, is required.
- e. A zero-tolerance policy needs to be adopted to ensure women-friendly, non-discriminatory, and decent working environments.
- f. Safe transportation arrangements for women workers, along with separate rest areas and sanitation facilities at workplaces, need to be ensured.

### **9.3 Ensuring Universal Maternity Protection and Extending Paid Maternity Leave to Six Months for All Women Workers:**

- a. Paid maternity leave for all women workers should be extended to six months. Where necessary, support needs to be provided by the State in addition to employers, and special schemes should be designed for women workers in the informal sector.
- b. Coordination among relevant ministries is required to ensure coherence among women-, child-, and welfare-related programmes.

## **10. Child Labour and Adolescent Workers**

### **Measures to be undertaken by the government to eliminate child and adolescent labour:**

- a. To build a dignified and skilled citizenry for the future of Bangladesh, the minimum age for employment should be raised to 16 years. Adolescents aged 16–18 should be employed only in forms of work that allow sufficient opportunities for skills development and creative growth.
- b. Children from economically disadvantaged and working-class families need to be ensured access to quality education free of cost at least up to the secondary level, including the provision of textbooks and all necessary learning materials.
- c. Accessible and quality vocational and technical education opportunities should be ensured for adolescent workers in order to develop a skilled labour force.
- d. Strict penalties need to be prescribed and enforced to prevent deprivation of children's access to quality education, discrimination, neglect, exploitation, or any practice that violates children's rights or obstructs their education and skill development.
- e. Necessary measures are required to ensure that all industries, including their direct and indirect suppliers within supply chains, remain entirely free from child labour and forced labour.

## **11. Labour Administration, Inspection, and Accountability**

### **11.1 Strengthening Institutional Capacity:**

- a. The establishment of the Department of Employment and Skills Development and the Department of Workers' Social Security and Welfare, as proposed by the Labour Reform Commission, should be undertaken under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- b. Separate units need to be formed for labour force surveys, labour-related research and education, and migrant labour affairs.
- c. Budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Labour and Employment should be increased in the national budget to support institutional capacity development.

### **11.2 Ensuring Accountability, Transparency, and the Right to Information:**

To strengthen coordination and effectiveness within the Ministry of Labour and Employment and its subordinate bodies, necessary measures are required to establish accountability, democratic practices, transparency, and the right to information across all relevant public institutions—including the Department of Labour, the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, the Workers' Welfare Foundation, the Central Funds, Labour Welfare Centres, the Industrial Relations Institute (IRI), the National OSH Research and Training Institute (NOSTI), and the National Skills Development Authority—as well as relevant private institutions.

## **12. Just Transition in the Context of Climate and Technological Change, Automation, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and Responsible Business Conduct**

### **12.1 Ensuring a Just Transition in the Context of Climate and Technological Change:**

- a. To address the adverse impacts of climate change on working people and their families and to ensure climate justice, a worker-centred National Climate Justice Strategy needs to be formulated, incorporating just transition principles for environmentally sustainable industrial transformation.
- b. To ensure inclusiveness and fairness in the transition to a green economy and technological transformation, a National Just Transition Framework should be developed, along with the establishment of a Just Transition Advisory Council.
- c. Funds from national and international sources need to be mobilised to address losses and damages arising from climate change and green transitions and to ensure social protection.
- d. A priority list of sectors affected by climate and environmental change should be prepared, followed by the formulation and implementation of coordinated action plans involving all stakeholders.
- e. Occupational health and safety risks arising from climate change need to be assessed, and protective action plans should be developed accordingly.
- f. Rehabilitation, up-skilling, and re-skilling of workers affected by green transitions need to be ensured.
- g. Women workers' specific needs and challenges should be integrated into just transition policies, with targeted skill-development and rehabilitation programmes addressing gender-specific barriers.

## **12.2 Measures in Line with International Commitments and Responsible Business Conduct:**

- a. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure all rights and welfare of workers and their families in accordance with obligations arising from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), ICESCR, ICCPR, CRC, and the fundamental conventions of the ILO.
- b. Responsible business conduct needs to be operationalised in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the ILO Tripartite Declaration on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, with measurable progress ensured at every level.
- c. A National Task Force on Responsible Business Conduct should be formed under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, ensuring effective participation of workers' representatives, and a comprehensive National Action Plan (NAP) should be developed to safeguard human rights and environmental protection in business operations.
- d. A National Labour Commission needs to be established, under which a permanent mechanism should be instituted for monitoring human rights due diligence in business activities, receiving complaints, and providing remedies.
- e. A comprehensive national supply-chain database should be established to identify workers, factories, suppliers, and other stakeholders, thereby supporting the implementation and monitoring of human rights due diligence.
- f. Mandatory social clauses requiring human rights due diligence should be incorporated into all trade and export agreements to establish preventive measures against labour and human rights violations.

## **13. Rights, Safety, and Protection of Migrant Workers**

### **13.1 Ensuring the Rights of Migrant Workers:**

Measures should be taken to ensure the welfare of all migrant workers and to strengthen migration governance. To this end, the recognition, organisation, and representation rights of migrant workers need to be ensured, alongside efforts to strengthen domestic and international cooperation.

### **13.2 Ensuring the Protection of Migrant Workers**

- a. The Expatriates' Welfare Bank needs to be mandated and strengthened to provide easy-term loans for prospective migrants, rehabilitation support for returnee workers, and compensation for injured or deceased migrant workers.
- b. Necessary steps should be taken to reduce migration costs for migrant workers.
- c. Effective initiatives are required to prevent abuse, exploitation, and harassment of migrant workers.
- d. Recruitment agencies, intermediaries, and sub-agents need to be brought under strict monitoring, accountability, and regulatory oversight.
- e. A digital complaint system should be introduced for migrant workers, enabling complainants to track the status of their complaints.
- f. Full implementation of the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) is required, along with the ratification of relevant ILO conventions on labour migration.
- g. Language and cultural education, alongside courses aligned with international labour market demands, need to be developed at IMT/TTC institutions, with regular evaluation to ensure quality standards.
- h. Adequate staffing and budgetary allocations are required for embassies and consular offices, including labour wings, to

ensure effective service delivery. In recruitment, priority should be given to individuals with expertise in labour migration, including contractual appointments where necessary.

- i. Effective measures need to be adopted to ensure health, safety, and social protection for migrant workers, with particular attention to the safety and dignity of women migrant workers.
- j. Budgetary allocations should be made for international labour market research, followed by action plans, regular reviews, and progress assessments.
- k. The early ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 97 and 143 on migrant workers is strongly urged.

## **14. Workers' Rights, Skills Development, and Employment in EPZs and Foreign Investment Contexts**

### **14.1 Ensuring Trade Union Rights for All Workers:**

Through the application of appropriate tripartite processes, fundamental and necessary reforms to existing labour laws need to be undertaken. In accordance with the principle of "one country, one law," Export Processing Zones (EPZs), Special Economic Zones, and all industrial and labour sectors are to be brought fully under the scope of national labour legislation. In this context, the democratic rights of all workers to freely form trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining should be ensured without restriction.

### **14.2 Expanding Employment Opportunities through Skills Development:**

Specific and time-bound plans need to be formulated to ensure that foreign-owned factories operating in EPZs facilitate technology transfer and enable workers to acquire skills aligned with modern and advanced technologies, thereby expanding sustainable employment opportunities.

## 15. Establishment of a Permanent National Labour Commission

**A Permanent National Labour Commission** should be established as a statutory body to monitor and review the implementation of the recommendations of the Labour Reform Commission, to resolve industrial disputes, to address workplace crises at the national level, and to ensure an accountable and transparent labour administration system.

### Concluding Statement

We firmly expect political parties, in addition to endorsing the above proposals, to take effective measures to implement the full set of recommendations put forward by the Labour Reform Commission; the nine-point charter of demands of the Workers –Employees Unity Council (SKOP); and the proposals advanced at various times by the Workers’ Safety Forum (SNF), research institutions, and other organisations, institutions, and platforms engaged in the protection, development, and welfare of workers’ rights.

By acting on these commitments, political parties can play a decisive role in building a dignified Bangladesh and in establishing an inclusive and justice-based society in the days ahead.

We reaffirm our commitment to continued engagement and participation in this collective journey towards dignity, inclusion, and social justice.

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*Attachment:*

**Overall Reflection of the Proposals of the Labour Reform Commission**

One of the basic principles of governing the state of Bangladesh, as directed by the Constitution, is ensuring the freedom of the working class from all forms of oppression. The primary goal of the state is to establish a society where the rule of law, fundamental human rights, freedom, justice, and political, economic, and social equity are ensured for all citizens. The central aspiration of our great struggle for independence and the bloody uprising of students, workers, and the masses in July '24 was to establish Bangladesh in a position of dignity by building a just and discrimination-free society. Reflecting this collective aspiration, the Interim Government established the 'Labour Reform Commission' on 18 November 2024 with the aim of providing necessary reform recommendations to safeguard workers' rights and well-being. The commission, formed 54 years after our independence, believes that it is impossible to build a discrimination-free society without placing labour, workers and their rights at the center in order to address the prevailing inequalities in Bangladesh's labour sector.

This recommendation has been formulated through consultations with more than one hundred stakeholders, with the aim of ensuring workers' civic rights, dignity of life and livelihood, genuine trade union representation, and non-discriminatory opportunities. The Commission believes that employment opportunities, industrial productivity growth, and democratic transformation are integral to safeguarding workers' rights and well-being in Bangladesh. Thus, this is not only important for workers but also in the interest of the country and its people. Workers' rights are part of the Constitutional rights in Bangladesh. Similarly, they form part of the country's commitment to achieving specific labour standards as a member state of various international agencies. It is therefore an important responsibility of the state to formulate policies and laws, develop and implement plans, and uphold the principles of universality and inclusiveness. The Commission holds the view

that it is possible to establish a discrimination-free and dignified Bangladesh, grounded in justice, only by ensuring workers' rights through targeted programmes, guaranteeing workers a fair share in industrial growth, and securing their inclusion in the benefits of development.

In light of the recommendations formulated through coordinated discussions, the Commission recommends that the Government play a necessary role in legally protecting and implementing the rights of all workers engaged in the formal, informal, and agricultural sectors in Bangladesh. At the same time, the Commission urges the State to play a pivotal role in ensuring legal recognition for effective implementation, structural development, and the prevention of violations. The salient features of the Commission's overall recommendations are highlighted below.

### **1.1. Legal protection and recognition of all workers**

Labour law should be upheld by the State for all workers, including those employed in the formal, informal, agricultural, domestic, migrant, and self-employed sectors.

To this end, effective measures must be taken to ensure recognition of labour through the issuance of identity cards, continuous employment, guaranteed income, and a dignified and decent work environment. At the same time, measures must be taken to prevent irregular or temporary employment practices and the growing trend of agency-dependent appointments.

The suggested measures include:

- a. The right to receive fair participation in development, as well as a living wage adequate for workers and their families.
- b. The right to safe and healthy working conditions, appropriate compensation in the event of accidents, and access to health care for workers and their families.
- c. Retirement benefits for all, along with social protection in adverse situations such as inability to work, illness, or maternity, and inclusion in some forms of social safety net schemes.

- d. The assurance of protection of rights for all workers, including the right to assemble for fair wages, collective representation, the ability to lodge complaints against rights violations, and access to remedies and justice.

In order to ensure these rights, the government must follow the country's constitution, declare its commitment to ILO conventions and fundamental principles and rights, reform the current labour law or enact additional laws, and implement the Commission's recommendations by adhering to the appropriate tripartite system, in line with decent work standards, human rights, and international accountability related to business.

### **1.2 Ensuring dignified and sector-wise wages:**

In order to guarantee workers and their families the right to a suitable wage for leading a dignified life, a minimum standard of wages needs to be determined, and a national minimum wage must be declared. At the same time, it is important to improve the wage-determining system, enhance the capacity of the board, and establish a permanent wage commission for structural reform.

### **1.3 Ensuring a safe work environment:**

It needs to be ensured that workers have a safe and healthy work environment, along with access to legal support. Develop sector- and profession-specific safety plans. Reconsider the standard of compensation for workers who are killed or injured in accidents or due to negligence. At the same time, specify both the standards and the amounts required to ensure dignified compensation.

### **1.4 Measure to register workers and labour force and developing database:**

Steps need to be taken to arrange state recognition of workers, issue identity cards, and register them in order to ensure professional and legal protection as well as social security for all workers, including those engaged in the informal sector and self-employment. To this end, the government must urgently take measure to register labour force and establish a database.

### **1.5 Right to organisation and bargaining:**

Implementation of the constitutional guarantee of the state—the right to organise and the freedom of speech. The rights to organisation should be expanded by relaxing the conditions for forming trade unions. A participatory, transparent, and accountable structure needs to be ensured for bargaining.

### **1.6 Ensuring accountability, transparency, and the right to information:**

In order to strengthen the capacity and coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and its subordinate departments (including the Labour Department, the Department of Factory and Establishment Inspection, Labour Welfare Centre, Labour-Industry Relationship Institution (IRI), NASTRY, and the National Skill Development Authority), and to ensure accountability of government and non-government organisations, promote democratic practices, enhance transparency, and establish the right to information, necessary state-led reforms need to be carried out.

### **1.7 Establishment of permanent labour commission:**

For ensuring an accountable labour administration system, a permanent labour commission needs to be established as a constitutional body. As the first step of establishing the permanent labour commission, it is necessary for the Ministry of Labour and Employment to take immediate initiative to form a ‘national level social dialogue forum’.

### **1.8 Initiative to enhance skills and employment:**

The state should take effective initiatives to prevent prevailing unemployment in the country and to expand employment opportunities both at home and abroad. At the same time, it is important to formulate short-, medium-, and long-term roadmaps to address the challenges of automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and to build skilled human resources capable of utilizing the opportunities created by these changes. To this end, special emphasis

should be placed on the appropriate use of labour, and on establishing a productive youth labour force and promoting entrepreneurship.

### **1.9 Ensuring social security:**

Initiatives must be taken to guarantee all workers the right to access universal social security (covering workplace accidents, death, inability to work, retirement due to illness, maternity benefits, or any other adverse situation). Workers should be included in appropriate social safety schemes based on the nature of their problems. To this end, it would be appropriate to revive the ILO's lifecycle-based social safety programme and introduce a social insurance system.

### **1.10 Ensuring equal rights and the elimination of discrimination:**

The state must take necessary action to ensure equal rights and eliminate discrimination in all labour sectors based on gender, race, religion, color, or ethnicity, particularly in relation to wages, trade union participation, and decision-making processes. Additionally, the safety and employment of indigenous and multiethnic workers from both hill and plain regions must be guaranteed.

### **1.11 Prevention of all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment:**

The state must take special measures to ensure the right to protection from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. Policies against sexual oppression and harassment must be formulated in all factories and establishments in accordance with the directive of the High Court delivered in 2009. At the same time, complaint cells and resolution committees must be urgently established. In this regard, ILO Convention 190 should be followed.

### **1.12 Universal protection during the maternity period:**

The state must take the initiative to provide six months of paid maternity leave for all women workers. To this end, the

government must extend its support alongside relevant entities, and special schemes must be introduced for workers in the informal sector.

### **1.13 The elimination of child and adolescent labour, the abolition of forced labour, and the assurance of security:**

The government must take appropriate measures to stop child and adolescent labour and forced labour. Effective actions should be implemented to eliminate all forms of bonded labour, including the practice of providing advance payments.

### **1.14 Well-coordinated industrial relations and the practice of social dialogue:**

To ensure a well-coordinated work environment, it is important to promote responsible behavior by all parties, including workers and employers, and to establish effective structures for dialogue.

### **1.15 Proper labour court, justice and arrangement for alternative dispute resolution:**

The number of labour court must be increased to ensure justice for workers, and the government must take initiative to resolve the cases promptly and to stop unnecessary harassment. Appropriate system and structure must be ensured in preventing the violation of right to justice. The lodging of criminal cases and abuse of power must be stopped during the dispute resolution and when an activity is initiated to gain lawful obtainable. The criminal cases filed against members of various trade union and workers in allegation of participating in labour movement should be repealed after quick review.

### **1.16 Dignified and harassment free work environment and use of Bangla language in the court:**

To establish a culture of dignified work environments, derogatory and disrespectful language targeting specific classes, genders, colors, or ethnicities must be eliminated. In

the labour law, the term “Nari” should be used in place of “Mohila.” The practice of addressing colleagues with tui-tumi based on class hierarchies in the workplace must be discontinued. Bangla should be used in labour courts, from the Labour Appeal Tribunal to the High Court, and even in the Appellate Division.

### **1.17 Ensuring female and male workers’ participation in decision-making and representation:**

It is important to ensure the participation of both female and male workers, along with their representatives, in formulating and implementing various national plans, including labour-related policies, the annual budget, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - 2030. The Government must also formulate policies to ensure the representation of labour unions in all representational forums, including the National Parliament.

### **1.18 Establishing emergency funds and ensuring transparency of existing funds:**

An urgent emergency government fund must be established to maintain production and pay workers’ wages and other entitlements during national and international crises, natural disasters, epidemics, or sudden business disruptions. In addition, the transparency and accountability of the Workers’ Welfare Foundation and central funds must be ensured.

### **1.19 Protection of labour history and historical places and construction of monument:**

Initiative must be taken by the state to protect labour history and historical places and to build monument and museum. The dignity of labour, their safety and workers’ biography must be presented in a dignified manner in textbook, syllabus, educational courses and media.

### **1.20 Recognition of martyrs, rehabilitation, treatment and justice:**

The state must recognize all workers killed during the 2024 uprising and in the labour movement as martyrs. In addition, state policies must be formulated to provide appropriate compensation to workers killed in accidents in the labour sector or due to negligence, as well as to arrange rehabilitation for injured workers. At the same time, those responsible must be tried under a speedy trial process and punished in cases of significant workplace accidents, including Rana Plaza, Tazreen Garments, and Hasem Food.

### **1.21 Sustainable industrialization, productivity and inclusive development:**

It is important for the authority to formulate a comprehensive and well-thought-out plan of action and to encourage the establishment of social businesses for the expansion of national industries, industrialization, and the development of labour-intensive industries. To this end, a task force must be formed, and coordination mechanisms must be established between industry and the skill development authority, educational institutions, and relevant national and international agencies and organisations.

### **1.22 Ensuring civic facilities in industrial and labour-intensive areas:**

Civic facilities and services must be ensured for workers and their families in industrial areas. It is important to make sure that these facilities (education, healthcare, health insurance, participation in services, development of roadways, the supply of gas, electricity and water and other kinds services) are provided for the workers, so that Bangladesh can play role in the establishment of a welfare state and social justice.

### **1.23 Creation of work environment considering the climate change and global warming:**

The government must take initiative to establish work environment considering the climate change and global warming. We have to be mindful about our country's reality and in carrying out our international responsibilities.

### **1.24 Ensuring the security and rights of the migrant workers:**

The state must take measures to ensure the welfare of all the migrant workers and to strengthen the migration management. To this end, the recognition, trade union and representation rights of migrant workers must be ensured. At the same time, the national and international relations be strengthened.

### **1.25 Research and survey on labour topics:**

A separate division must be established by the state to carry out labour force surveys, research on labour and operate educational activities.

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