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# Examining Occupational Safety and Health Issues under Labour Laws of Bangladesh after Rana Plaza Tragedy: A Critical Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

*Safe work is one of the workers' fundamental rights. Occupational safety and health (OSH) is an important component of the decent work agenda, as it focuses on preventing workplace accidents and diseases, as well as safeguarding and promoting workers' health. The workplace where employees work will be free of all hazards and risks. However, workers around the world continue to die as a result of work-related accidents or diseases. For the development of Bangladesh safe work place for worker is a sine qua non. Unfortunately, Bangladesh experienced some deadly industrial accidents, the deadliest of which being the Rana Plaza tragedy. The event sparked extensive demonstrations and calls for improved safety standards. Following the tragedy, various occupational safety and health (OSH) concerns were discovered, leading the Bangladesh government to enact laws, norms, and policies that recognize the importance of OSH in ensuring workplace safety.*

*This paper seeks to conduct an analytical analysis of the laws and policies that regulate occupational safety and health (OSH) issues in Bangladesh. It also attempts to provide a necessary improvement plan based on the findings.*

**Keywords:** Occupational Safety, Health, Diseases, Safe Work Place, Labour Laws, Policies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Safe work is one of the fundamental rights of the workers. A key element of the decent work agenda is occupational safety and health (OSH) (Hossain, Akter, & Khan, 2015). The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines occupational safety and health (OSH) as the field that focuses on preventing injuries at work and diseases, while also safeguarding and promoting the well-being of health of workers (Cmpact, 2023). Ultimately, OSH is the improvement of environment and working conditions for workers to ensure their safety and health while working. Thus, the condition of workplace where workers work will be free from all kinds of hazards and risks. But according to the estimation of ILO yearly 2.3 million women

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and men worldwide pass way from accidents or diseases related to their work; this equates to more than six thousand deaths each day. Annually, there are an estimated 340 million occupational accidents and 160 million instances of work-related illnesses worldwide (ILO, World Statistic, 2023).

According to a study on reports of different national and local newspaper by the Safety and Rights Society (SRS), a total of 2,677 workers in Bangladesh lost their lives between 2014 and 2019 due to inadequate occupational health and safety standards. Over the course of these six years, there was an average of one worker fatality each day (Huda, 2021). According to another report conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies, there were 1,034 worker fatalities and 1,037 injuries due to workplace accidents in 2022. This is compared to 1,053 fatalities and 594 injuries in 2021. Another report indicates that from January to June 2023, there were 389 worker fatalities in 287 workplace accidents across Bangladesh (Report T., 2023).

In 2015, Bangladesh achieved the rank of a lower-middle income country. It is on track to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list in 2026 and to be an upper middle-income country by 2031 (Bank, 2023). At this stage of development in Bangladesh industrialization bring a radical alteration. However, if industries are poorly designed and fail to implement appropriate safety measures, there can be severe negative health outcomes. Examples of such consequences consist of the collapse of Rana Plaza, the fire accident at Tazreen Fashions Ltd, and the collapse of the Spectrum Factory building (Tasnim, Rahman, Rahman, & Islam, 2016). The Rana Plaza collapse is widely regarded as the most fatal tragedy in the history of garment factories and the deadliest workplace accident in the history of Bangladesh. (Star, 2023). The collapse of Rana Plaza, an eight-story commercial skyscraper in Savar, Bangladesh, on 24 April 2013, was caused by a structural breakdown. The search for deceased individuals concluded on May 13, 2013, resulting in a total of 1,138 deaths (WSR, 2019). Around 2,500 individuals who suffered injuries had been successfully saved from the structure. The structure contained five textile manufacturing facilities, a financial institution, and apartments. The construction of Rana Plaza took place in 2006 on the location of a previous pond, and was carried out without the necessary authorizations (Ahmed, 2013). The building's fifth to eighth levels were constructed without the presence of load-bearing walls. The garment companies' heavy equipment exceeded the structural capacity. Significant cracks were detected in the structure on April 23, 2013. The stores and bank located on the lower floors promptly shut down, while the garment factory owners situated on the top floors disregarded the alerts and compelled the workers to resume their duties the next day. At 9:00 am local time on 24

April, the structure experienced a collapse, resulting in the entrapment of a large number of individuals (Campaign).

The Rana Plaza tragedy marked an important turning point in the history of the Bangladesh garment industry. The incident sparked extensive demonstrations and demands for enhanced safety protocols. (Times, 2013) Following the incident, several occupational safety and health (OSH) concerns were revealed, leading the Government of Bangladesh to enact the Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment), 2013. (NATLEX, 2013). Soon after the enactment the Labour Rules, 2015 has been passed, which came into effect to enforce the terms of the BLA (Establishments, 2021). In 2018, the BLA underwent more revisions, although there were no significant alterations concerning worker safety and health. The Labour Rules of 2015 were changed on September 1, 2022 (Abrar, 2022).

In addition to amending the BLA and BLR to acknowledge the importance of occupational safety and health (OSH) in guaranteeing workplace safety, the government set up the National OSH Policy in 2013. This policy assigns the government the responsibility of ensuring OSH by developing a National Plan of Action based on gathered information, which will then be used to implement the policy (Clause 4(Ka) (9) of OSH Policy, 2013). The program was further strengthened by the National Occupational Safety and Health Profile in 2016 and 2019. The National Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Profile 2019 provides an overview of the current OSH situation in the country. The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE), in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), has developed the National Plan of Action for Occupational Safety and Health. This plan aims to identify areas for intervention, outline relevant activities, establish necessary strategies, assign responsibilities, and set progress indicators and timelines. It encompasses short-term (2021-2023), medium-term (2024-2026), and long-term (2027-2030) targets for achieving the specified tasks.

## **II. OSH PROVISIONS UNDER DIFFERENT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES**

The following categories cover laws and policies pertaining to OSH:

### **(A) Occupational Accidents, Hazards and Diseases:**

#### **a. Workplace safety:**

##### **i. Factory Construction:**

The National OSH Policy of 2019 states that employers must identify all OSH hazards and provide all workers with instruction on these risks as well as potential causes of accidents. Furthermore, all must uphold safety standard norms and maximum safety requirements during

factory construction (Clause 4.d.2).

**Imminent danger:** The BLA makes it quite clear that a Labour Inspector must notify the owner of the organization in writing if they discover that a building, any portion of a building, or its equipment and plant, presents a major risk to workers. After then, the owner has to take the appropriate steps to remedy the building and respond to the notice within the allotted time frame (Section 61). Section 61(2) states that if a building, piece of equipment, or plant of any establishment looks to be dangerous for people's lives or safety, the inspector may forbid their usage.

**Fire license:** According to the Fire Prevention and Extinction Act 2003, in order to use a building or certain part of a building or establishment as a warehouse or workshop, certain person/ group need a permission license under the Act from the Director General of the Fire Service and Civil Defense Department (Section 4).

The Fire Prevention and Extinction Act 2003 prohibits any multi-storied industry or commercial space without the certification of the Director General of the Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD), with respect to fire prevention, fire extinguishing and other fire safety related issues (Section 7).

**Fire resistance requirements:** The Bangladesh National Building Code 2020 has detailed provisions on the safety of industrial building. The ceiling height and the head room clearance of a production floor shall not be less than 3.3 meter and 2.286 meter respectively (Section:2.11.1). The minimum width of staircases of an industrial establishment has to be at least 2.15 metre and handrails will have a minimum height of 0.9 meter (Section 1.14.5.6).

According to the Fire Code in Bangladesh National Building Code ,2020 the storage of moderate and low hazardous materials shall be separated at least by a two hours fire resistive construction (Section: 2.12.7)

#### **ii. Firefighting Apparatus and Emergency Fire Exit:**

According to Section 62(1) of the BLA (Amendment 2013), every establishment must have a means of exit, such as a minimum of one alternate staircase connecting each floor and the necessary number of firefighting tools on each floor. Additionally, the modified Act guarantees that, in every establishment, no room's exit shall be kept closed during construction, and no exit shall be obstructed or a barrier placed in the way (Section 62(3a)). Mock fire drills shall be conducted at least once every six months in factories employing more than fifty people (Section 62(8)).

A building must have several ways to escape, including staircases, hallways, and exits, to allow worker to flee swiftly in the event of a fire, according to the BNBC (2020), which also includes comprehensive guidelines for fire escapes (Part IV, Chapter 3). In order to help control and put out fires, the code also suggests that buildings include sprinkler systems, fire hoses, and other firefighting equipment (Part IV, Chapter 4).

**Handling of petroleum products and asbestos:** The Bangladesh Ship Breaking and Recycling Rules 2011 suggests maintaining a safety distance for storage of all petroleum products (Section 17.7). There should also be a specially constructed facility for the removal and handling other available asbestos handling systems (Section 17.9).

**Safety Committee:** Section 90a of the BLA 2006 mandates the establishment of a safety committee. The committee will be set up in accordance with Section 30 of the Act (The Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Act, 2013)

**b. Accident prevention:**

The prevention of workplace accidents is a component of the National OSH Policy, the National Labor Policy, and the National Industrial Policy. For instance, the National OSH Policy explicitly delineates the necessity of establishing national standards on OSH, enforcing national laws and regulations, and ensuring workplace safety and health protection in accordance with international conventions. (Establishments, 2021).

**i. Firefighting requirements:**

According to the Bangladesh Labor Act 2006, it is mandatory for every establishment to have firefighting equipment and evacuation routes. If there are 50 or more employees, the employer must conduct fire-fighting drills no fewer than twice a year and keep a record of them. (Section 62, BLA).

**ii. Machineries safety:**

If there are machines which are in motion or in use, they should be securely fenced by the safeguards of substantial construction (Section 63, BLA).

**iii. Floor safety:**

It is necessary for all floors, stairs, tunnels, and gangways in enterprises to be constructed well and maintained properly. Additionally, strong railings must be placed on all floors and staircases to ensure safety. The hallways and stairs must remain open to provide smooth mobility during the duration of the activity. (Section 72) (The Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Act, 2013).

**iv. Load handling:**

No one in the workplace should be asked to lift or carry anything that is too heavy and could hurt them. (Sections 74, 83-86, 90,323, BLA.).

**v. Personal safety equipment:**

Authorities are prohibited from assigning any worker to a task without supplying them with personal safety equipment and ensuring that it is used correctly. The employer is required to maintain a record book on this topic, following the authorized method. (Section 78A) (The Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Act, 2013).

**c. Workplace environment and prevention of hazards:**

The Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006 has several regulations aimed at safeguarding workers from job dangers:

- It is necessary for all establishments to maintain cleanliness and ensure that there are no unpleasant odors coming from drains or other sources of nuisance, as stated in Section 51 of the BLA.
- The temperature of the work environment must be maintained at a level that ensures comfort and prevents harm to health.
- In order to avoid the accumulation of dust or fumes in the workroom and their inhalation by workers, as stated in Section 53 of the BLA.
- The workplace of a establishment should not be excessively crowded to the extent that it poses a risk to the health of employees. According to Section 56, it is recommended to allocate nine and a half cubic meters of space every individual worker in a factory.
- Each establishment must provide an adequate number of segregated restrooms equipped with illumination, ventilation, and running water for both male and female employees (Section 59).
- Employers are required to ensure an ample provision of potable water (as stated in Section 58) and adequate illumination (as stated in Section 57).
- An adequate quantity of sanitary receptacles, such as dustbins and spittoons, should be strategically placed throughout the workplace (Section 60).

**i. Electric supply:**

According to Section 58 of the Bangladesh Labour Rules (2015), it is required that electricity supply lines be positioned, safeguarded, and kept in a way that does not endanger workers with the possibility of severe physical injury.

**ii. Chimneys and Ventilation:**

According to the Bangladesh National Building Code 2020, it is required that chimney, vents, and ventilation ducts be made from materials that cannot catch fire. According to the code, it is required that each boiler, central heating plant, electrical room, or hot water supply boiler be physically separated from the main workplace building(s) in order to avoid significant risks.

**iii. Material Safety Data Sheet:**

The Bangladesh Labor Rules, 2015 mandate that the owners of factories and establishments must display the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) of hazardous materials in a prominent location to ensure that the employees are adequately informed about potential hazards (Rule 68).

Additionally, the factory owner is required to obtain the proper approval of the factory's layout plan and extension layout plan from DIFE (Section 326, BLA and Rule 353, BLR) (Section 326, BLA and Rule 353, BLR).

**d. Disease prevention and safeguards**

The National OSH Policy and the National Child Labour Elimination policy both include clauses regarding disease(s) prevention and safeguarding. The National OSH Policy calls for identifying the risk of health and safety (Clause. A3).

The penal code ensures punishment by law in case of negligent and or malignant acts likely to spread infection of diseases dangerous to life (Section 269 and 270).

**i. Fire and Smoke Detection System:**

The Bangladesh National Building Code requires the installation of automatic fire and smoke detection systems when the size, arrangements and the occupancy of a building become such that a fire itself cannot provide adequate warning to its occupants for their safety. The automatic fire and smoke detection system shall include sort of lien type heat sensitive detectors and optical, ionized or chemical sensitive type and smoke detectors (Part IV, Chapter:3).

**e. Record keeping and planning****i. Safety record:**

Every establishment and factory that employs more than 25 workers is required to maintain a safety record book and a safety board, as stipulated in Section 90 of BLA 2006. The Bangladesh Labor Rules 2015 mandate that the authorities of all factories maintain a register of all accidents and hazardous occurrences that occur within the factory (Rule 73).



**f. Workplace level initiative****i. Safety Committee:**

According to the Bangladesh Labor Rules 2015, if an establishment employs 50 or more workers, the employer is required to establish and ensure the operation of a safety committee in accordance with the guidelines outlined in BLR (Section 90A, BLA 2006).

The establishment and responsibilities of safety committees are outlined in the Bangladesh Labor Rules (Chapter 8 and schedule 4, BLR 2015).

**ii. Sick room and dispensary:**

As per the Bangladesh Labour Act (2006), every establishment must have a first-aid box or cupboard containing the necessary items specified by BLR. This box should be easily accessible to all employees during working hours (Section 89). Additionally, if an establishment employs 300 or more workers, it must also provide a sick room with a dispensary. The size and equipment of this room should comply with the requirements stated in Section 77 of the BLR.

**iii. Medical Centre:**

In any establishment employs 5000 (five thousand) or more workers, the employer of that establishment, shall arrange for operating a permanent medical Centre, in such manner, as may be prescribed by BLR (Section 89 (6), BLA 2006 and Section 78, BLR 2015).

**iv. Welfare officer:**

It is compulsory to designate a welfare officer in any establishment that employs 500 or more workers (Section 89 (8), BLA 2006 and Section 79, BLR 2015).

**v. Awareness on Hazards:**

According to section 78A (3) of the BLA, the owner has a responsibility to provide training to all workers in order to inform them about occupational dangers. The National OSH Policy (2013) outlines the responsibility of organizations to identify occupational health and safety concerns and to communicate them to all individuals in the workplace.

**vi. Drinking water:**

According to the BLA (2006), factories are required to supply clean drinking water for workers at a convenient location within the factory or establishment (BLA Section 58 (1)). During periods of high temperatures, it is necessary to ensure that establishments with a workforce of over 250 people have access to cooled drinking water (Section 58. 3).

**vii. Rest room:**

According to section 93 (1) of the BLA, employers are required to provide a rest room for their workers if there are more than 50 workers. This rest room should have facilities for drinking water, as well as a space where workers can eat their own meals and take breaks. If the number of female workers exceeds 25, it is mandatory to have separate restroom facilities for male and female personnel [Section 93(3), BLA].

**g. Awareness raising**

According to the rule 351 of Bangladesh Labor Rules 2015, one of the key roles of labor inspector is to conduct training and/or workshop to raise knowledge and skills of workers, members of trade unions and employers.

**i. Safety Equipment/Tools and Facilities**

The safety equipment/ tools and facilities include firefighting apparatus and the emergency fire exit, protective kits and the safety of buildings and machineries.

**3Personal Protective Equipment**

According to the National OSH policy, it is mandatory to offer training, safety instructions, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to workers, and to ensure that they are using in the workplace (Clause 4, d.7). The policy recommends that workers adhere to the OSH recommendations offered by their employers (Clause 4.e.1). Clause 4.e.2 of the document further emphasizes the responsibility of workers to ensure the health and safety of both themselves and their colleagues.

According to the BLA 2006, it is required to give appropriate goggles to workers who may be at risk of their eyes being exposed to extreme light or heat, as stated in section 75.

The BLA Section 78A, provides explicit instructions for the utilization of safety appliances to ensure personal safety in the workplace:

- If necessary, the employer must provide safety appliances and must not hire someone until they have made sure that these appliances are being used. As per legal requirements, the employer must maintain a record book in the specified manner:
- The workers in question will be held accountable if they fail to utilize the provided safety equipment.

- In order to guarantee occupational health, safety, and protection, it is necessary to provide workers with training to make them aware of the hazards associated with their employment.

### **III. WELFARE AT WORKPLACE**

#### **(A) Health Services and Medical Care:**

BLA provide the following provisions for mandatory and optional health care services:

- Where a worker serves notice of an accident, the employer shall, within 3 (three) days of service of such notice, ensure the worker is examined at the expense of the employer, by a registered medical practitioner. Provided that the accident or illness of the worker is of a grave nature, the employer shall make arrangements for him/her to be examined at the place where the worker is staying (Section 160 (1), BLA Amendment 2013).
- In any establishment where at least 10 (ten) workers are employed, the employer of the establishment may introduce, and implement, an insurance scheme against workplace accidents under a group insurance for all workers, and the benefits or money received from such an insurance scheme shall be spent on treatment of the workers (Section 160 (11), BLA 2006).
- If a worker is physically injured by an accident arising out of the course of his/her employment, his/her employer shall be liable to pay him/her compensation in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XII of BLA (Section 150, BLA 2006).
- The medical treatment of a worker injured in the workplace has to be performed under the supervision of the employer, and the employer is obligated to bear the expenses related therein (Section 142, BLR 2015).
- If a worker, while in the service of an employer for a continuous period of not less than six months occupational disease peculiar to that employment, the illness shall be deemed to be a workplace injury by accident. Unless the employer proves the contrary, such an accident shall be deemed to have arisen out of the course of his/her employment (Section 150, 3(b), BLA 2006).

#### **(B) Maternity Benefits and Medical Care**

BLA guarantees the Right to maternity benefit and imposes the responsibility for its payment. According to the law, every pregnant female worker is entitled to receive maternity leave from her employer for a duration of 8 weeks before the expected day of delivery and 8 weeks after the actual day of delivery and the employer is legally obligated to provide this benefit to the

female worker.

- A woman is only eligible for this benefit if she has been employed by her employer for at least 6 months prior to the day of her delivery (Section 46(1), BLA 2006).
- According to Section 94(1) of the BLA 2006, any establishment that employs 40 or more female workers must furnish and maintain one or more appropriate rooms for the use of their children who are under the age of 6.
- A female employee will be granted a one-month leave in the event of a miscarriage (Amendment of 2022).

#### **IV. THE ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND BODIES**

##### **(A) Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE):**

The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) is the official body in charge of labor inspection in Bangladesh. It operates in accordance with the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No 81). DIFE's main responsibility is to enforce labor laws and regulations by conducting inspections at workplaces (Establishments, 2021).

Over time, especially following the Rana Plaza disaster, the DIFE has enhanced its technical and institutional capabilities. While the DIFE's personnel has grown and its inspectors have become more skilled, there is still a significant number of vacant positions, accounting for 47% of the total sanctioned posts (DIFE, 2022). The number of DIFE inspectors rose from 196 in FY16 to 285 in FY21. Consequently, the DIFE has been able to carry out a greater number of inspections in recent years compared to previous periods. Nevertheless, there was a significant decline of over 43 percent in the number of DIFE inspections conducted in the RMG sector during FY22, as compared to FY21. The reason for the decrease in the number of inspections is not evident, especially considering that there is a greater potential for inspections with a larger workforce and the recent implementation of the Labour Inspection Management Application, a digital inspection tool developed by the DIFE. (Moazzem & Ahmed, 2023).

During the fiscal year 2021-2022, the inspectors of DIFE conducted a total of 43,644 inspections in factories, shops, and establishments. Out of these, 5,944 inspections were carried out using the Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA). Among the inspections done through LIMA, 281 were reactive inspections and 5,663 were proactive inspections. In addition, 959 of the inspections conducted were scheduled in advance, while 4,855 were conducted without prior notice. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, the DIFE has filed a total of 1426 complaints

in the Labour Court for the infringement of labour regulations. A total of 682 cases have been resolved, according to the DIFE (2022). However, the primary worry lies not only in the quantity of inspections, but also in the quality of safety inspections. Allegedly, the inspectors fail to carry out their inspections in accordance with their assigned responsibilities. In addition, it seems that the DIFE is disclosing less information. In addition, there is an ongoing issue with DIFE regarding the underreporting of accidents, injuries, and worker fatalities in the RMG industry. This discrepancy is evident when comparing the data supplied by other public and commercial organizations (Moazzem & Ahmed, 2023).

**(B) Department of Labour (DOL) :**

The primary responsibility of the Department of Labor (DOL) is to register trade unions and facilitate productive labor-industrial relations. This includes overseeing collective bargaining and negotiations, as well as ensuring the timely and efficient resolution of labor disputes (Establishments, 2021). In 2019, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) stated in an observation report that the online registration system for Trade Unions, which was recommended by the committee in 2017, was not yet fully operational. Despite acknowledging technical difficulties, the committee expressed confidence that the online registration system and the publicly accessible database would become fully functional soon, ensuring complete transparency in the registration process (Brief, 2020).

The Department of Labor (DOL) operates four training institutes, known as Industrial Relations Institutes, which provide instruction on Labour Laws, specifically focusing on safety and health regulations. The Department of Labor (DOL) operates 28 Labor Welfare Centers that offer medical services, including health care and family planning initiatives. (Labour, 2023).

**(C) Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence (BFSCD):**

The Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense department is accountable for firefighting, fire prevention, rescue operations, and maintaining fire safety in the event of natural or man-made disasters, as mandated by the Fire Prevention and Extinction Law of 2003. The organization addresses fire emergencies by utilizing a vast network of about 340 fire stations. Additionally, it provides a hotline, 9555555, to promptly receive notifications of fire occurrences (Establishments, 2021).

The fire fighters of the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense (BFSCD) exhibit an impressive response to industrial accidents in Bangladesh. However, it is concerning that these firefighters carry out their tasks without proper safety gear and sufficient training, despite the

increasing occurrence of factory fires in the country. In June 2022, a conflagration erupted at a chemical warehouse in Chattogram, the primary seaport of Bangladesh, resulting in the tragic demise of 12 firefighters. The number of casualties documented in the Fire Department was the greatest since 1981 (Sakib, 2022).

**(D) National Council for Industrial Health and Safety:**

National Council for Industrial Health and Safety is chaired by the State Minister, Ministry of Labour and Employment, and consists of concerned Ministries, representatives of employers, workers and industry experts.

**V. INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES ON OSH**

The United Nations, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) taking the lead on work-related matters, is collaborating with various international labor and human rights groups, brands, buyers, retailers, and trade unions to enhance the occupational safety and health (OSH) conditions in Bangladesh. A significant number of these efforts revolve around the RMG Sector. Two prominent organizations in this field are the Nirapon (which is the successor to the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety) and the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.

**(A) International Labour Organization (ILO):**

The primary focus of the ILO is to cultivate a secure and satisfactory working atmosphere while advocating for the rights of all workers in Bangladesh. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is collaborating with the Government, employers' and workers' organizations in Bangladesh to cultivate a proactive culture of safety and health by enhancing the country's national occupational safety and health (OSH) systems. This involves the formulation of OSH policies and frameworks, bolstering labor inspection and governance, facilitating OSH training, and organizing nationwide OSH campaigns (ILO, Safety and health at work in Bangladesh, 2023). The National Initiative ILO is providing support for conducting structural, fire, and electrical safety inspections of 1,549 RMG companies (Establishments, 2021).

**(B) Alliance for Bangladesh Workers Safety**

A consortium of North American apparel firms, retailers, and brands together initiated the Bangladesh Worker Safety Initiative with the aim of enhancing worker safety in ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh. The Alliance is dedicated to implementing long-lasting and comprehensive enhancements in fire, structural, and electrical safety in garment factories in Bangladesh. Since its establishment in 2013, about 1.6 million workers have received training in fire safety. Additionally, over 28,000 security officers have been taught in fire safety and

emergency evacuation. In late 2018, Nirapon was established by former members of the Alliance and dedicated clothing brands. Nirapon's objective is to advance safety management, provide training, and implement worker hotline programs (Establishments, 2021).

### **(C) Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh**

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh aims to eliminate the fear of fire, building collapses, and other preventable mishaps among workers by implementing appropriate health and safety measures. The Accord is a contractual agreement between international brands and retailers, Industrial Global Union, UNI Global Union, and eight affiliated unions in Bangladesh. Its purpose is to collaborate in order to establish a secure and healthy garment and textile industry in Bangladesh. This deal was signed shortly after the Rana Plaza building collapse. In 2013, more than 220 companies endorsed the five-year Accord. By May 2018, the Accord had made a substantial contribution to improving workplace safety for millions of textile workers in Bangladesh (ACCORD, ACCORD, 2023).

In order to uphold and extend the advancements made under the 2013 Accord, more than 190 brands and retailers have endorsed the 2018 Transition Accord with the global unions. This updated agreement came into force on 1 June 2018 (Bangladesh Accord, 2017).

On June 1, 2020, the Accord Steering Committee and the garment and knitwear manufacturing associations in Bangladesh (BGMEA, BKMEA) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding. As a result, the functions of the Accord in Bangladesh were transferred to the RMG Sustainability Council (RSC). The RSC is a Bangladeshi corporation established by the brands that have signed the Accord, the unions that have signed the Accord, and the BGMEA and BKMEA. RSC is a recently formed non-profit organization in Bangladesh that has been established and is managed by international clothing businesses, trade unions, and manufacturers. The RSC, which stands for the Ready-made Garments Sector Safety Council, was formally established in Bangladesh on May 20, 2020. Its purpose is to serve as a permanent organization responsible for monitoring safety and ensuring compliance in the Ready-made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh, as stated by ACCORD (2023).

### **(D) To improve the OSH in Bangladesh the following steps may be considered:**

- Conduct training and provide capacity support to increase knowledge on Law and compliance issues for ensuring OSH at workplace.
- DIFE must be stronger in Labour Inspection, follow up and OSH policy implication.
- Establishment of autonomous OSH institute for services.

- Establishment of National Occupational Safety & Health Council.
- Expand OSH programs to all occupations
- Expand union activities to all occupational sectors including.
- Update the laws and reduce inconsistencies.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

After Rana Plaza tragedy Bangladesh has taken steps to ensure better safety and health at workplace for worker. The laws, policies and intention of the government till date which are discussed in the paper requires effective implementation. For effective implementation it requires proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The government can take steps to establish necessary body for monitoring and co-ordination of work of different bodies to achieve the goal. Finally, we can conclude here that with the government all stakeholders involving employers, workers, international as well as national bodies should come forward with the sense of togetherness to bring significant change to ensure safe workplace for worker.

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