

The Daily Star

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Ending Sexual Abuse at Workplace

Separate law need of the hour: speakers



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54 female workers faced
workplace violence in 2021

5.6pc female UNOs faced
workplace sexual harassment

48,233 women, children
faced violence from Apr 2020
to Sept 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formulate separate law

Take stakeholders' opinions
on draft act

Ratification of ILO
Convention-190

Proper implementation
of HC verdict

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need for a comprehensive law to protect female workers from workplace harassment.

They said achievement in this area will help reduce gender-based violence as a whole.

Speakers urged the government to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention-190 recognising the "right to a workplace free from gender-based violence and harassment."

The roundtable, titled "Gender-based Harassment and Violence: Prevention Requires Coordinated Initiatives" was jointly organised by Gender Platform Bangladesh and The Daily Star at The Daily

Star Centre in the capital.

Addressing the roundtable, Nazrul Islam Khan, secretary-general of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), said a law preventing workplace violence and harassment against female workers is a necessity and should be formulated within a short time.

Mentioning that a draft has been submitted to the law ministry recently, he stressed the need for generating stakeholders' opinions on the draft act.

"Without a humane society, it will be very tough for us to accomplish our goal in this regard," said Shirin Akhter, lawmaker and member of parliamentary committee on primary and mass education ministry, while chairing the roundtable.

During a presentation, BILS Director Nazma Yesmin referred to a Transparency International Bangladesh study and said 5.6 percent of female UNOs in the country have faced sexual harassment while on duty, while a Manusher Jonno Foundation study found that from April 2020 to September 2021, 48,233 women and children faced various forms of violence in the country.

Moreover, a BILS study based on news reports found that from January to December 25 this year, 54 female workers faced workplace violence, she added.

Abdullah Hil Rakib, director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said they have introduced need-based training at different

factories to train new workers about their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, member of parliamentary committee on law and parliamentary affairs ministry, said the country's one failure in 50 years is the lack of focus on issues like human development or different global indexes to make rights-based progress.

Shamsun Nahar, member of parliamentary committee on labour and employment Ministry, said the country cannot be turned into a developed one if half of its population leave the workforce in fear of violence.

Abul Hossain, acting coordinator, Domestic Workers Rights Network, said domestic workers are among those who face workplace harassment both at home and abroad and formulating a preventive law in this regard is a requisite.

"Proper implementation of the High Court verdict on preventing workplace harassment needs to be ensured as well," he added.

Noor Kutub Alam Mannan, acting president of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik League, stressed the need for socially taken preventive measures to end workplace harassment.

Quamrul Ahsan, joint coordinator, Sramik Karmachari Oikko Parishad, and Susmita Paik, deputy director of National Human Rights Commission also spoke at the event.



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