



# Governing Body

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Institutional Section

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**Road map of actions to address all the outstanding issues mentioned in the complaint concerning non-observance by Bangladesh of the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)**

**Summary:** This document contains the road map of actions to address all the outstanding issues mentioned in the complaint concerning non-observance by Bangladesh of Conventions Nos 81, 87, and 98, sent by the Government of Bangladesh in response to the decision made by the Governing Body at its 341st Session (March 2021).

**Author unit:** International Labour Standards Department (NORMES).

**Related documents:** [GB.341/INS/11\(Rev.1\)](#).



## ▶ Background

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1. Bangladesh became a Member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1972 and ratified 29 ILO Conventions on a single day in the same year, manifesting its full commitment to the spirit of the ILO from the very beginning. Bangladesh has already ratified a total of 35 ILO Conventions including 7 of the 8 fundamental Conventions. Bangladesh is happy to inform of the remarkable progress made in recent years in the labour and employment sector in the country in terms of administrative, legal and policy reforms, particularly in improving trade union activities, workplace safety, wages, skills development and labour welfare.
2. The Government had pledged to further develop the labour sector as per international norms. The election manifesto of the Bangladesh Awami League on page 52, paragraph 3.17, mentions "Awami League is determined to implement the multilateral steps on labour policy and the welfare of the labourers taken in the light of the Constitution and ILO Convention". So there is no ambiguity about the earnest intentions of the Government to ameliorate the labour sector as per international practice and the Constitution of Bangladesh which assures fundamental rights to every citizen of Bangladesh including the workers. The situation of labour rights and workplace safety in Bangladesh is discussed by various bilateral, multilateral and international forums where the progress made by Bangladesh is duly recognized and appreciated.
3. Since 2013, Bangladesh has gone through massive legal and administrative reforms supported by practical activities to uphold labour rights and workplace safety in the country. The legal reforms included: amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (in 2013 and 2018); adoption of the Bangladesh EPZ Labour Act, 2019; and formulation of the Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2015. For effective enforcement of the Bangladesh Labour Act, the Directorate of Inspection for Factories and Establishments was upgraded to the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in January 2014 with 575 inspector posts and new field-level offices. The Directorate of Labour (DOL) was also upgraded to the Department of Labour, with an increase in manpower from 712 to 921. Additional resources and logistics were provided for these departments. Other initiatives included: conducting massive awareness-raising training for labour officials, inspectors, employers, trade union leaders and workers; establishing the Workers' Resource Centre; adopting standard operating procedures (SOPs) for trade union registration and anti-union discrimination; introducing a web-based mobile application "Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA)"; establishing the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC); and increasing the minimum wage for ready-made garment (RMG) sector workers in 2013 and 2018.
4. The ILO Committee of Experts has made specific comments for further improvement, particularly in relation to implementation of ILO Conventions Nos 81, 87 and 98. Further, the ILO Governing Body at its 340th Session (October–November 2020), in connection with the complaint concerning non-observance by Bangladesh of Conventions Nos 81, 87 and 98, has requested the Government to develop a time-bound road map of actions. The following road map has been developed accordingly under four priority areas with a series of specific actions set against timelines.

5. These four priority areas are:
  - (1) labour law reform;
  - (2) trade union registration;
  - (3) labour inspection and enforcement; and
  - (4) addressing acts of anti-union discrimination/unfair labour practices and violence against workers.
6. The implementation of the road map will impact all economic sectors of Bangladesh and involve the wider engagement of stakeholders across the sectors. The technical assistance of the ILO and development partners is also crucial for full implementation of the road map.
7. There will be a Tripartite Monitoring Committee, including high-level representation from the Government, to periodically discuss and monitor the implementation of the road map. The Ministry of Labour and Employment will issue a notification on the composition and terms of reference of this Committee.

## ▶ Road map

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### 1. Labour law reform

#### ▶ 1.1. Amendment of Bangladesh Labour Rules (BLR), 2015

Actions	Timeline
1.1.1. Review Committee meetings to scrutinize amendment proposals	Mar. 2021
1.1.2. Tripartite Consultative Council meetings	Mar.-June 2021
1.1.3. Placing the amendment proposal to the Cabinet	July-Aug. 2021
1.1.4. Vetting of amendment proposals by the Ministry of Law	Aug.-Sep. 2021
1.1.5. Issuance of Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) by the Ministry of Law/ Gazette notification	Sep. 2021

#### ▶ 1.2. Amend the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (as amended in 2018)

Actions	Timeline
1.2.1. Formation of the Tripartite Labour Law Review Committee	July 2021
1.2.2. Receiving amendment proposals from constituents and different ministries for onward transmission to the Review Committee	July-Sep. 2021
1.2.3. Meetings of the Review Committee to examine the amendment proposals received from different stakeholders and in light of the comments by the ILO supervisory bodies in relation to Conventions Nos 81, 87 and 98	Oct. 2021-June 2022
1.2.4. National- and divisional-level consultations on amendment proposals	Jan.-June 2022
1.2.5. Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on amendments	July-Sep. 2022

Actions	Timeline
1.2.6. Tripartite Consultative Council meetings	Oct. 2021–Sep. 2022
1.2.7. Meetings of the Review Committee (as required)	July–Aug. 2022
1.2.8. Examination by the Examination Committee of the Cabinet	July–Aug. 2022
1.2.9. Placing the amendment proposal to the Cabinet for preliminary approval	July–Aug. 2022
1.2.10. Vetting of amendment proposal to the Ministry of Law	Sep.–Nov. 2022
1.2.11. Placing the amendment proposal to the Cabinet for final approval	Oct.–Nov. 2022
1.2.12. Placing a proposed amendment bill to the Parliament	Nov.–Dec. 2022
1.2.13. Scrutinization by the Parliamentary Standing Committee	Nov.–Dec. 2022
1.2.14. Bill passed by the Parliament	Nov.–Dec. 2022
1.2.15. Assent by the Honorable President/Gazette notification	Nov.–Dec. 2022

▶ **1.3. Amendment of Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2015, after 2022 further amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA)**

Actions	Timeline
1.3.1. Review Committee meetings to scrutinize amendment proposals	Jan.–Apr. 2023
1.3.2. Tripartite Consultative Council meetings	May–June 2023
1.3.3. Placing the amendment proposals to the Cabinet	July–Aug. 2023
1.3.4. Vetting of amendment proposals by the Ministry of Law	Aug.–Sep. 2023
1.3.5. Issuance of SROs by the Ministry of Law/Gazette notification	Sep. 2023

▶ **1.4. Adoption of export processing zone (EPZ) Labour Rules**

Actions	Timeline
1.4.1. Preparing initial draft of EPZ Labour Rules	May–July 2021
1.4.2. Discussion with concerned stakeholders, including investors, workers' associations, relevant ministries (as required)	Aug.–Dec. 2021
1.4.3. Formation of Tripartite Committee to review and finalize the draft	Dec. 2021–Mar. 2022
1.4.4. Send final draft to the Ministry of Law for vetting	Apr.–June 2022
1.4.5. Gazette notification	July 2022

▶ **1.5. Amendment Bangladesh EPZ Labour Act, 2019**

Actions	Timeline
1.5.1. Implementation of EPZ Labour Rules	July 2022–June 2023
1.5.2. Impact analysis of the adopted EPZ Labour Rules	July 2023–June 2024
1.5.3. Discussion with concerned stakeholders, including investors, workers' associations, relevant ministries (as required) on reviewing EPZ Labour Act	July 2023–June 2024

Actions	Timeline
1.5.4. Amend the EPZ Labour Act in light of the comments of the ILO supervisory bodies	June 2024–Dec. 2026

## 2. Trade union registration

Actions	Timeline
2.1. Explore and implement ways of further simplifying the registration process through tripartite consultations:	
2.1.1. Overhaul the existing online registration system in line with the latest BLA amendments and through developing a comprehensive system and train relevant officials of DOL and its regional offices	June 2022
2.1.2. Establish a pre-application service at the Department of Labour to facilitate workers' preparation of registration documents by scrutinizing trade union registration application documents	June 2021
2.1.3. Continue with the provision for an offline registration system in case of limited internet access for the concerned workers	2021–26
2.2. Give training to the workers and employers in all sectors on the trade union registration process (including online registration system) and providing regular training to relevant officials (DOL, registrar, divisional and regional officers) on the handling of registration applications to ensure rapid and efficient handling and to avoid arbitrary denial of applications	2021–26
2.3. Publicly accessible online database on registration to be made fully operational and regularly updated by providing sufficient human and financial resources (include number of applications submitted, granted, filed and rejected)	May 2021

## 3. Labour inspection and enforcement

### ▶ 3.1. Provide for new labour inspectors and ensure full functionality of the labour inspectorate

Actions	Timeline
3.1.1. Fill vacant labour inspector posts in consultation with the Bangladesh Public Service Commission and through promotion by the MoLE	Mar. 2021–Mar. 2023
3.1.2. Creation of new posts and recruitment of labour inspectors	Dec. 2023
3.1.3. Full application of the LIMA digitalized labour inspection system (all offices)	Dec. 2021
3.1.4. Develop competencies of labour inspection staff through regular training and capacity-building measures and creating more senior positions	Dec. 2023 (Action 3.1.2)
3.1.5. Implement and promote effective labour inspection processes:	
3.1.5.1. Prioritization of safety issues, target establishments to be inspected and monitor progress on remediation of non-conformity on priority issues identified by labour inspections	Dec. 2021

Actions	Timeline
3.1.5.2. Create a database for monitoring the efficiency of labour inspections through a yearly strategic labour inspection plan (upgrading of existing inspection plan, if needed)	Dec. 2021
3.1.5.3. Take effective measures to ensure sufficiently dissuasive penalties and ensure that the DIFE Legal Unit responsible for the follow-up of labour law violations creates nine new posts of law officers (currently one law officer)	Dec. 2023
3.1.6. Formulate DIFE inspection modalities for EPZs in collaboration with the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA)	June 2022 (current system to continue until the modalities are formulated)
3.1.7. Incorporate the SOPs on labour complaints and investigation in the BLA	Dec. 2022 (Action 1.2)
3.1.8. Promote effective functioning of the National Occupational Safety and Health Council and of Safety Committees	2021–26
3.1.9. Development of a framework for Ready-Made Garment Sustainability Council (RSC) coordination/monitoring in consultation with the Ministry of Commerce	Mar. 2022

► **3.2. Set up an efficient system to follow-up on worker's complaints received through the helpline**

Actions	Timeline
A. DIFE	
3.2.1. Continuation of the helpline (16357) under revenue budget of DIFE	Completed in Jan. 2021 and to follow
3.2.2. Establish a complaint management cell to follow up cases directly by the labour inspectors	Completed
3.2.3. Develop a database of the complaints covering information including the following elements: (a) information on the number and nature of the allegations; (b) information on the nature of the follow-up to calls	Dec. 2021
3.2.4. Organize regular training programmes for all service personnel/ officials receiving complaints via the helpline on the SOP on grievance handling	2021–26
B. BEPZA	
3.2.5. Establishment of the helpline for all workers in EPZs	Completed in Mar. 2021

► **3.3. Eliminate the backlog of cases at labour courts, including in the Dhaka Metropolitan Area**

Actions	Timeline
3.3.1. Take steps to make the three newly established labour courts fully functional:	
3.3.1.1. Set up offices in three different locations	Done
3.3.1.2. Deployment of judges by the Ministry of Law	Done
3.3.1.3. Recruit registrar by Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC)	Dec. 2021
3.3.1.4. Recruit other official support staff	June 2022
3.3.1.5. Select representatives from employers and workers	Done
3.3.1.6. Train labour court officials	Dec. 2022
3.3.2. Establish new labour courts in Narayanganj, Gazipur, Cumilla and Faridpur districts:	
3.3.2.1. Post creation by the Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Finance and MoLE	June 2022
3.3.2.2. Set up offices for the newly established labour courts	June 2023
3.3.2.3. Deployment of judges by the Ministry of Law for new labour courts	Dec. 2023
3.3.2.4. Recruit registrar by BPSC and other manpower for official support	Dec. 2023
3.3.2.5. Select representatives from employers and workers	Dec. 2023
3.3.2.6. Train labour court officials	June 2024
3.3.3. Deploy one additional judge (member) to the Labour Appellate Tribunal:	
3.3.3.1. Creation of one post of additional judge (member) to the Labour Appellate Tribunal and official supporting staff	Dec. 2022
3.3.3.2. Set up offices for the newly created post of additional judge (member)	Dec. 2023
3.3.3.3. Deployment of additional judge (member)	Dec. 2023
3.3.3.4. Recruit other manpower for official support	Dec. 2023
3.3.4. Establish pilot processes to classify cases in consultation with the judges of the labour courts with a view to addressing case backlogs	July 2021–June 2022
3.3.5. Continue to work on improving the court facilities and premises	2021–26

► **3.4. Promoting an effective conciliation and independent arbitration system as a means of alternative dispute resolution (ADR)**

Actions	Timeline
3.4.1. Establish a Conciliation and Arbitration Cell at DOL to provide a secretariat service and monitor individual cases as need be	July 2021
3.4.2. Develop an SOP for a conciliation system through tripartite consultations	Dec. 2021
3.4.3. Appointment of conciliators through Gazette notification	June 2022



Actions	Timeline
3.4.4. Develop an SOP for an arbitration system through tripartite consultations	June 2022
3.4.5. Establish an arbitrators' panel	Dec. 2022
3.4.6. Promote a conciliation and arbitration system as ADR	2021–26
3.4.7. Provide information sessions on the conciliation and arbitration system to workers, employers and DOL officials	2021–26

#### 4. Addressing acts of anti-union discrimination/unfair labour practices and violence against workers

##### ▶ 4.1. Preventive measures

Actions	Timeline
4.1.1. Conduct regular training for awareness-raising for responsible factory security staff, police and employers to prevent violence, harassment, unfair labour practices and anti-union acts	2021–26
4.1.2. Develop and regularly update (online) databases to provide an overview of the number and nature of training programmes, as well as the number of trainees among factory security staff, police, employers and workers	DOL: Dec. 2021 BEPZA: Dec. 2023 MOHA: Dec. 2023
4.1.3. Develop a Bangla language compendium of all existing and relevant laws, rules and regulations (including the use of minimum force and applicable sanctions or penalties for any proven violation) in order to train and raise awareness among industrial police and relevant law enforcement agencies (LEAs)	MOHA: June 2022
4.1.4. Continue to train and provide clear instructions to the industrial police and relevant LEAs on the use of minimum force, respect of human rights and labour rights, including on trade union rights and civil liberties during labour protests	MOHA, MoLE: 2021–26

##### ▶ 4.2. Investigation of violence and harassment against workers, anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices

Actions	Timeline
4.2.1. Continue to provide regular training and clear instructions (including monitoring of instructions) for all DOL staff handling complaints on how to comply with the SOPs on anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices against workers	2021–26
4.2.2. Continue to provide regular information to all workers on their rights and on how to complain and access legal support in case those rights are violated/abused	2021–26
4.2.3. Continue to sensitize managers/employers, and security staff on how they can support the investigations	2021–26
4.2.4. Continue to provide regular training and clear instructions (including monitoring of instructions) for all personnel handling cases of alleged acts of violence and harassment against workers, including in cases of protests	2021–26

	Actions	Timeline
4.2.5.	Rapid and thorough investigation of alleged cases of violence and harassment of the police against workers, including in cases of legal protests	2021–26
4.2.6.	Clarifying the BLA and EPZ Labour Ordinance that blacklisting of current and former workers is prohibited as an unfair labour practice	Action points 1.2 and 1.5

► **4.3. Ensure timely and dissuasive sanctions/convictions and related information**

	Actions	Timeline
4.3.1.	Review for possible upward revision of fines for employers for anti-union discrimination and unfair labour practices in the BLA	Dec. 2022 (Action 1.2 on BLA)
4.3.2.	Compile and regularly update statistics on complaints received and of alleged incidents of violence and harassment, their follow-up including remedies for victims and sanctions/convictions imposed	DOL: June 2021 and update quarterly MOHA: Periodically monitor with concerned LEAs

► **4.4. Promoting social dialogue**

	Actions	Timeline
4.4.1.	Work on developing an evidence-based National Wage Policy through tripartite consultations and exchange of views with other relevant stakeholders	July 2021–June 2023
4.4.2.	Develop an institutional mechanism and capacity-building for national and sectoral Tripartite Consultative Councils (TCCs)	Dec. 2021
4.4.3.	Develop and implement a road map on the social partners' awareness- and capacity-building for social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels, including sectoral and national levels	Dec. 2021 and following
4.4.4.	Work on finalizing the project proposal on introducing an Employment Injury Insurance Scheme through tripartite consultations and piloting the project in collaboration with the ILO, towards possible scaling up at the national level:	
	(a) finalizing the project design, scope and financing;	July 2021–Dec. 2021
	(b) piloting the project	Jan. 2022–Dec. 2023
4.4.5.	Continue to work under the framework of the Cabinet Division's National Social Security Action Plan (2021–26) towards "Introducing Unemployment, Accident, Sickness and Maternity Insurance under NSIS (National Social Insurance Scheme)"	2021–26