

**National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Structural Integrity
in the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh**

**Ministry of Labour and Employment
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

25 July, 2013

National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Structural Integrity

Background

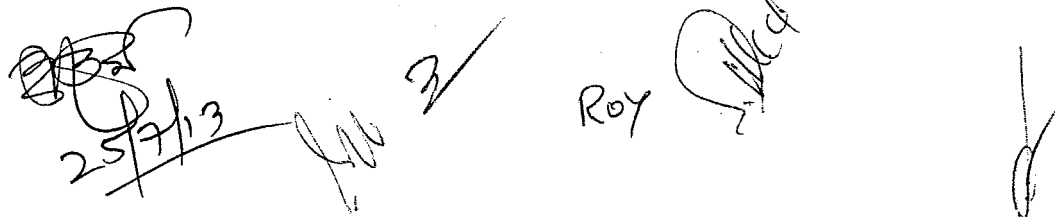
Following the fire of November 24, 2012 at Tazreen Fashions Limited in which 112 workers lost their lives and many others were injured, the Tripartite Partners adopted a Joint Statement of Commitment during a meeting organized jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on January 15, 2013 (Annex 1). Through the Joint Statement the Tripartite Partners committed to work together to develop a National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety by the end of February, 2013, with a view to taking comprehensive action aimed at preventing any further loss of life, limb and property due to work place fires and fire-related accidents and incidents. A further factory fire on January 26, 2013 at Smart Export Garments, in which 8 workers lost their lives and others were injured underlined the need for urgent tripartite action in this respect. To ensure the timely development of a National Tripartite Plan of Action, the MoLE established a Tripartite Committee, which met four times with the assistance of the ILO. The National Tripartite Plan of Action was endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment on March 24, 2013.

On 24 April 2013, the Rana Plaza building collapsed leaving 1,129 dead and almost 2,000 injured, many of whom will remain permanently disabled. Most of the victims were garment sector workers given that the building housed 5 RMG factories. The ILO subsequently dispatched a High-Level Mission, led by Deputy Director General for Field Operations and Partnerships, Mr. Gilbert Houngbo, to Bangladesh from 1-4 May to convey the solidarity of the ILO with those affected by these tragic events, the partners from government, labour, and industry, and to the nation as a whole. The Mission engaged with the tripartite partners and other stakeholders to identify what needs to be done to prevent any such future tragedies. Within the framework of the mission, the tripartite partners issued a Joint Statement in which they committed to the development of an action plan focusing on six short and medium term steps aimed at improving structural integrity of RMG factories and other measures to prevent further tragedies from occurring.

The current Tripartite Plan of Action is a merger of the National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire safety and the tripartite Joint Statement so as to provide an integrated platform for action.

Objectives

The objectives of the Plan of Action are:

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1. To identify activities that the tripartite partners agree fall within their individual and/or collective responsibility and need to be implemented to ensure an integrated approach to promoting fire safety and structural integrity in Bangladesh, in particular in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector; and
2. To provide entry points for other stakeholders (buyers/brands, international development organizations, donors, etc.) that wish to support implementation of the Plan of Action, as well as to provide a platform for coordination for stakeholders that wish to initiate additional fire safety promotion activities.

It should be underlined that the Tripartite Partners recognize that improving fire safety and structural integrity will require the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders. In this respect, it is hoped that Plan of Action will act as a catalyst and core principles for all stakeholders to work together to ensure its implementation. However, the Plan of Action is not meant to be an exclusory document and the Tripartite Partners welcome the development and implementation by any stakeholder of any other activities that would constitute a meaningful contribution to improving fire safety and structural integrity in Bangladesh.

Activities and Monitoring

In order to ensure an integrated approach to the promotion of fire safety and structural integrity, the Plan of Action foresees activities on three levels:

1. legislation and policy;
2. administration; and
3. practical activities.

The Plan of Action also identifies the respective social partner(s) responsible for the implementation of the activities, as well as a timeframe for implementation. The full Plan of Action can be found in Table 1.


To ensure implementation of the activities in the Plan of Action there will be a High-Level Tripartite Committee with a mandate to:


1. monitor progress in implementation of the activities in the Plan of Action;

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2. review and update the Plan of Action as necessary, including for activities to be carried out in 2014 and 2015; and
3. develop ways through which other stakeholders can support implementation of - and coordination with - the Plan of Action.

The High-Level Tripartite Committee (Annex 2) will be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and will report to the Cabinet Committee on the Ready-Made Garment Sector established by the Government on February 7, 2013. The Committee will meet on a quarterly basis, but the Chairperson can call for any additional meetings if deemed necessary. All partners which have committed to the implementation of any activity in the Action Plan, will report to the Committee on a quarterly basis, and upon completion of the activity, on progress made in implementation. It should be underlined, however, that the Plan of Action is not meant to be an exclusory document and the Tripartite Partners welcome the development and implementation by any stakeholder of any other activities that would constitute a meaningful contribution to improving fire safety and structural integrity in Bangladesh. The Committee will use the good offices of its Members and the organizations they represent to encourage and assist partners in the implementation of the activities in the Action Plan. The Committee will provide recommendations to the Cabinet Committee for action to be taken. All activities will be coordinated through the MoLE.



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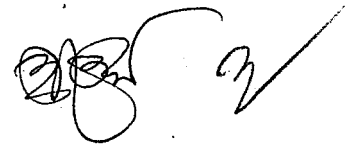


Table 1: National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Structural Integrity

ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
LEGISLATION AND POLICY				
<p>1 Submission of a labour law reform package to Parliament, during its June/July session.</p> <p>The amendment package, which has already been under development by Government for some time, must consider inputs of the tripartite partners and should improve protection, in law and practice, for the fundamental rights to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, as well as occupational safety and health.</p>	Cabinet	MoLE	---	July 15, 2013
<p>2 Adoption of National Occupational Safety and Health Policy.</p> <p>The Government of Bangladesh has developed a draft National Occupational Safety and Health Policy, in consultation with the social partners and with the assistance of the ILO. This Policy is currently undergoing final review by the Government before adoption.</p>	Cabinet	MoLE	---	30 April 2013
<p>3 Review and, where necessary, adjustment of relevant laws, rules and regulations.</p> <p>Fire and building safety (including related issues such as building, electrical and chemical safety) is regulated through different legislative and administrative instruments. It is considered necessary to review all relevant instruments to ensure they are up to date and any gaps and/or overlap in legislation and administrative authority can be addressed.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	DCFIFE, FSCD, Power Cell of Power Division, Rajuk	31 December 2013

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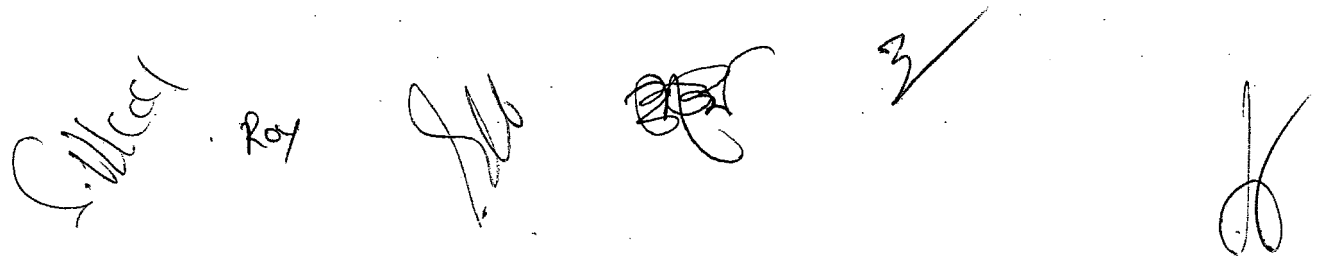
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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>4 Establishment of a Task Force on Building and Fire Safety of the Cabinet Committee for the Ready-Made Garment Sector.</p> <p>Upon a request by the MoLE, the Cabinet Committee was established by the Government on February 7, 2013, with a mandate to facilitate development of the ready-made garment, including labour affairs, building and fire safety. It is considered that the establishment of a Task Force on building and fire safety will ensure due attention is paid to this issue by the Cabinet Committee, especially with regard to upgrading relevant industry infrastructure, including electrical systems, street hydrant points, etc.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	MoRDM, MOLGRD, FSCD, Power Cell of Power Division, Energy and Mineral Resource Division, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, IBC	30 May 2013
ADMINISTRATION				
<p>1 Recruitment of staff to fill currently vacant posts (Factory Inspectors and support staff), as well as 200 additional Labour Inspectors in the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments.</p> <p>To improve the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments it is considered a priority to ensure that posts of factory inspectors and support staff that are currently vacant are filled and additional staff is hired in the short term.</p>	---	MoLE	DIFE	31 December 2013



ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>2 Upgrade the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments to a Directorate.</p> <p>In order to improve labour inspection capacity it is considered a priority to upgrade the Department to a Directorate, with an annual regular budget allocation adequate to enable i) the recruitment of a minimum of 800 inspectors and ii) the development of the infrastructure required for their proper functioning.</p>	Cabinet	MoLE	---	31 December 2013
<p>3 Implementation of MoLE project to strengthen capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments.</p> <p>On January 8, 2013, the Planning Commission approved a project to improve the capacity of the Department of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments. The project has a budget of Tk 24 crore, 82 lac (approximately USD 3 million) and foresees the development of infrastructure and recruitment and training of 98 additional staff, including 33 Factory Inspectors. It will run up to 31 December 2014.</p>	---	MoLE	DCIFE	31 December 2014
<p>4 Review and, where necessary, adjustment of factory licensing and certification procedures concerning fire safety, including electrical, chemical and environmental safety.</p> <p>The factory fire safety licensing system, including electrical, chemical and environmental safety, is divided between a number of different government authorities. It is considered that the relevant procedures need to be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and any gaps and/or overlap in legislation and administrative authority can be addressed.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	FSCD, Department of Environment, DCIFE	30 June 2013

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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>5 Consideration of the establishment of a one-stop shop for fire safety licensing and certification.</p> <p>Within the framework of the mandate of the Cabinet Committee it is felt necessary to consider whether or not the establishment of a one-stop shop for fire safety licensing and certification would improve administration and monitoring of fire safety at factory level.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	FSCD, Department of Environment, Department of Explosives, DCIFE	31 December 2013
<p>6 Development and introduction of unified fire safety checklist to be used by all relevant government agencies.</p> <p>Fire safety inspection is currently undertaken by a number of different government agencies. It is considered that the development and use of a single fire safety checklist would improve the quality, transparency and predictability of fire safety inspection services.</p>	---	MoLE	DCIFE, FSCD, Rajuk	30 April, 2013
PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES				
<p>1 Factory level fire safety needs assessment.</p> <p>Following the Tazreen Fashions fire, the BGMEA initiated a needs assessment programme within which members of the Alumni Association of Architects of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology are undertaking a comprehensive fire safety review of 10 garment factories. See also under 2.</p>	---	BGMEA	FSCD	30 April 2013

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<p>2 Development and implementation of a factory fire safety improvement programme.</p> <p>Based on the findings and recommendations from the needs assessment (see 1), as well as other sources of information (including the Accord and Alliance), the National Tripartite Committee intends to take the lead in the development and implementation of a tripartite+ fire safety improvement programme.</p>	MoLE, MoHA, MoHPW	National Tripartite Committee	DCIFE, FSCD, Rajuk, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, IBC	31 December 2013
<p>3 Assessment of the structural integrity of all active RMG factories.</p> <p>To minimize the risk of further factory collapse, it is considered that an assessment of all active export-oriented, ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh will be conducted with the objective of identifying factory buildings imposing a high risk of collapse, so that timely remedial actions, including relocation of unsafe factories, can be taken.</p>	MoLE, MoHPW	National Tripartite Committee	DCIFE, FSCD, Rajuk, PWD, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, IBC	31 December 2014
<p>4 Development of a transparent and accountable industry sub-contracting system.</p> <p>Given the consensus that the lack of transparency and accountability within the current sub-contracting system is a major contributing factor for the existence of sub-standard fire safety conditions in relevant factories, it is considered that a new system needs to be developed.</p>	MoC, MoLE	BGMEA, BKMEA	BEF, NCCWE, IBC	30 June 2013

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<p>5 Delivery of fire safety "crash course" for mid-level factory management and supervisors.</p> <p>Because of the role played by mid-level managers and supervisors in the Tazreen Fashions factory fire, the BGMEA initiated a one-day fire safety "crash course" for mid-level managers and supervisors. All BGMEA members have to participate in this one-day course. Training is provided by the Fire Service. A number of courses have already been delivered but the BGMEA has calculated that a total of 88 courses need to be delivered to cover all its members.</p>	MoHA	BGMEA, BKMEA	FSCD	30 September 2013
<p>6 Development and delivery of specific training on fire safety for union leaders.</p> <p>In recognition of the fact that unions play a vital role in promoting fire safety, it is considered that union leaders need access to fire safety training so that they are better able to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures, as well as raise awareness of union members.</p>	MoLE, MoHA	NCCWE, IBC	BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, FSCD	31 December 2013
<p>7 Development and delivery of mass worker education tools.</p> <p>To raise awareness of workers regarding fire safety and OSH risks and prevention, it is considered necessary to develop and distribute mass worker education tools. Such tools could include tv and radio spots and dramas, street theatre, and print materials. Given that the Industrial Relations Institute has a legal mandate to educate workers, the MoLE was assigned as lead agency.</p>	---	MoLE	NCCWE, IBC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, DoL, DCIFE, FSCD	31 December 2013

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<p>8 Establishment of a worker fire safety hotline.</p> <p>To enable workers to report fire safety risks in factories they work at, the Fire Service will establish a hot line combined with a system to follow-up on any information received through the hot line. This hot line will be different from the general fire emergency alarm number.</p>	---	MoHA, BTCL, BTRC	FSCD, NCCWE, IBC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	30 June 2013
<p>9 Development and delivery of specific training on fire safety for Factory Inspectors.</p> <p>To improve the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments it is considered necessary to ensure that Inspectors have access to training that will enable them to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures, as well as provide advice to employers, unions and workers on how to address fire risks. The Industrial Relations Institute has the mandate to train Factory Inspectors, in this respect. The MoLE, ILO and GIZ are currently cooperating in the implementation of a MoLE Compliance Capacity Building programme that includes Inspector training.</p>	---	MoLE	DIFE, DOL, FSCD	30 June 2013
<p>10 Strengthen the capacity of the FSCD.</p> <p>It is considered necessary to strengthen the capacity of the FSCD by modernizing equipment, increasing the number of Fire Inspectors to a sufficient level, providing necessary training, and increasing the number of fire stations in industrial RMG areas.</p>	MoHA	FSCD		30 September 2013

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<p>Development of guidelines for the establishment of labour-management committees on occupational safety and health and/or fire safety.</p> <p>11 The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 requires the establishment of labour-management Participation Committees in every establishment with 50 or more employees. To encourage the establishment of specific occupational safety and health and/or fire safety sub-committees, it is considered necessary to develop guidelines for employers, unions and workers as to how this can be done.</p>	---	MoLE	DCIFE, FSCD, NCCWE, IBC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	30 September 2013
<p>Development and dissemination of self-assessment and remediation tools on fire safety.</p> <p>12 To enable employers, unions and worker representatives to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures it is considered necessary to develop and disseminate self-assessment and remediation tools.</p>	---	MoLE, MoHA	DCIFE, FSCD, NCCWE, IBC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	31 December 2013

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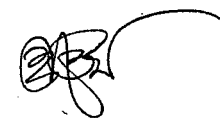
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<p>13</p> <p>Development of a tripartite+ protocol for compensation of the families of workers who die and workers who are injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases.</p> <p>To ensure that compensation for families of workers who die and workers who are injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases in the RMG sector is provided in a transparent and equitable manner, it is considered necessary to develop a tripartite+ protocol outlining legal entitlements to compensation, as well as procedures for compensation provided based on other considerations. The development of this protocol will include a review of the appropriateness of the level of current legal entitlements to compensation, bearing in mind the concept of loss of earnings and the provisions of ILO Convention No. 121.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, IBC	31 December 2013
<p>14</p> <p>Establishment of a publicly accessible data base on safety issues in ready-made garment factories.</p> <p>To improve transparency and enable the development of an industry fire license expiry notification system the MoLE will establish and maintain a website which will contain information related to fire safety for each of their members. At a minimum, information will include fire and other relevant licenses, dates and frequency of fire drills, and information on relevant management and worker education and training provided.</p>		MoLE	FSCD, DCIFE, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	31 December 2013

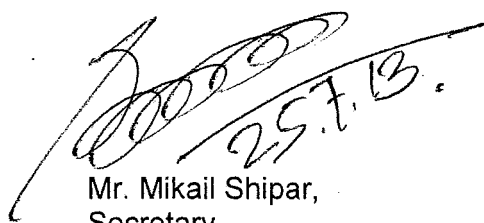
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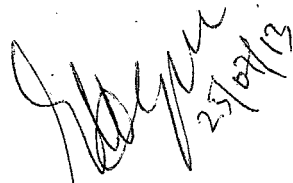
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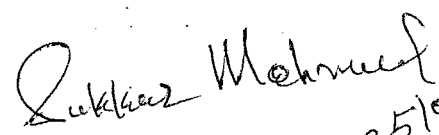



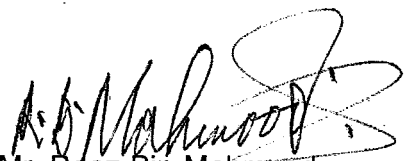


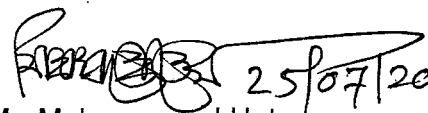
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<p>15 Redeployment of the RMG workers that were rendered unemployed as well as rehabilitated disabled workers.</p> <p>The Rana Plaza collapse left thousands of workers unemployed including those workers that became permanently disabled and will need to undergo rehabilitation and re-training. These workers will need to be redeployed to jobs elsewhere.</p>	MoLE	BGMEA, BKMEA	BEF, NCCWE, IBC	30 June 2014

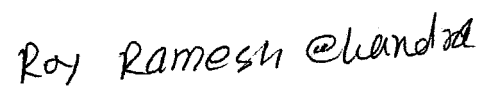

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Mr. Mikail Shipar,
Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and Employment
(MOLE)


25/07/13
Mr. Md. Fazlul Hoque,
President,
Bangladesh Employers Federation
(BEF)


25/07/2013
Mr. Sukkur Mahmud,
Chairman,
National Coordination Committee for
Worker's Education (NCCWE)


Mr. Reaz-Bin-Mahmood,
Vice President(Finance)
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and
Exporters Association
(BGMEA)


25/07/2013
Mr. Mohammad Hatem,
First Vice President,
Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and
Exporters Association
(BKMEA)


Mr. Roy Ramesh Chandra,
Secretary-General,
Industrial Bangladesh Council (IBC),

Annex 1
Tripartite Statement of Commitment (to be inserted)

Annex 2

The Members of the High Level Tripartite Committee will be (not according to seniority):

1. Joint Secretary (Labour), Ministry of Labour and Employment;
2. Director of Labour, Department of Labour;
3. Deputy Secretary (Labour), Ministry of Labour and Employment;
4. Chief Inspector, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments;
5. Chairperson, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK);
6. Director General, Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense;
7. President, Bangladesh Employers Federation;
8. President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association
9. President, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association;
10. Chairperson, National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education
11. Secretary General, IndustriALL Bangladesh Council

The Committee can co-opt any tripartite representative as a Member of the Committee and invite any person as an advisor and/or observer.

Annex 3

List of Acronyms (in alphabetical order)

BEF:	Bangladesh Employers Federation
BGMEA:	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association
BKMEA:	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association;
BTCL:	Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.
BTRC:	Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission
DCIFE:	Department of the Chief Inspector for Factories and Establishments
DOL:	Department of Labour
FSCD:	Fire Service and Civil Defense
IBC	IndustriALL Bangladesh Council
ILO:	International Labour Organization
MOC:	Ministry of Commerce
MoFDM:	Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
MoHA:	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHPW:	Ministry of Housing and Public Works
MoLE:	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MOLGRDC:	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives

NCCWE:	National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education
PBD:	Bangladesh Power Development Board
PWD	Public Works Department