

Bangladesh: Speech at the public meeting of sugarcane workers held in Gaibandha

Sunday 26 September 2021, by [BWF](#), [HOSSAIN FayeZ](#) (Date first published: 25 September 2021).

On 25 September 2021 a public meeting of sugarcane workers was held in Gaibandha, a far northern district of Bangladesh. The meeting was organized by the coalition of several workers' organizations including Bangladesh Shramik Federation. AAM FayeZ Hossain, General Secretary of the Federation read out the written presentation below in meeting.

Written presentation of the General Secretary of Bangladesh Workers Federation in the meeting of Representatives

- Sugar mills should not be nationalized or shut down
- Increase sugarcane cultivation, increase the productivity of the mill

Fighting friends,

During the Corona crisis, the government shut down six sugar mills in December last year. If successful, the government will close down other sugar mills like jute mills. 18,000 workers will lose their jobs directly, millions of farmers will die. Roads, railways, residential areas, markets, schools, colleges and small scale industries built around the sugar mills will be closed and more than five hundred thousand people will sit on the road. In the midst of a terrible workers' and peasants' dissatisfaction, a Manga situation will arise from house to house. The cry in the air will add to the malnutrition of the working peasant and the corruption of the looting of the ruler-exploiter. Even imagining this situation, the physical body becomes horrible.

You must have witnessed the eviction of the law enforcement agencies in the morning of November 6, 2016, in the Sahebganj area of Gobindaganj Upazila of Gaibandha, without notice, without any persuasion. Firing started against unarmed people indiscriminately when they built resistance for safety of their life and property. Mangal Maddi was martyred on the spot and Shyamal Hembrum was martyred who could have been taken to hospital. Bimal Kisku, Dwijen Tudu, Charan Saren and others were injured. Many were arrested. Today, in this great meeting of delegates, we respectfully remember the shining example of their struggle to save their land and sanctify their land with their own blood, greetings and red salute.

Dear Brothers and sisters,

You must have been aware that the Workers' Struggle Council is emerging as a class-conscious organization based on the working class. The desired goal can be achieved only if the peasant movement and the labor movement of the country run side by side through the struggle of the movement based on the working class.

Today, it is very sad to say that the workers and peasants may not fall at the level of the people of this state. If we become citizens, we can never become unemployed refugees because of the decision of the state. The real solution to today's problem lies in changing the character of the state system that turns its owners into jobless refugees in their own state. Their exploitation along with rule, looting and corruption should be uprooted. This also requires ideological unity.

Dear brothers and sisters,

We know that out of 15 sugar mills of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation, Keru, Setabganj, Thakurgaon, North Bengal and Rangpur sugar mills have huge farms. The remaining 10 depend on farmers' sugarcane supply. The current total production of sugar mills is around 100,000 tonnes. But the current demand of sugar in the country is 1400000 tons. In 2004, a privately owned white sugar refinery was set up in the country. The production capacity of 5 refineries is 3200000 tons. As a result, the sugar market fell into the hands of the refinery syndicate. By showing thumbs up to the corporation, they create the reality of selling at a higher price in the country even though it is less in the international market.

Byproducts of sugar mills such as molasses, sugarcane, thermal power, ethanol, yeast, organic manure etc. also help to keep the sugar mills profitable.

It is a matter of regret that the corporations and the government are trying to shut down the sugar mills in the name of denationalization, leasing of factories and land, special industrial zones, etc. showing the loss of hundreds of crores of Takas. The ruling governments do not have a policy to keep jute, yarn, textile, sugar etc. in the hands of the people. The main reasons for the losses of sugar mills are ubiquitous corruption, looting, institutional incompetence, theft and immorality. The state has not yet issued a statement inquiring into the cause of the loss. As a result, all the responsibility for corruption and looting of the last 50 years lies with the ruling party.

We are demanding today that sugar mills cannot be denationalized. They will not accept this demand just like that. Greater unity is needed to comply. The unity of the workers and peasants. Due to that unity people of other classes and professions of the society will also come forward. Awakening will happen. Awakening of the people.

Dear friends of struggle,

Sugar mills and sugarcane fields are burning in the fire of capitalist greed. The miscreants have burnt down the houses and property of the poor farmers. They have looted as well. The struggle of resistance against these capitalists must be conducted coherently, and in a well-planned way. Our workers have a tough acid test in front of the farmer.

The Bangladesh Workers Federation does not support the denationalization of any industry, including jute, yarn, textiles, sugar and ceramics. No country in the capitalist world has squandered state resources for the same reason that governments have denationalized at various times on the pretext of a free market economy. The real reason why the government and the sugar corporation are enthusiastic about this is that we are once again talking about corruption, bribery, looting, exploitation and expansion of rule.

If the sugar mills are operational, not only the workers and employees will benefit. The economic value of the various by-products developed in the industry, market, towns, is many times more than the losses of the sugar mills. If the sugar mill is open, the workers and employees will survive. Dissatisfaction will start when you stop. For this reason, the heirs of the owners at the time of land acquisition will reclaim the land. We are supporting that movement in advance on behalf of the working class. I swear to intensify the class struggle.

My request to all the intellectuals, workers-employers and sugarcane farmers, leaders of Workers and Workers Action Council, delegates and farmers leaders who came to today's meeting is to form a struggle committee with everyone to protect the sugar mill. Give feedback. Take up the agitation program with everyone's opinion. Based on everyone's participation, finalize what programs can be taken for the next 3 months. The movement has to be done locally as well as nationally in Dhaka. As important as the propaganda movement is, so is the presence on the ground. Take programs on the basis of consensus including talks, meetings-seminars, issuance of memorandums, mass hunger strike. Bangladesh Workers Federation will remain united with them.

Remember we will be on the field until victory. I will break it but I will not sprain it. We will not lose.

Be one of the workers of the world. Red salute to all.

AAM Fayez Hossain, General Secretary, Bangladesh Workers Federation

Gaibandha

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