

Garment Workers (Bangladesh): 11,000 sued over RMG workers' unrest in Gazipur

Justice for deceased, revision of wage demanded at workers' rally

Saturday 11 November 2023, by [The Daily Star](#) (Date first published: 11 November 2023).

Police sued 11,000 unnamed garment workers over vandalism and clashes with law enforcers in Gazipur's Konabari area.

Law enforcers, both on the riot truck and on foot, use firearms to disperse garment workers who have been protesting for better wage for 10 days. The photo was taken at Jamgara on Tongi-Ashulia EPZ road yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A Gazipur court yesterday sent 11 arrestees to jail, who were held by Rab and police on Thursday, in one of the cases.

Abu Sayed, sub-inspector of Gazipur Metropolitan's Konabari Police Station, filed the case against 12 workers, including the arrestees, and 3,000-4,000 others unnamed on Thursday night.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sayed said the workers ransacked Tusuka factory in Konabari, demanding a wage hike. A car of a deputy commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police was also vandalised in front of the factory.

The arrestees are workers of different factories. Efforts are on to arrest the others, he added.

On Wednesday, SI Sanir Hasan Khan of Konabari Police Station filed another case accusing 6,000-7,000 unnamed people.

Workers said they started demonstrating on the premises of Tusuka Garments around 3:00pm on Thursday, adding that the management then called in police who beat up several workers.

The protesters threw brick chunks at police and the factory, said witnesses.

Police used teargas, sound grenades, and firearms to disperse the workers.

A labour leader of Konabari area, seeking anonymity, told this newspaper yesterday that they were in fear of arrest.

"We demonstrated demanding wage hike of workers but were not involved in vandalism. A false case has been filed against me. I left Konabari area and have been staying elsewhere to avoid arrest," he said.

Another labour leader of Kashimpur area said he was not sued in any case. Yet he was in fear because police could put them in jail if they want.

The workers, who demonstrated, are now leaving are not staying in their homes, he said.

Following the clashes, over 160 factories were shuttered in Ashulia and Gazipur on Thursday.

Sarwar Hossain, general secretary of Garment Sramik Oikya League, said they found hanging of closure notices in front of many factories in Ashulia yesterday. The notices say the factories were closed under section 13(1) of the labour law, which states “no work, no pay”.

Over the last two weeks, workers demonstrating for a minimum wage of Tk 23,000 clashed with law enforcers in Gazipur, Savar, and the capital’s Mirpur.

On October 30, garment worker Rasel Howlader, 26, died after Gazipur Industrial Police personnel allegedly shot him at close range, and on November 8, Anjuara Khatun, 28, a sewing machine operator of Islam Garments in Gazipur, died of gunshot injuries after police opened fire on protesters.

‘REVIEW WAGE HIKE’

Rejecting the new minimum wage of Tk 12,500 set by an RMG sector wage board, Mojuri Briddhite Garment Sramik Andolan, an alliance of 11 labour organisations, yesterday demanded at least Tk 25,000 per month.

At a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, they also demanded justice for three deceased workers, one of whom was found dead after a factory fire.

They said when the garment workers have been demanding better pay, the incident of attacks on them in Gazipur and Ashulia was shameful.

Taslima Akhtar, the coordinator of the alliance, said the workers are being threatened with closure of factories , laying offs, and recruitment halt.

Workers must be given wages on which they can survive. There is no room to ignore this justified demand, she said.

“The wage board says 56 percent pay has been increased. But if we look at the annual increment, it stands at 39 percent. If we see the inflation, prices of commodities, it is not possible for the workers to survive with Tk 12,500.”

At another rally in front of the capital’s National Museum yesterday, Karmojibi Nari, a non-government organisation, said they don’t want a wage board that does not work for the workers.

Star Report

P.S.

• The Daily Star. Sat Nov 11, 2023 12:00 AM. Last update on: Sat Nov 11, 2023 07:04 AM:
<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/11000-sued-over-rmg-workers-unrest-gazipur-3466616>