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Decent job, living standards linked to attaining SDGs

Panelist tells Brac University seminar

Star Business Report

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires keeping in mind the indicators of a decent job and whether living standards are improving with per capita income, things the state is liable to provide, said a panelist at a seminar in Brac University.

Suggestions for salary increases, instead of triggering happiness, raises fears among workers on how much the workload will increase, said the discussant, Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

The Centre for Development and Employment Research (CDER) and the Department of Economics and Social Sciences (ESS) organised the seminar on “Bangladesh Employment and Labour Market Watch, 2018” on Monday.

Two entities are living off every worker in the real estate sector as top members of the Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh revealed in a recent Prothom Alo roundtable that they have subcontractors and employ no worker, said Ahmed.

This has been propagated by two finance ministry circulars stipulating that no third and fourth class employees can be made permanent, meaning all have to be subcontracted, he added.

Moreover, workers retire getting no social safety benefit or insurance while a huge inequality gap exists when it comes to comparing the topmost and bottom tiers of a factory, he said.

Urban planning requires ensuring the accommodation of 20 percent of workers of a city to keep it running, something not available in the country, while state land is looted the most without any regulation in place, said the executive director.

The manufacturing sector is not female friendly, exemplified by the urban industrial belts around Dhaka and Chittagong which have no proper accommodation, healthcare and movement facilities suitable for women, he added.

Prof ATM Nurul Amin, chairman of ESS and a senior fellow at the CDER, gave a presentation on “A trend analysis of female informal employment in Bangladesh”.

He put emphasis on the vulnerability of women, reflected in surveys including that of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2008 which puts their unemployment rate at 7.5 percent in comparison to 4.3 percent of males.

It is also evident in the unpaid family labour composition rates of 40 and 60 percent and formal sector employment rates of 84.3 and 15.7 percent for males and females respectively, he said.

Dr Rushidan Islam Rahman, executive chairperson, CDER, also gave a presentation on “Employment growth, and inequality in the labour market” and Dr Rizwanul Islam, senior visiting fellow, CDER, one on “Has Manufacturing Employment Hit a Bump?”.

Associate Prof Farzana Munshi of ESS, and Dr Nazneen Ahmed, senior research fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, also spoke as panelists while Dr Quazi Shahabuddin, senior fellow, CDER, moderated the seminar.