

# RMG owners, workers submit proposals on minimum wage

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Owners and a worker representative have proposed Tk 6,360 and Tk 12,020 respectively as the minimum monthly wages for entry-level apparel workers.

The proposals came at a meeting of the wage board for the readymade garment sector on Monday in Dhaka.

Rights groups rejected both the proposals and stuck to their previous demand for Tk 16,000 as minimum wages.

The owners' proposed hike was only 20 per cent.

In contrast, the workers' representative proposed a 127 per cent rise.

Md Siddiqur Rahman and Shamsunnahar Bhuiyan representing the owners and the workers respectively submitted their wage structures to the board at its third meeting.

Chairman of the board Syed Aminul Islam received the proposals.

"There are 11 issues that need to be taken into account while fixing a minimum monthly wage," Mr Rahman said.

"We have proposed Tk 6,360 mainly taking the cost of living into consideration," added Mr Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The minimum monthly wage proposed

by him for an entry level garment worker included a basic pay of Tk 3,600 and house rent of Tk 1,440 -- or 40 per cent of the basic.

The other allowances are Tk 300 as medical, Tk 240 as transportation and Tk 780 as food.

The proposal recommended 18.92 per cent, 18.77 per cent, 18.45 per cent and 17.31 per cent spike in the grades of six, five, four and three respectively.

The owners, however, didn't propose any hike in the grades one and two.

The main task of the board is to fix minimum monthly wages while those of the other grades will rise accordingly once the minimum pay is fixed, the BGMEA president said.

Ms Bhuiyan, in her proposal, suggested a basic pay of Tk 7,050 and Tk 2,820 as house rent.

The other allowances are Tk 1,000 as medical, Tk 500 as transport and Tk 650 as food.

She is women affairs secretary of Jatiya Sramik League.

She proposed Tk 12,930 for grade six, Tk 13,910 for grade five, Tk 14,960 for grade four and Tk 16,150 for grade three workers respectively.

For grade one and two the proposal recommended Tk 17,550 and Tk 21,050 respectively.

A 10 per cent annual increment, two festival allowances and one month's gross salary as festival allowance and 20 per cent of the basic payment as Boishakh allowance were included in the proposal of the workers' representative.

"The board has asked for three more months to complete the wage review process from the labour ministry," Mr Islam said.

He expressed the hope that the board would make its proposal shortly after discussions on both proposals.

The board, however, didn't fix any date for the next meeting.

On January 31, the government issued a gazette, unveiling the names of the owners' and workers' representatives on the board.

The last minimum monthly wages were set in 2013.

Minimum wages for RMG workers were fixed at Tk 3,000 in 2010.

It was Tk 1,662.50 in 2006 and Tk 940 in 1994.

Meantime, three groups of labour unions gathered in front of the board and opposed both the proposals made by the representatives of owners and workers.

The groups are: Garments Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (G-SKOP), a coalition of 22 garment labour unions, Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendro and Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati.

The rights groups pressed for their long demand for Tk 16,000 as minimum wage.

The G-SKOP reiterated its previous demand of Tk 18,000.

Garment Sramik Odhikar Andolan, a coalition of 12 garment labour unions and Industrial Bangladesh Council, in separate statements rejected the Tk 12,020 minimum wage proposal and demanded Tk 16,000 with a basic of Tk 10,000.

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