



Journal Homepage: www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/10869

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/10869>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDUSTRIAL DISASTER IN RMG SECTOR: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF RANA PLAZA COLLAPSE

Saiful Islam¹

1. Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Bangladesh University of Professionals.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 18 February 2020

Final Accepted: 20 March 2020

Published: April 2020

Keywords:-

Rana Plaza, RGM Sector, Political
Economy, Capitalism

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the Rana Plaza tragedy as a social phenomenon through a sociological lens from a local and global political economy perspective. It looks beyond the occurrence of the accident. The paper argues that Rana Plaza tragedy is inherent in the global economic system (e.g. uneven economic relationship between core and peripheral state) and the deindustrialization of advanced countries and industrialization of the third world. It is related to post-Fordist flexible accumulation. In the post-Fordist era, globalization provides flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption through the process of the deindustrialization of advanced countries and industrialization of third world countries. The role of peripheral countries in this global economic system is also accountable for such industrial accidents. The study shows that the pattern of relationship among the various social groups (e.g. patron-client relationship among businessmen, politicians and musclemen), the interaction among different social institutions (e.g. whose responsibility is to ensure the safety of the building and security of working environment) and the nexus between corruption and use of political power is also related to the accident. It further explores a close relationship between the super-exploitation, other oppression of cheap female labour and the ceaseless accumulation and growth.

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Introduction:-

The readymade garment (RMG) sector stands at the core of the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. While a population of around 160 million for a small country like Bangladesh is considered a serious burden, with the rapid growth of RMG sector, it has turned into an invaluable asset (Islam, 2014). The garment sector currently employs approximately 4 million workers in Bangladesh in over 5,000 factories and accounts for over 40 percent of the country's total industrial employment (Farole et al., 2017). The export share of GDP tripled between 2003 and 2015, and Bangladesh is now the world's second-largest garment exporter after China (Bossavie et al., 2019). This RMG sector is the single biggest export earner for Bangladesh. The sector accounts for 83% of the total export earnings of the country.

With the rapid growth of RMG sector, it has become a regular newspaper heading for the last two decades that workers have died of some sort of accident at their garment factories. The collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh in April of 2013 killed over a thousand workers and injured about 2,500 others. It is widely

considered the worst accident in the history of the global garment industry, and the world's worst industrial disaster since the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy in India (Reuters, 2017). Despite the continuous occurrence of such industrial accident, there is hardly any study of these accidents from a sociological perspective. With the beginning of the process of the Industrial Revolution in England in the 18th century and its spread out to other parts of the world, we have been experiencing increasing industrial accidents. Thus, these accidents in RMG sector are not any isolated phenomena. They are rooted in the existing economic and political factors at local and global level. That's why we need to study industrial accidents from a sociological perspective which enable us to break free from individual circumstances and put things in a wider context.

Globally, the Rana Plaza accident can be explained as an outcome of the expansion of global capitalism. The global apparel business was established by the multinational enterprise through its flexible capital accumulation. On the other hand, cheap labour (mostly poor women) in the peripheral state is a part of the global division of labour in today's global economic system. The comprador bourgeoisie in peripheral also has an interest in this flexible accumulation process. Because of corruption and political abuse of power, the government in the peripheral state is unable to ensure the safety and security of its labour. We have to understand the role of women in the context of a global division of labor under the dictates of accumulation. Violence against women and extracting women's labour through coercive labour relations are part and parcel of capitalism. In other words, capitalism has to use, to strengthen, or even to invent, patriarchal men-women relations if it wants to maintain its accumulation model. Ultimately, the poor female labors in the periphery are the victim of super-exploitation. Thus, the Rana plaza accident is the outcome of the negligence of everyone concerned ranging from the global retailer, factory owner, building owner, approver, engineer, contractor, politicians, to manufacturers of construction materials. All are engaged in capital accumulation through dispossession e.g. corruption and exploitation. A nexus between politics and corruption is working in the flexible capital accumulation process. Neither global retailers nor local compradors took their responsibilities. So, it is not just an industrial accident. Sociologically, this accident can be studied in relation to the political and economic aspects of global readymade garment (RMG) industry and flexible capital accumulation at the local and global economy.

Objectives of the Study:-

This paper focuses on the sociological understanding of the Rana Plaza accident to get a critical point of view to explain such an industrial accident in the readymade garment (RMG) sector. Specifically, this paper attempts to attain the following objectives:

1. To analyze the accident as a part of the expansion of global capital accumulation process. To understand how multinational companies' fast and restless drive for flexible accumulation and high profit responsible for such a deadly industrial accident.
2. To understand the role and structure of the peripheral state in this global economic system.
3. Through analyzing the accident, to find out overall legal and institutional failures of the governance at the periphery to ensure the safe and secure working condition and to prevent such a deadly accident.
4. To study how a nexus between politics and corruption working behind the negligence and gross violation of rules and regulations at every step.

Methodology:-

The paper aims to study the research issue from a qualitative approach because the political economy of industrial accident involves a set of complex political and economic aspects both global and local perspective. The case study method has been used to study the case of Rana Plaza accident in detail, using multiple sources of data to get a holistic and comprehensive understanding of its complex political-economic aspect.

Multiple techniques have been used for collecting both primary and secondary data. The fieldwork of this study conducted immediately after the accident took place. The primary empirical data were collected through in-depth interview of the victims of the accident including factory workers, their families, respective authorities and local people. Apart from this, the secondary data were collected on relevant issues from various sources. The information from different sources including reports, article and interview presented on Television, Newspaper (printed and online) and other social media have been used. This study sought to analyze the political and economic aspects behind the Rana Plaza accident based on these primary and secondary data.

Theoretical Framework:**The Rana Plaza Accident in Retrospect:**

In this study, to understand the political economy of the Rana Plaza tragedy, the Marxist perspective has been used. It is because the Marxist framework continues to be one of the most comprehensive and systematic theoretical critiques of capitalism ever created. Here, both classical and neo-Marxist theories have been used to study what is the role of global capital in peripheral state and the role of peripheral government in the third world. From a Marxist political economy perspective, the Rana Plaza accident can be viewed in the context of two inter-related factors: changing global capitalism with its new regime of flexible accumulation and a peripheral state with the extremely weak structure of governance and corruption.

Marxist Perspective of Political Economy:

Marxism originated with the writings of Karl Marx. Marx saw capitalism and the market as creating extremes of wealth for capitalists and poverty for workers. He perceived capitalism as an inherently conflictual system (Frieden and Lake 2003). Marxist political economists make three central assumptions: (1) classes are the dominant actors in the political economy and the appropriate units of analysis, (2) classes act in their material economic interests and (3) the basis of the capitalist economy is the exploitation of labor by capital (Frieden and Lake 2003).

Marx's critique of the political economy then understands capitalism as a historically specific mode of production. Exploitation becomes masked by the apparent equity of market relationships. Labour power, the ability to work, is itself reduced to a commodity, which can be bought and sold. Its value, like that of other commodities, is determined by the work needed (to produce the commodities needed) for its reproduction. So in a sense workers do receive a 'fair wage' (Dunn 2009). Even market relationships between capital and labour are iniquitous; workers have no other choice but to work for capital, while capital's ability to draw on a reserve army of unemployed workers exerts downward pressure on wages. However, the fundamental inequity and exploitation comes in production, as workers can be made to work longer or more intensely than is needed to produce goods equivalent to the value of their labour-power. Exploitation in production creates surplus-value, which can become profit for capitalists (Dunn 2009).

Thus, exploitation, in capitalism as in any other class society, is the necessary basis for the production of surplus. The relationship between capital and labor is zero-sum; any gain for the capitalist must come at the expense of labor. On the other hand, Competition between capitals drives an imperative to accumulate, to produce more and more cheaply than competitors. Capitalism involves displacing workers, as living labour the ultimate source of profits, with machines, 'dead labour'. Marx was a witness to the oppressive working conditions in the textile and steel mills. Women and children worked long and arduous hours in the factories for very low wages with no social or legal protections against abuse. Workers lived in grimy, unsafe, and unclean slum environments that surrounded the pollution-spewing factories. Marx shared with many other intellectuals and social activists an abhorrence of these terrible conditions of industrial capitalism (Miller 2008).

Owing to the extensive use of machinery, and to the division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labour, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases the wage decreases. Any more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labour increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by the increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of machinery, etc.... Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooked, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. (Marx and Engels 2008:43-44)

Marx's description is like the description of the condition of garment workers in Bangladesh. Garment workers in Bangladesh become an appendage of the machine. They experience prolonged working hours and insufficient wage only for maintenance, and for the propagation of their race. Even, Marx is more relevant to today's globalization of production and consumption pattern. This can be gleaned from the following passage in *The Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material is drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. (Marx and Engels 2008:38-39)

World System Theory:

Immanuel Wallerstein, the main proponent of the world system, developed the theory within broadly Marxist terms. World system theory is a macro-sociological perspective that seeks to explain the dynamics of the 'capitalist world economy'. For Wallerstein, a world system is a 'multicultural territorial division of labor'. He proposes four different categories, core, semi-periphery, periphery and external. The core regions benefited the most from the capitalist world economy. On the other end of the scale lay the peripheral zones. These areas lacked strong central governments or were controlled by other states, exported raw materials to the core, and relied on coercive labor practice.

Ready-made garments manufacturing industries originated in the developed countries of West Europe and the United States in the '50s of the last century. In those countries, during that period, the organized trade union movement was able to exact a relatively high price of labour-power. From the beginning of the 1960s, because of high competition as a result of globalization of production, the relatively big capitalists investing in the garment industry began to explore the possibility of taking advantage of the cheaper labour power available in the 'developing' countries like Bangladesh for decreasing the production cost. Through this process, multinational apparel companies have been converted into just 'brand name companies'. If we look into the process how does this global chain work, we will get this picture.

This global ready-made garment production process is a part of Wallerstein's world economic system. The global apparel business involves a world division of labour where multinational companies of the core countries utilize cheap labour of the third world peripheral state. As a part of this process, the Ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh started in the late 1970s.

From world-system theory, there is a scope of discussion about the weak governance, corruption and role of comprador bourgeoisie in the peripheral state also responsible for such industrial accident. The Legal and institutional framework of the peripheral government unable to ensure the safety and security of the factory labor. It is also the interest of comprador bourgeoisie to cut the cost of labour safety. They only concern about making a high profit rather than labour safety.

Flexible Accumulation: Accumulation by Dispossession:

The Marxist theorist who has most influentially highlighted these processes is David Harvey. For him, globalization understood as an on-going process of accumulation by dispossession has now entered a new phase which can be called a shift towards global post-Fordism. Harvey has argued that during the last few decades there was a shift, as a result of intensified globalization, from Fordism to post-Fordism. Fordism (1945-1975), coming out of the Great Depression and World War II, was an accumulation regime characterized by rigid accumulation. After that post-Fordism emerged during the period from 1980 to the first decade of the twenty-first century which is characterized by flexible accumulation. Since the demise of Fordism, the capitalist ruling class has used several tactics to increase its rate of profit at the expense of labor. Consequently, non-unionized corporations such as Wal-Mart can keep wages as well as health and pension benefits at a minimum. Corporations that have provided higher wages and benefits in the past are now trying to escape their obligations. One way to do that is the deindustrialization of industrialized countries and industrialization of the third world. During the last decades of the twentieth century, there was a significant shift in the distribution of world industry away from the older industrial economies—the United States, Western Europe, and Japan—toward Pacific Asia, Latin America, South Asia and other rapidly industrializing economies. According to Harvey, flexible accumulation is marked by a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism. It rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of

consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. It has also entailed a new round of 'time- space compression' (Harvey 1997).

Harvey argued that in this post-Fordism regime, the labour market has undergone a radical restructuring. Faced with strong market volatility, heightened competition, and narrowing profit margins, employers have taken advantage of weakened union power and the pools of surplus (unemployed or underemployed) labourers to push for much more flexible work regimes and labour contracts. It obliges the employee to work much longer at periods of peak demand, and compensate with shorter hours at periods of slack, are becoming much more common. But more important has been the apparent move away from regular employment towards increasing reliance upon part-time, temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements. According to Harvey, the most radical shift has been either towards increased subcontracting or towards temporary rather than part-time work. This whole network of sub-contracting and 'outsourcing' gives greater flexibility in the face of heightened competition and greater risk. The current trend in labour markets is to reduce the number of 'core' workers and to rely increasingly upon a work force that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad. This revival parallels the enhanced capacity of multinational capital to take industrial mass-production systems abroad and there to exploit extremely vulnerable women's labour-power under conditions of extremely low pay and negligible job security (Harvey 1997).

According to Harvey, such flexible production systems have permitted, and to some degree depended upon, acceleration in the pace of product innovation. Flexible accumulation has been accompanied on the consumption side, therefore, by much greater attention to quick-changing fashions (fast fashion) and the mobilization of all the artifices of need inducement and cultural transformation that this implies (Harvey 1997). Advertising is everywhere. The "buy and be fulfilled" message is ubiquitous. Consumption pattern defines the good life. As a result, as long as people are absorbed in the latest consumer fad, they are not focusing much on income inequality, even while they sink more and more into debt. For example, in 2006 the net savings rate in the United States was zero. Customers still flock to Wal-Mart, making it the largest retail operation in the United States, even though it is widely known that their employees are poorly compensated and that its cheap Bangladeshi-made goods undoubtedly caused the loss of good manufacturing jobs in the United States. Few Americans even think or care about the working conditions that Bangladeshi workers must endure in order to make products at such low cost. Consumers have little concern about the frequent occurrence of the deadly industrial accident like Rana Plaza accident in the peripheral state. The working-class solidarity that the Marxists expected is almost absent. Technological developments in transportation and communications in the late twentieth century enable the multinational company, a global apparel brand for example, to outsourcing their product from third world industries which now become death trap like Rana Plaza. Manufacturing processes could now be located in multiple countries, with the result that it has become almost impossible to tell what the home-production country of any product such as readymade garment product actually is. Transnational corporations operate globally with decreasing loyalty to any particular nation-state. He calls them instances of 'accumulation by dispossession' -the plunder of resources to enable the profitable expansion of capital. It is a politically driven process which occurs simultaneously with capital accumulation. It works in a variety of ways from the subtle commodification of once communal property to outright theft and relies on a more overt use of force.

Today, theorists, who study the international political economy from a Marxist perspective, are primarily concerned with the fate of labor in a world of increasingly internationalized capital. With the growth of multinational corporations and the rise of globally integrated financial markets, the greater international mobility of capital appears to have weakened labor's economic and political power. If workers in a particular country demand higher wages or improved health and safety measures, for example, the multinational capitalist simply shifts production to another country where labor is more compliant (Frieden and Lake 2003).

Thus, from Harvian perspective, today's neoliberalized free market provides multinational companies with an opportunity for high profit from flexible capital accumulation. The global apparel business rests on flexibility with respect to production processes, labour markets and patterns of consumption. However, this flexible accumulation involves high risk; health and life of poor cheap labour in the peripheral state. With the rapid increase of garment manufacturing factories, Bangladesh increasingly experiences worse to the worst accident in RMG sector. When an accident takes place in any garment factory in the peripheral state that sourcing RMG product for a multinational company like Wall-mart and consumers put pressure for ensuring safe working place then these companies leave

this country and look for another cheap labor market without taking any responsibility for such accident like the collapse of Rana Plaza or fire in Tazneen fashion. These accidents are a clear symptom of the global apparel industry's outsourcing of responsibility for labor and environmental conditions in factories.

Political Economy of Rana Plaza Tragedy: Local, Global and Gender Dimensions:

The Rana Plaza accident is not an isolated phenomenon. This accident can be explained from both global and local political-economy perspective. From a global perspective, it is the outcome of flexible accumulation by a global capitalism, the global division of labour and the exploitative and uneven relationship between capitalist core countries and third world peripheral state in global economy. On the other hand, at the domestic level, it can be seen as the product of the emergence of lumpenbourgeoisie, mass corruption and abuse of political power and overall institutional and legal failure of the government in the peripheral state.

Global Context:

Flexible Accumulation by Dispossession:

Today's economy is global. In this global era, there is internationalization of production and consumption pattern. Capital accumulation has become more flexible. During the merchant phase of capitalism, the capital was accumulated through trade and plunder that began around the sixteenth century and continued to the late eighteenth century. Then colonialism allowed much greater profits because one the one hand it was the system of production and the marketing of the colonies' raw materials and agricultural products necessary for the further industrial expansion of the west, on the other hand, it was protected market outlet for the finished products from the mother country.

Now, in the age of globalization, whatever we called it neo-colonialism or imperialism, neoliberalism established the economic dominance of multinational corporations (MNCs) who increase their economic grip on the raw materials and cheap labour of the third world. In this process of internationalization of production and consumption, accumulation of capital become more flexible which in other word called accumulation by dispossession. Now multinational companies produce their products in third world countries using cheap labour power. To some, it is the last but worst form of imperialism. The result of this globalization is that global capital is used for the exploitation rather than the development of the less developed parts of the world. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibilities and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. It is just capital accumulation by dispossession.

In the case of the global apparel business, the multinational fashion or ready-made garment companies based in the imperialist countries has now almost shifted their own production in the third world countries as a consequence of the globalization of the production process. They have been converted into 'brand-name companies'. Garments manufactured in production facilities scattered throughout the 'developing' countries worldwide are brought together and stamped with their brand-names before coming to the market. But the brand-named companies are in no way associated with the ownership or management of the production units.

Bangladesh offers the Global garment industry something unique: High volume, low prices, good quality and predictable service. Millions of workers who quickly churn out huge amounts of well-made underwear, jeans and T-shirts for the lowest wages in the world. The garment industry in Bangladesh is the third-biggest exporter of clothes in the world, after China and Italy. There are 5,000 factories in the country and 4 million garment workers. Latest government figures put the annual value of those exports at \$21.5bn. Manufacturers have easy access to cheap raw materials, and its garment workers command the lowest wages — by far — in the world. The average worker in Bangladesh earns the equivalent of 24 cents an hour, compared with 45 cents in Cambodia, 52 cents in Pakistan, 53 cents in Vietnam and \$1.26 in China, according to the Worker Rights Consortium, a worker advocacy group (Leaving Bangladesh, 2013).

The factory collapse in Savar that killed over 1,132 people is a stark reminder of the risks in the global retail industry's search for cheap production. Labels for the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, the Spanish chain El Corte Ingles and PC Penney have been found in the rubble. Web sites for the factories in the building indicate that they also supplied Germany's Kik, Belgium's C&A, Benetton UK, Spain's Mango, Canada's Trimark and Premark in Ireland, to name a few. Despite a series of accidents that have killed hundreds of people in recent months, dozens of major retailers and apparel makers continue to operate in Bangladesh only because of its competitive price.

Order dockets found in the rubble of Rana plaza factory show just why it pays foreign stores to buy from Bangladesh – clothes made for as little as a tenth of what they sell for in the West. In the case polo, shirts of a brand sold in London for \$46 were offered for sale from Rana Plaza for just \$4.45, a typical transformation in an industry where manufacturers across Asia and retailers in Europe and North America are locked in a war to get catwalk trends ever faster, and ever cheaper, to consumers (Bangladesh rubble, 2013).

It is no secret that retail price labels, whether for a \$5 T-shirt or a \$5,000 suit, reflect manufacturing costs that are a fraction of what the wearer eventually pays. But the mark-ups revealed by the Rana Plaza documents – of 5 to 10 times from factory gate to store window – offer a precise insight into the relationship of one end of a global supply chain to the other. The price to Mango: \$4.45 each. The chain currently offers similar shirts for sale in Spain for 26 to 30 Euros and for 26 to 30 pounds at its branded stores in Britain (Bangladesh rubble, 2013).

Another set of documents retrieved from the dusty wreckage shows an order, complete with pattern sketches, for long-sleeve, checked shirts under the Danish brand Jack's, owned by retailer PWT Group. The unit cost was \$5.08, and tags to be attached to each shirt listed a retail price of 24.90 Euros. "A good product – at a competitive price," runs the slogan for Jack's menswear, sold in Scandinavia, Russia, Britain and Ireland (Bangladesh rubble, 2013).

Thus it is a kind of capital accumulation by dispossession; the dispossession of poor labour in the third world. This is making a high profit by paying low wage. Bangladesh experienced rapid growth in the RMG sector only because of cheap labour. As labour costs in China, long the world's low-cost factory floor, have been rising rapidly, global retailers and apparel producers are switching to lower-cost alternatives like India, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Bangladesh, where the entry-level wage for garment workers is \$40 a month. A Bangladeshi garment worker, typically paid less than half the wages of counterparts in China, the world's biggest clothing exporter, would have to spend two or three weeks earnings just to buy one polo shirt at Mango in Madrid. A Spaniard on the minimum wage could afford the same shirt for a day's labour.

According to the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, in the USA, the production cost for a shirt is four times higher than Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, cheap labour is the main reason for low production cost. For the USA more than half of the total production cost is labour cost. On the other hand, In Bangladesh, for the same shirt, labour cost is only 0.6 % of the total production cost. This is the imperialist plunder exacted as a result of the economics of this 'global value chain' dominated by the giant multinationals. According to Oxfam Hong Kong Briefing Paper (April, 2004), if it assumes that the market price of a branded ready-made garment is Rs. 400, then, out of it, the cost of raw materials is Rs. 40, overhead and other costs are Rs.13, quota-fee is Rs. 20, transport expenditure is Rs. 2, worker's wage is Rs.7, the profit of the owner of the supply company is Rs.18 and total up to this is Rs.100. Hence, the value appropriated by the brand-name company and the trading company is Rs. 300 (<http://alice.ces.uc.pt/news/?p=1783>). Thus we see that when ready-made garments are being manufactured in the 'developing' countries, more than 70 % of the value produced is being appropriated by the 'developed' / imperialist countries as profits of their giant multinational companies; while in the 'developing' countries, the workers get 1.75 % and the factory-owners get 4.5 %.

Let us look into the international retailers who outsourcing from factories at Rana Plaza. Primark, an Irish clothing retailer, sells clothes at the budget end of the market. Its main competition is that of other cut-price clothing retailers; such as supermarket lines. Primark was a leading customer at one of the garment factories housed in the Rana Plaza, whose collapse on 24 April. Primark, a leading retailer of cut-price attire, had recorded a 24pc increase in sales in the six months to March, its revenue jumping to £2 billion and operating profits leaping by 56pc to £238 million. In the same period, Primark opened 15 new stores across Western Europe.

This is possible only for its expertise in sourcing cheap raw materials and manufacturing facilities. Then, notwithstanding a substantial profit margin, the finished product can still be retailed with a competitively low price tag. The consumer is pleased to bag a bargain; the company is delighted by the bounce in its bottom line. The low-cost, high-profit-margin phenomenon all often entails that at the other end of the capitalist food chain, life is too cheap. It is like cheap clothes at cost of life. In the case of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., an American multinational retail corporation runs chains of large discount department stores and warehouse stores. The company is the world's second-largest transnational enterprise, according to the Fortune Global 500 list in 2013 and is the largest retailer in the world. Wal-Mart's new slogan is "Low prices. Every Day. On everything," replaces the old one "Save money.

Live better”. However, both show the sad face of garment business. They also reveal the critical point of the problem: when one want to go cheap, his operation will go cheap too.

One has to get the cheapest thing from the garment manufacturer. And the manufacturer will try to cut corners. The big question is: which corner will he cut? If one looks at the value chain of garment manufacturing, the answer becomes clear. The international buyers want to negotiate orders at the same price, if not less, as last year’s. And, for every year, it is always a done deal as an unofficial league of big buyers maintains an identical low price policy in negotiation. About 18 months before the previous big tragedy in Bangladesh – a fire in November in a textile factory that killed 112 people – shareholders at Wal-Mart Stores Inc had the opportunity to weigh in on the safety question. By a nearly 50-to-1 margin, they rejected a proposal to require suppliers to report annually on safety issues at their factories. In arguing against the proposal, Wal-Mart’s management made its reasoning clear: Having suppliers compile such reports “could ultimately lead to higher costs for Wal-Mart and higher prices for customers. This would not be in the best interests of Wal-Mart’s shareholders and customers. Consumers continue to purchase products from brands like Wal-Mart’s Faded Glory, found in the Tazreen rubble.

The global brands or retailers no longer wanted to invest in factories – they turned to subcontractors, offering them very narrow margins for profit and thereby forcing them to run their factories like prison-houses of labour. The subcontracting regime allowed these firms to deny any culpability for what was done by the actual owners of these small factories, allowing them to enjoy the benefits of the cheap products without having their consciences stained with the sweat and blood of the workers. The Rana Plaza accident was a clear symptom of the global apparel industry’s outsourcing of responsibility for labor and environmental conditions in factories. The tight delivery times, competitive pricing and penalties embedded in apparel contracts played a critical role in motivating factory managers to cut corners on safety and to push workers back into a dangerous factory.

It is possible to identify immediate causes of the accident such as- irresponsible factory managers, overworked and under-resourced building inspectors, a highly corrupted government. But American and European brands and retailers also shoulder much of the blame. As a business partner, there are responsibilities of global brands to work to improve compliance of factory. Corporate initiatives to monitor and police these factories have failed to improve conditions. Demanding that factories follow labor and environmental codes while pushing down prices and delivery times has primarily created incentives for factories to hide problems rather than solve them. Mostly, companies have just learned how to pass audits while continuing to fail their workers. Companies need to adjust contracts to guarantee that they pay the real costs of production, including the costs of providing safe and healthy work environments. They must adjust pricing and delivery time requirements so that they can guarantee their garments are produced within legal wage and overtime limits.

The "fast fashion" trend is one of the responsible factors of accidents like Rana Plaza. The entire apparel industry – including inspectors and monitoring firms – has been pushed to speed up production, increase style changes and cut costs. This pressure to simultaneously lower costs while increasing speed and delivery times drives factory managers to insist on long hours for workers at low pay. It also drives apparel manufacturers to seek countries like Bangladesh that are willing to meet these demands. Retailers never concern about the safety of the workers. The factories of Bangladesh are the part of twenty-first century globalization, poorly built shelters for a production process geared toward long working days, third rate machines, and workers whose own lives are submitted to the imperatives of just-in-time production.

Local Context:

Institutional Framework:

After analyzing the event of Rana Plaza collapse we can conclude that it was an outcome of the governance failure in the society. Bad governance prevailed from the very beginning, as the building was constructed on illegal lands and clearance to the construction was gained in an illegal way. It is not only the failure of governance; it is also the failure of responsibility.

In the case of Rana Plaza accident, the government has totally failed to ensure that the building owners adhere to the approved plans. The local municipality has little power to ensure that the influential elite of the area sticks to them. This is true to almost all planning or permission agencies from the capital to the suburbs. The lack of competent town planners, code enforcers, inspectors all add to the nexus of undue politicization and corruption. The rescue efforts also show the complete inadequacy of the disaster management agencies.

Role of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment:

The Department of Inspection for factories and establishment under the labour and employment ministry is supposed to oversee more than two lakh factories including over 5,000 readymade garment factories and establishments countrywide. But this department cannot perform its functions properly due to an acute crisis of manpower and logistics. The department has only 51 inspectors to do the massive task. Another 52 approved posts for inspectors remain vacant for long (Factory watch farical, 2013). The high authority of the department also acknowledged that they have huge power and important tasks to discharge but they do not have the necessary manpower to do this. On condition of anonymity, a senior official of the department stated to media that “It is just an eyewash what we do in the name of inspection”.

Historically, the department had been facing neglect of the government since its inception in 1970. The number of factories and establishments has increased over the years, but the department has not been equipped with adequate logistics and manpower to discharge its functions properly. To meet a legal condition of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a UNO specialized agency dealing with labour issues, the then government set up the department for factories and establishments.

Role of the RajdhaniUnnayanKartripakkha (Rajuk):

The RajdhaniUnnayanKartripakkha (Rajuk) is legally responsible to control development within its 1,528-square kilometers area of Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (master plan) as per Town Improvement Act. But the common excuse is that many time they could not control construction of buildings beyond the city’s core area due to lack of manpower. Even there are scores of the example of illegal high-rise buildings even in the capital’s core area, where Rajuk has remained mysteriously silent. So, the excuse is unacceptable. On the other hand, whereas Rajuk is already overloaded, at the same time it is a planner, developer, regulator and contractor. But now it is more interested in working as developer and contractor.

After the Rana Plaza accident, it was revealed that the building had no approval from Rajuk. It was built with a municipality approval for five stories and is located within Rajuk master plan. It is apprehended that the building law, safety precautions and mandatory Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) have not been followed in constructing thousands of buildings in Savar and other fringe areas of the capital.

According to a media report, since 2007 the RajdhaniUnnayanKartripakkha (Rajuk) has had five designated officials in a committee responsible for approving building construction in Savar. The committee, comprised of a board member, an assistant director and an executive engineer of Rajuk, assistant chief architect of department of architecture and a governmentappointedauthorised officer, has a revised jurisdiction over Turag, part of Ashulia and Tongi and GazipurSadar in April this year. But they never appeared to enforce building law there.

On the other hand, various municipal authorities, including that of Savar, have approved hundreds of buildings within Rajuk jurisdiction even though they lack technical manpower as required by laws. As per Building Construction Act and BNBC, only an authorized officer along with a building construction committee of Rajuk can approve a building design within an area of an approved master plan. Such approval also requires supervision by enlisted architect, structural engineer, geotechnical engineer, a town planner as per laws and above all a set of rules. But a Pourashava lacks all of those. They also could not go for enforcing building law in areas like Savar because of “vehement opposition” by local municipal authorities. But Rajuk did lodge a case against Rana Plaza owner for the collapse for violating Building Construction Act and the BNBC. It proves Rajuk is the authority responsible for enforcing laws there.

Role of the Disaster Management System:

The disaster management procedures at Rana Plaza also proved the fragility of the disaster management system. The rescue efforts show the complete inadequacy of the disaster management agencies. 8 years ago, rescue at the Spectrum site became almost impossible because of lack of proper equipment and effective coordination. A Task Force set up after the Spectrum collapse had recommended the import of equipment for precisely such rescue operations, but it is amazing that a shortage of mechanical equipment at the Rana site led volunteers to manually dig walls and open gridlocks. Numerous volunteers using their bare hands, small scissors etc. to cut wires, have set a courageous standard in rescuing lives. But many more could have been saved if disaster management procedures had been more orderly, and proper equipment made available in time. We have provisions for an industrial police to

control workers but no industrial disaster management system. It is the characteristics of a bourgeoisie state who arrange all preparation to control the poor weak mostly female labour but not concern about their safety.

Failure of Legal Framework:

The repeated occurrence of the industrial accident has proved that the existing legal framework has failed to stop the death of workers. There are several weaknesses in the existing legal framework. The existing law has been made on punitive strategy and there is a failure to effective implementation of the existing law. The framers of the law existing on safety and security of worker ignored the human rights approach in determining the preventive action as well as compensation under the legal provision.

Moreover, Article provides for the right to form trade union for collective bargaining to ensure workers' rights. But now a day's trade union is an important mean to implement political agenda rather the interest of the workers. They are motivated to ensure the interest of their leaders who have elected him by money or support. They never have any headache as to the death of workers (Alam 2013).

Inefficient Law on the Occupational Safety and Health of Workers:

In the Rana Plaza accident, the worst thing is that accident was avoidable. Although on the previous day industrial police asked them not to open the factory, factory owners and building owner enforced workers to join in the work. The respective authorities were not concerned about labour safety and security. The Labour Act 2006 of Bangladesh provides the safety and security of the workers at the workplace. There is a large number of international standards for the occupational safety and health (OSH), such as safety requirements to a certain special type of industry, personal protective equipment, protective clothing, safety signs, radiation-exposed environment and the use of electrical appliances. These requirements are not covered by the Labour Act, except only eye protection.

Non Compliance of Building Safety:

It is the hard reality that the National Building code is rarely followed in the building construction. In the case of Rana Plaza, this is about the failure of the construction of the building, which is due to its design that had been set for five stories but four more had been built. It was also designed as a commercial building; this is a gross failure of the administration to ensure public safety. Another problem is that most buildings which are used as factories are not designed as RMG factories. They are designed as commercial buildings and rented out. Accordingly, Rana Plaza housed all the factories, bank and markets. Factory buildings are designed with a higher factor of safety than commercial buildings. Generally, commercial buildings are designed with a factor of safety of 2. Garment factory buildings are designed with a factor of safety between 3 to 5. The live loads of storage areas/warehouses are designed with due consideration. The live load of such areas may be up to 5 times more than that of ordinary office buildings.

Inadequate Penal Provision:

Bangladesh Labour Act does not contain any penal provision as far as noncompliance with the provisions of safety is concerned. But it imposes imprisonment up to three months or fine up to one thousand taka or with both for any noncompliance (like safety of building, fire) which is not specifically dealt with. Hence, this punishment seems to be inadequate considering the severity of such noncompliance by the owners. Moreover, considering the safety of the building there are legislations to address it. However, the penal provision containing therein is also inadequate. For instance: the Building Construction Act 1952 imposes a penalty of imprisonment up to seven years or with a minimum fine of fifty thousand taka or with both (Khan 2013). Even these inadequate penalties were not implemented. In most of the previous cases, the responsible person escaped through monetary or political power.

Slow Legal Process:

In all the cases of industrial disaster, responsible persons go unpunished. In 2005, at least 64 workers were killed in a building collapse at Spectrum Garments at Savar. The owners of the factory were sent to jail. But eventually, they got out on bail in a month. A writ petition filed against them is still pending for more than seven years. They are now doing business under different names.

In the case deadly fire at Tazreen Fashions factory, a day after the accident Ashulia police filed a case saying the fire was set by outsiders. This is only to save the owner of the factory, despite his numerous faults, including blocking the exit passage and having no emergency exit. Hossain was never charged. Soon after the accident, the BGMEA stands blindly by the factory owner without judging their faults. The trade body also smells "sabotage" in the

accident without any evidence. Successive governments have also backed the BGMEA's sabotage theory. He had even made the observation before the BGMEA came up with such a claim.

The latest one, the collapse of the nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar that had housed five garment factories, claimed the life of 1133 workers. In this case, the factory owner escaped with the help of local parliament and later arrested at the time of crossing at Jessore border four days after the building collapsed. The court and the prime minister had to intervene to arrest the criminals of the Savar tragedy because the normal mechanism to punish the culprits is not working.

Irrelevant and irresponsible comments made by politician which act as a barrier to justice. At present the lax attitude of the government and the BGMEA in dealing with workers' death has been encouraging factory owners not to take proper remedial actions to ensure that such untoward incidents do not occur. As a result, dozens of accidents have occurred in a number of factories that killed more than 600 workers in between 2006 and 2012. But no-one was punished for their crimes, there is no update about the case. Thus, in all cases of industrial disaster, criminal goes unpunished, feel safe to commit it again and that's what has come true for Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Inadequate Compensation Provisions:

Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 provides for compensating workers for death, permanent disablement and partial disablement. However, the amount to be compensated seems to be inadequate as far as the earning capacity of the aggrieved workers is concerned. Had the amount been more, the owners would have been practically bound to ensure compliance and recurrence of such tragedies could have been prohibited.

In cases of compensation for death, the amount is equivalent to the three years wages or remuneration. Section 309 of the labour Act 2006 states that 'whoever contravenes any provision of this Act or any rules or regulations shall be punishable with imprisonment for any term' up to four years or with fine of up to one lakh taka or both if such contravention results in death. If it results in bodily injury for any term, the punishment is the maximum imprisonment of two years or fine of up to ten thousand taka (Khan, 2013). These penal sanctions are grossly inadequate and do not correspond to the gravity of the offence.

Inactive Trade Union in RMG:

Labour Act also provides limited scope for trade unions. In practice, such trade unions are not effective due to lack of harmony between the workers and the owners. This is mainly due to the lack of intention on part of the owners which warrants a change of attitude. The governments are less worker-friendly and more owner-biased, as owners are seen as the creator of employment amid massive unemployment and earners of much needed foreign currencies.

Strict trade union registration requirements (such as under the EPZ Act 2004) were an impediment to trade union functioning. These restrictions have been relaxed in a recent Cabinet meeting. Bangladesh has also ratified the ILO Convention on the right to organization, but the concerned department is yet to embrace and implement the long overdue expansion of trade union practice in RMG. The owners' associations, notably BGMEA and BKMEA, do not promote union practice to maintain employer-workers relation and dialogue in their industrial units; instead, they form pliable participation committees to manage industrial relations to their advantage. Their role is thus a part of the problem as they are a stakeholder in the vested interest of the industry. They are not meant and expected to be representing the interests of the workers.

Most of the trade union leaders are not from the workers, particularly in RMG. They are like mercenaries and grab leaderships politically as conduits of different political parties' influence on the workers. There are no effective workers representative body. As such, existing workers organizations are more political than the representative of the workers. As a result, there is hardly any serious pressure to be brought to bear on government and owners to improve working conditions of laborers who are mostly powerless and voiceless. In the case of Rana Plaza accident, there was no active trade union who protests the enforcement to join in the work.

Nexus between Corruption and Abuse of Political Power:

The Rana Plaza accident is one of the worst possible examples of ill effects of the nexus between corruption and use of political power — abuse of power for private properties. It was the outcome of the negligence of everyone concerned ranging from the building owner, approver, engineer, contractor, politicians, to manufacturers of

construction materials. As corruption has polluted every sector of the country, everyone was busy for making their own profits. In the case of Rana plaza tragedy corruption starts from the very beginning of making factory building bypassing building plan and ends with the hiding of dead body of the crashed workers. Even political blessing starts from more early than that of corruption. Accused owners and managing persons always are escaped by the grace of their political godfather. They are never brought under the system of legal punishment.

It is generally known that corruption hinders development and deprives people of fundamental human rights. The Savar tragedy tells the world that not only does corruption prevent access of the poor and disadvantaged to the whole range of basic services and entitlements, but corruption also kills innocent, honest and hardworking workers.

The Rana Plaza was allegedly constructed in an illegally occupied piece of land in collusion with the powerful from both sides of the political spectrum, supported by commission or omission by officials in the municipality, Rajuk and other authorities whose responsibility it was to ensure compliance to laws, regulations and codes relevant to the design, content and quality of construction and use of the building. There were gross violations a to z by power or transaction. The question remains if and to what extent source of income behind such a huge property was a matter of interest to the tax authority. The UNO abused power to undermine security threats caused by the cracks, so did owners of garments factories who forced the workers to come to work.

Within the Readymade garment sector, there are certainly some compliant business houses. But obsessed with quick profits, a large number of the so-called employers have not only ignored the basic requirement of transparency in setting up terms of employment like basic minimum salaries and benefits and work-place safety, but they have also used their money-power to enjoy impunity blatantly violating laws, regulations and codes thanks to a vicious and apparently unbreakable collusion of elements in politics, business, administration and law enforcement.

All of these facts are evident in the building that houses the headquarters of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which was built on wetland without environmental clearance and defying civil society outcry and even court orders. One prime minister, Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of the BGMEA building on 28 November 1998; another prime minister, Khaleda Zia inaugurated this complex on 8 October 2006, symbolizing an unabashed and endless mutual contest of gaining inches in the power base of political space.

Factory licences given and Renewed despite Faults:

The chief factory inspector's office had granted licenses to four garment factories at Rana Plaza and renewed those every year since 2008 though the factory floors of the nine-story building were built illegally and the units lacked safety standards.

As per the law, building owner Sohel Rana was supposed to get its design approved by the RajdhaniUnnayanKartripakkha. Though he had approval from Savar Municipality for raising a five-storey structure, he built four stories more and rented out the top floors to garment factories. The office of the Chief Inspector of Factory and Establishment (CIFE) is responsible for verifying the authenticity of the approval and ensuring the safety of workers. But the CIFE seemed to have overlooked this mandatory verification prior to issuing licenses to these garment units.

Four factories — New Wave Bottoms Ltd, Phantom Apparels Ltd, Phantom Tex Ltd and New Wave Style Ltd — had obtained licences from CIFE between 2006 and 2008, according to records. The fifth, Ether Tex Ltd on the sixth floor, had been running without any licence. Garment factory owners usually don't approach CIFE for licence at all. Being involved in underhand deals, some unscrupulous officials issue licences to non-compliant factories (Ali 2013).

The CIFE, under the labour law, can file cases against the owners of non-compliant factories. It has filed 11 cases against the owner of Rana Plaza for anomalies in the approval of the high rise and against all five factory owners for not maintaining safety standards.

In November 2012, a dreadful fire at another garment factory Tazreen Fashions Ltd at Ashulia claimed 111 lives. Housed in a nine-story building, the factory also had acquired fire licence from Fire Service and Civil

Defence(FSCD). Fire Service and Civil Defense authorities had also issued fire licences to the factories and renewed those every year.

This is the common phenomena that when an incident happened, respective authorities show the excuse of lack of sufficient manpower. The CIFE said that nearly 40 percent of 314 positions at the chief inspector's office is vacant. Of the total manpower, only 103 are factory inspectors. Of them, only 52 are posted to oversee more than 26,000 registered factories across the country. There are only 13 working inspectors out of approved 29 posts to look after 14,000 registered factories in Dhaka division alone.

Violation of National Building Code:

The probe body, formed by the home ministry to investigate the reasons behind the collapse, revealed its findings. Extremely poor construction materials and violation of construction rules contributed to the collapse of the nine-storey Rana Plaza. The substandard of materials was very poor. The ratio of cement and sand in the mixture was not proper and extremely low quality iron rods and cement was used.

Sohel Rana, the owner of Rana Plaza, erected the building for commercial purposes and later built more floors to house garment factories, violating the building construction code, and factory and fire safety rules. The municipality did not even follow the Bangladesh National Building Code while issuing the permissions to Rana Plaza. The local municipality authorities permitted for a six-storey building, and later permitted another four floors on top of that.

Rana housed five garment factories on the upper floors of the building where factory owners installed generators and machines weighing several thousand tonnes, which was a gross violation of the rules. Regarding the land on which the building was built, the report said a portion of the large building stood on a piece of land which had been a water body before and had been filled with dirt.

Officials of Savar municipality said the building owner had placed a layout plan in 2008, which they approved. The municipality has a small wing comprising of two engineers for approving building layout plans. Local homeowners said most of the buildings in Savar were authorized by this wing. The process is simple and quick with speed money.

According to Sub-Assistant Engineer Alam Mia of Savar municipality, their responsibility had laid only in approving the layout plan for the 10-storey commercial building, not in supervising the construction. It was up to the site engineer or architects to ensure quality on the construction. On the other hand, Chairman of RajdhaniUnnayanKartipakkha (Rajuk) stated that an area of 1,528 square-kilometers around Dhaka falls under the direct jurisdiction of Rajuk. No municipality within this area has the authority to permit any building construction. The owner of Rana Plaza did not obtain Rajuk approval, although it was mandatory. The owner of the building had not followed the Bangladesh National Building Code. Besides, there was no supervision by any architect or engineer during the construction work which, according to him, was the main reason for the collapse.

There is a strong linkage between corruption and politics. Corruption starts from the very beginning of making factory building bypassing building plan and ends with the hiding of dead body of the crashed workers. Political blessing starts from more early through land grabbing by political power. Accused owners and managing persons always are escaped by the grace of their political godfather.

Politicians involved in the party in power and government officials (bureaucrats) establish their own rule and play with people's lives to amass money and assets. The Rana plaza accident is one of the bad examples of it in recent time. A ruling party man, Rana, had built the nine-storied building without following building construction laws. Even, he grabbed the land on which he had built the Rana Plaza.

As Rana is a ruling party man, he did not need to face any hurdle in retaining the possession of the grabbed land and he did not need to follow the laws properly to build the Rana Plaza. Even the law enforcers, the Industrial Police after being informed about the cracks in the building, could not enforce the law as the building owner is a ruling party man who is blessed by the ruling party's local MP.

Sohel Rana as the face of democratic politics at the grassroots level: Rana patronized by Member of parliament as his godfather, use of local power and patronage to ensure Rana's rapid rise to affluence, no oversight by party

organization over political players such as Rana and Rana could use his political influence to bring in inspector/engineer from UZ office to give clearance that building was safe in response to worker's concerns over safety.

Rana demonstrated his political loyalty by keeping factories in his building open during the hartal. He enforced factory owners for keeping factories open. Even victims accused to the researcher during the interview that Rana used to protect opposition parties hartal and for this, he collects workers from these factories by using his political power.

Now politician becomes businessman and businessman becomes a politician. This growing linkage of politics and business with plus 60% of members of the parliament having business as primary occupation against below 20 in the first post-independence parliament four decades ago, lies at the core of the policy capture by forces that have prevented strategic and concrete measures. More than 30 garment industry bosses are members of parliament, accounting for about 10 per cent of its lawmakers (How textile Kings, 2013). Other owners, like Sohel Rana, the owner of the building that collapsed, have strong political ties. These politician businessmen have made a mountain of properties through corruption and political power. For example, the case of Mohammad Fazlul Azim who is also a member of parliament. Bangladesh's garment boom has made Mohammad Fazlul Azim a wealthy man. Over three decades his empire has grown from a single factory to a string of plants that employ 26,000 workers and clock up an annual turnover of about \$200 million (How textile Kings, 2013).

Azim, a member of parliament, has benefited from government policies to grow the industry into a global powerhouse. His elegant home in Dhaka is a haven of luxury with an outdoor swimming pool, walled off from the chaos of the capital's streets. His costs have almost doubled over the past several years. It's now time for the big Western brands he supplies to pay more for their clothes and stop squeezing his margins, he declares (How textile Kings, 2013)

Even today's trade union is an important mean to implement political agenda rather the interest of the workers. They are motivated to ensure the interest of their leaders who have elected him by money or support. Most of the trade union leaders are not from the workers, particularly in RMG. They are like mercenaries and grab leaderships politically as conduits of different political parties' influence on the workers. There are no effective workers representative body. As such, existing workers organizations are more political than the representative of the workers. They never have any headache as to the death of workers. As a result, there is hardly any serious pressure to be brought to bear on government and owners to improve working conditions of labourers who are mostly powerless and voiceless.

A study conducted after the Rana Plaza accident by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) covering over 80 factories in Dhaka, Ashulia, Gazipur and Jatrabari, has found that all the stakeholders in the garment sector, including owners, buyers, labour leaders and government agencies, are more or less involved in corruption and irregularities. Owners are involved in irregularities related to technical and social compliance issues while buyers help make fake audit reports. In many cases, owners set up factories without complying with building codes and fire safety rules and even build factories in residential areas.

In most cases, owners do not give appointment letters and payslips to the workers. They instead prepare fake salary sheets to show buyers that they pay higher wages to workers. Many international buyers, for their part, are giving orders to non-compliant factories in exchange for underhand dealings or commissions. In many cases, buyers withhold payments on various grounds mainly to get a discount or commission.

As TIB report stated, garment owners pay between Tk 7 lakh and Tk 20 lakh in bribe to collect certificates and get other services from 17 government institutions for setting up an industrial unit (Separate ministry for garment, 2013). In exchange for money, many trade union leaders also work in favor of the owners. These corruptions in the apparel industry took institutional shape mainly due to lack of transparency, accountability and good governance.

Some 10 percent parliament members are directly involved in the RMG sector, increasing the risk of making decisions in favor of certain individuals and groups. In many cases, the BGMEA does not perform its duties properly and rather gets involved in matters that are beyond its scope of work. This creates scope for political interference in the sector.

Conclusion:-

The Rana Plaza accident is the deadliest industrial accident in the history of the readymade garments industry. This is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a part of local and global political economy. Globally, this accident can be explained as an outcome of flexible accumulation by global capitalism. In this global economy, there is internationalization of production and consumption. Readymade garments manufacturing industries originated in the developed countries of West Europe and the United States in the '50s of the last century. But because of high competition as a result of globalization of production, the relatively big capitalists investing in the garment industry began to explore the possibility of taking advantage of the cheaper labour power available in the 'developing' countries like Bangladesh for decreasing the production cost.

World's giant retailer: Wal-Mart, El Corte Ingles, PC Penney, Kik, C&A, Benetton UK, Mango, Trimark and Premark etc. operate in Bangladesh only because of its competitive price and low labour cost. For example, in the case polo, shirts of a brand sold in London for \$46 were offered for sale from Rana Plaza for just \$4.45. This is the reminder of multinational companies' flexible accumulation by dispossession. But the global brands or retailers no longer wanted to invest in factories. They turned to sub-contractors that allowing them to enjoy the benefits of the cheap products without having their consciences stained with the sweat and blood of the workers. The Rana Plaza accident was a clear symptom of the global apparel industry's outsourcing of responsibility for labor and environmental conditions in factories. The tight delivery times, competitive pricing and penalties embedded in apparel contracts played a critical role in motivating factory managers to cut corners on safety and to push workers back into a dangerous factory. As a business partner, there are responsibilities of global brands to work to improve compliance of factory. But multinational companies' fast and restless drive for high profit to overcome the crisis of profitability of capitalism led developing countries like Bangladesh to just avoid mass death of workers in the deadly industrial accident like Rana Plaza accident.

From the local context, this accident can be seen as a product of bad governance and mass corruption in the peripheral state. Bad governance started from the very beginning as the building was constructed on illegal lands and clearance to the construction was gained in an illegal way. A nexus between politics and corruption worked in these illegal processes. Even the existing legal and institutional framework failed to stop the death of workers because of these bad politics and corruption. All the stakeholders in the garment sector, including owners, buyers, labour leaders and government agencies, are more or less involved in corruption and irregularities. Owners are involved in irregularities related to technical and social compliance issues while buyers help make fake audit reports. In many cases, owners set up factories without complying with building codes and fire safety rules.

There is a close relationship between globalization, export-oriented readymade garment sector and feminization of labour market. The poor female garment workers constitute the more flexible labour market for the global apparel business. Most of them are under-aged, widow, and divorcee or abandoned by the husband. It is easy to control and force them to enter into such a death trap, to work for a long time (16 hours working day including long overtime) without any leave facility. They had to work on the holiday. They become an appendage of the machine. They experience prolonged working hours and insufficient wage only for maintenance and for the propagation of their race (as Marx described the condition of factory workers in England many years ago). It is a super-exploitation of cheap female labour by multinational apparel company. There is a close relationship exists between the exploitation, other oppression of women and the ceaseless accumulation and growth.

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