

## **NSU–CMS Roundtable Urges Implementation of Labour Reform Commission’s Recommendations**

**Dhaka, 29 April 2025** – The Center for Migration Studies (CMS) at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), North South University (NSU), organized a roundtable titled “*Labour Rights in Bangladesh: Challenges, Reforms, and Possibilities*” to mark International Labour Day 2025. The event brought together notable members of the Labour Reform Commission, trade unions, leading policymakers, researchers, labour rights advocates, and representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to critically review the recent Labour Reformation Commission’s report and chart a path for implementing the recommendations. In the event, Brig Gen (retd.) Dr. M Sakhawat Hussain, Honourable Adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Ministry of Shipping, recounted first-hand experiences confronting poor labour practices. He firmly stated, “*Business owners must bear the responsibility of fair treatment of workers. Academics must work closely with the government to help ensure labour rights and sustainability.*” He stressed the necessity of holding employers accountable and integrating informal sector workers into formal protections.



The session concluded with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NSU and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, solidifying collaboration on labour research, education, and policy development.



In her welcome remarks, Dr. Ishrat Zakia Sultana, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology (PSS), NSU, stressed that in a global environment where tariffs increasingly hurt vulnerable workers, protecting labour rights must become a top national priority.

Professor Dr. Md. Rizwanul Islam, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, NSU, praised the Labour Reformation Commission's inclusive consultation process. However, he emphasized the need for actionable recommendations that align with ground realities to drive genuine reform.

Dr. Selim Reza, Coordinator of CMS and Associate Professor at NSU, highlighted that the commission's report reflects the aspirations of Bangladesh's 80 million workers. He noted the report's forward-looking proposals, including the creation of a permanent Wage Commission, a digital labour force registration system, and expanded maternity benefits. Mr. Nafiz Ahmed, Lecturer, Department of Law, NSU, offered a critical analysis, observing that while the report's value statements are important for setting vision, without concrete legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, such aspirations risk remaining symbolic.

Mr. A H M Shafiquzzaman, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, thanked NSU for its swift and insightful review of the commission's findings. He emphasized the need to bridge the divide between academia and policymakers and reflected on the painful memory of Rana Plaza, stressing that reforms must prevent workers from having to fight for their basic rights. Mr. Neeran Ramjuthan, Programme Manager at ILO Bangladesh, pointed out that while Bangladesh has made significant economic progress, informal sector vulnerabilities and youth unemployment persist. He underscored the need to deepen tripartite cooperation between government, employers, and workers.

Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed, Head of the Labour Reform Commission, acknowledged the limitations of the report but emphasized that it marks a starting point for ongoing, meaningful reform processes, grounded in national interest and collaborative dialogue.

Professor Dr. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor, NSU, noted that the MoU between NSU and the Ministry represents a strong commitment to jointly advance labour rights. He further pledged to embed labour law more comprehensively into NSU's academic curricula to cultivate socially responsible future leaders.