

“Better Work adapted more of a development approach rather than an audit or fault finding approach” – Director, Ananta Group

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Chowdhury A-A Quaseed is the Director of Ananta Group, one of the leading RMG exporters in Bangladesh and working with Better Work Bangladesh (BWB). He spoke about Ananta’s involvement with BWB, Participation Committee in the factory and other issues.

BWB: What are the reasons Ananta choose to join Better Work?

C. A-A Quaseed:

Ananta Group at the moment is a company that has 8 companies in operation, few more coming up and we have a total 25,000 people working here; 20,000 workers and 5,000 staff. We are also working with 25 different brands and we have audits happening all the time. The burden of audits are too much on the central management team. When we knew Better Work is coming in and lot of brands have registered with BW, we thought we would sign up with BW if BW could give a unified report which would be accepted by all the brands. That was one of the main reasons. Another reason was BW adapted more of a development approach rather than an audit or fault finding approach. We wanted to have something like this which look at things on a regular basis and point out where we are falling behind and help us to remedy those faults and finally become better.

BWB: BW now wants to facilitate the formation of elected Participation Committee in your factory. What is your view on this?

C. A-A Quaseed:

Well, the Participation Committee is something that we have been practicing in our factories for many years. Previously the PC was chosen through a process that was a combination of both voting and selection. But from about two years ago we started going through a completely transparent, democratic election process where the workers elected their representatives and the labour department had their representatives present during the elections. There are couple of points where I would say a bit of dissonance between what we had in mind and what we have practiced in last 2 years and BW has recommended. But we have been able to come to a mutual agreement. Basically we will be having PC where there will be election commission formed both by the participation of both workers and the management. That is in the law and we are going to follow the law.

So I would encourage the election. It is always a better idea to give voice to workers’ voice before problems get bottled up and erupts in a big way.

BWB: What has been your experience so far with BW?

C. A-A Quaseed:

We honestly feel that BW took a bit of time to get started in the full form we wanted it to be. In the first year we probably had one/two visits by BW in our factories and we didn't have many meetings or interventions as much as we wanted. There were few training programs organized at BW office. Those were good initiatives. I understand BW couldn't do that because the government rules that explains the labour law had not been published and BW was waiting for the rules to come in. But that was bit of a disappointment for us because we wanted BW getting into action bit sooner.

BWB: How can BW contribute more to your factory?

C. A-A Quaseed:

I think what actually BW can do, is have more training inside the factories. Training for the workers and also training for mid-management as well. I think BW is uniquely poised because it is signed up with so many brands that they can bring together the brands, BGMEA and factories and arrange dialogue, discussion and forums and not only clarify various confusions regarding compliance between all parties but also help the business ends of the companies interface with brands.