



Rawhide being processed in a tannery. File Photo: Mumit M/TBS

Tannery workers have voiced deep frustration as the new minimum wage announced by the government has not been implemented even a year after its declaration.

They also expressed concerns over worker retrenchment, non-payment of dues, harassment and the potential impact on freedom of association following the government's move to bring the leather industry under the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza).

"The government declared the new minimum wage for tannery workers on 21 November 2024, but the tannery owners have not yet implemented it," said Abul Kalam Azad, president of the Bangladesh Tannery Workers Union, at a press conference held at the Daily Star Centre in Dhaka today (25 November).

"Despite extensive discussion, tripartite meetings, and the ministry's final decision, the owners have not taken any effective initiative," he said, adding long-serving workers are being falsely labelled as temporary workers to deny them the declared wage - a clear violation of labour law.



The Tannery Workers Union organised a press conference at the Daily Star Centre in Dhaka on Tuesday, 5 November 2025. Photo: Collected

The association further stated that skilled and experienced workers are being deliberately laid off and replaced with workers hired through contractors. Those dismissed are reportedly not being paid their lawful dues.

Advocate AKM Nasim, country program director of Solidarity Center Bangladesh and a member of the Labour Reform Commission, said that bringing the tannery sector under EPZ rules could seriously undermine workers' freedom of association.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the Labour Reform Committee, said, "Keeping tannery workers in a temporary status for years, and delaying wage implementation could ultimately harm both the industry and the national economy."