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Over 400 garments units closed, more likely

By RM Titumir and Inam Ahmed

Once a lucrative sector, the readymade garments (RMG) industry is now inching towards a major setback as price undercutting, dampened markets, strong green-back and increasing input costs have made it yet another loss-making story.

For the last one year, most of the RMG factories are running at loss and it is estimated by industry leaders that between 400 and 600 units have been closed down after incurring heavy loss. More are to follow suit, they maintain.

A Daily Star team talked with a number of top RMG factory owners and verified their statistics which confirmed the above views.

"We are bleeding for the last one year," said Anisul Haq, Managing Director of Mohammadi Group, running about a dozen RMG units in the country. "I have not been able to pay this month's salary to my workers. I fear at least a thousand units may be closed down by next year if situation does not improve."

"The political situation which has already scared away a good number of buyers will further add to the plight of the RMG sectors," said MG Quddus, the country's leading RMG manufacturer and an adviser to Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "More factories are facing closure."

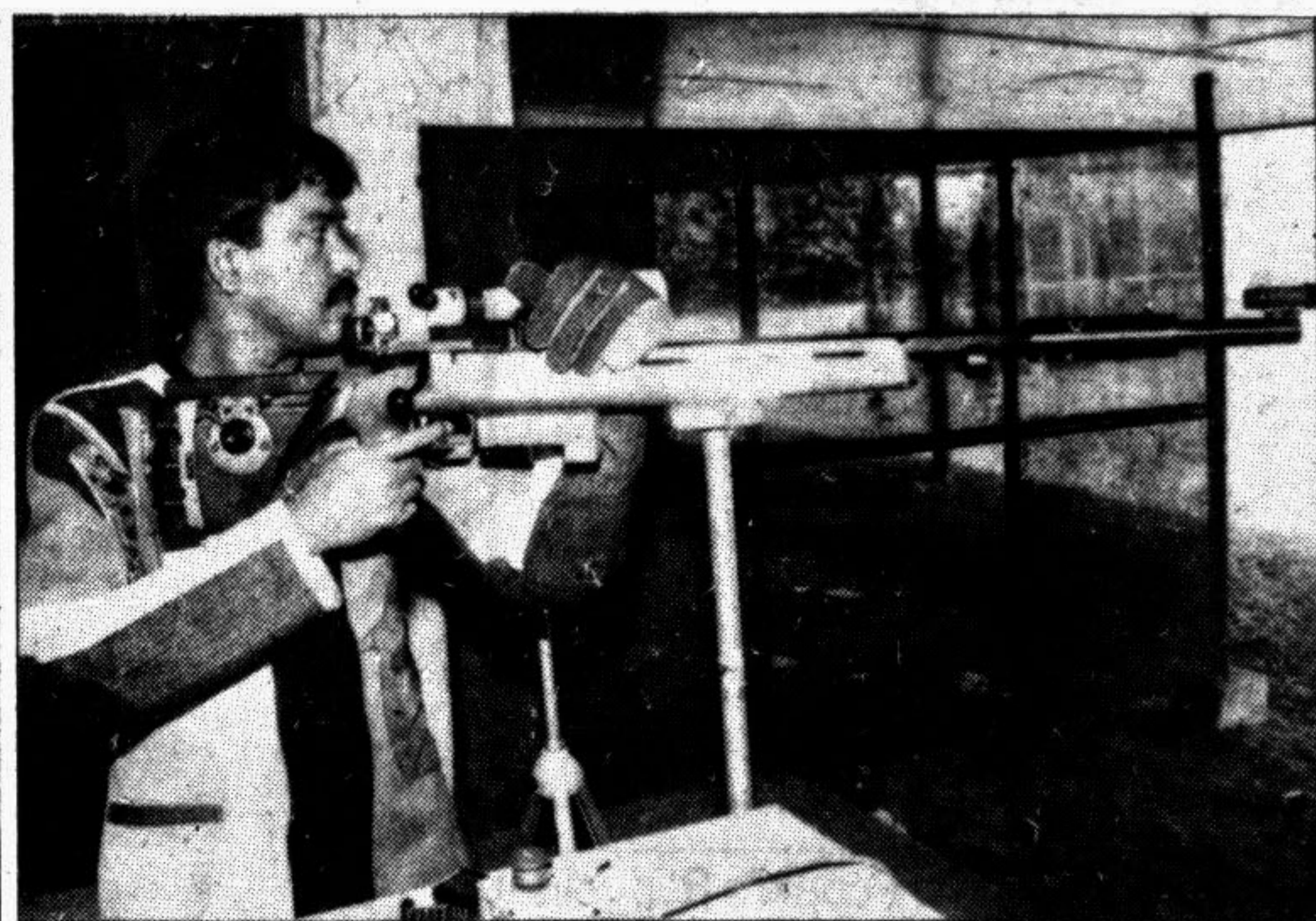
Cross-checking of statistics of costing at a number of RMG units revealed that these were incurring losses both in quota and non-quota items.

In case of quota category 347/348 (trousers), the 1996 Freight On Board (FOB) price of which is US 84.57 dollars per dozen, the Cutting and Making (CM) charge comes to 15 dollars.

Of the CM charge, an entrepreneur has to bear production and overhead cost of 4.5 dollars, bank, insurance, transportation, clearing and forwarding cost of 6.76 dollars at the rate of eight per cent of the FOB price, and quota price of five dollars, said owners of garments factories.

When these costs are added, the amount comes to 16.26 dollars which is 1.26 dollars higher than CM charge.

Again in case of non-quota flannel shirts which are priced at 30 dollars per dozen, the CM stands at around six dollars. Bank, insurance, transport and clearing and forwarding costs



Nasiruddin (Joni), who clinched gold yesterday at the 7th SAF Games being held in Madras, at a practice session. — Star file photo

First gold for Bangladesh

MADRAS, Dec 22: Md Nasiruddin of Bangladesh clinched the much-sought-after gold for his country in the smallbore free rifle prone event of the SAF Games at the Veerapuram Range here today, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh marksman scored 690.7 points to grab the gold.

Sutar Mahadev Totara of India got the silver with 686.1 points and his compatriot Palangappa Tambukutira bagged the bronze with 682.7 points.

The other Bangladesh participant in the event, Kamrul Islam, finished eighth with 661.8 points.

In the center fire pistol event India, led by ace shooter Jaspal Rana, made a complete sweep taking all the medals in the event. Rana took the gold with 581 points, Ashok Pandit the silver with 572 points and Ganagadhar grabbed the

Medals table

MADRAS, Dec 22: The following is the medals table at the end of the fourth day of SAF games today:

Country	G	S	B
India	51	30	12
Sri Lanka	10	13	25
Nepal	4	6	5
Pakistan	1	13	17
Bangladesh	1	5	13
Maldives	0	0	1



The Election Commission deadline for erasing the graffiti is only three days away. — Star photo

87 more arms recovered, 754 arrested

No Opposition activist held during mop-up operation

By Mizan Ali

Leaders of the three major opposition parties said they had no report of arrest of any party activist during the ongoing country-wide arms recovery drive which entered the second day yesterday.

They were, however, of the opinion that the mop-up operation should have been carried out under the supervision of a "neutral body strictly following the rules of the issuance of arms."

The drive began on December 21 at the directive of the Election Commission (EC) after the deadline for surrendering unauthorised arms expired on December 20. The EC took the initiative as part of its action programme to ensure a free and fair election.

"It is a very commendable attempt provided neutrality is maintained and the operation is carried out honestly," said Zillur Rahman, General Secretary of Awami League. He doubted "fairness in the operation in the present circumstances when the ruling party had already politicised the administration."

He replied in the negative when asked if any activists of his party was arrested during the drive.

"The operation should have been carried out by a neutral body and not through these agencies," said Anwar Hossain Manju, General Secretary of the Jatiya Party.

Manju also said that no worker or activist of his party

COMDECA a model example of social services: Biswas

BARGUNA, Dec 22: President Abdur Rahman Biswas said here today that the success achieved in the second Asia-Pacific Community Development Camp (COMDECA) would be a model example of services to the people through the Scout movement, reports BSS.

"This sort of camp is very fruitful in a way that the Scouts spontaneously work hand in hand with the local villagers in solving their problems, improving their living conditions and working for their welfare," he added.

President Biswas, who is the Chief Scout of Bangladesh, was addressing as the chief guest the closing ceremony of the five-day COMDECA here this evening.

Over 3000 Scouts and Rovers of 14 Asia-Pacific countries participated in the jamboree which began here on December 18. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in-See Page 12 Col 4

12km queue of vehicles on Aricha Highway

MANIKGANJ, Dec 22: An unprecedented traffic congestion was created at Aricha ferry ghat today following 11 hours of ferry suspension from early morning due to heavy fog, reports UNB.

Official sources said the ferry service came to a halt at about 1 am due to poor visibility in thick fog and resumed at noon after the fog disappeared.

Some 4,000 vehicles remained stranded at Aricha.

25 Bangladeshis hurt in Malaysian road accident

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 22: A truck carrying 31 foreigners skidded and overturned on a highway near Sungai Petani early Friday, killing a Nepalese and injuring the others, reports AP.

The victim was identified

Tk 489cr IDA aid for river bank protection

Bangladesh will receive 121.9 million US dollar (about Taka 489 crore) from the International Development Assistance (IDA) under an agreement signed on Thursday in Washington, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

The IDA assistance will be spent for the construction and maintenance of improved river bank protection works, the message said.

IDA, an affiliate of the World Bank, lends loans at concessional rate to selected developing countries.

The credit will help finance river bank protection to stop the Brahmaputra from dangerously breaching its right bank and flooding the hinterland. It is also expected to secure the Jamuna Bridge now under construction and two towns through erosion of the protection works.

Parliamentary polls BNP continues talks with smaller parties

By Nazmul Ashraf

The ruling BNP continues its efforts to bring the smaller opposition parties in the coming elections, informed sources said.

The policy planners of the ruling party are of the opinion that they should get ready for contesting the February 7 polls, along with the smaller parties, in case the lingering political crisis is not resolved before the January 3 deadline for filing nomination papers under the revised election schedule, the sources in the BNP said.

As part of the BNP move

NEWS BRIEFS

EC's request
 The Election Commission (EC) has again requested the people eligible to become voters, but not yet enlisted, to apply to the concerned Registration Officer by filling up forms No. 7 and 2 within December 24. After December 24, no applications will be entertained for becoming a voter, reports UNB.

Interview of BNP nomination seekers
 The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will resume interview of nomination seekers for the forthcoming national election today. Two hundred and twenty-six nomination seekers from Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Tangail, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Mymensingh and Netrokona will appear before the nomination board, party sources said. The interview will begin at 9 am at the BNP election office at 81, Kakrail in the city, reports UNB.

One electrocuted

From Staff Correspondent
 BARISAL, Dec 22: One Abdul Khaleque, 35, was electrocuted and his brother Motaleb, 40, was injured when came in touch with a high volt electric line at Madanpur village under Baul thana of Patuakhali district this afternoon.

Kukis kill 3

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Tribal guerrillas shot dead three people, including a senior state government official, in the far remote eastern Indian state of Manipur overnight, the Press Trust of India reported today.

Pry school teacher killed in B'baria

BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 22: Shahidul Haq, a teacher of a primary school, has been killed in broad daylight by some miscreants on December 18 in the village Dharmandal under Nasirnagar thana of the district. Police said the 42 years old teacher was returning home when the miscreants with lethal arms attacked him and left him severely injured on the spot where he succumbed to injuries, reports BSS.



The body of Swapan, reportedly beaten to death for a spoon yesterday in the city, being taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. — Star photo

Beaten to death for a spoon

By Staff Correspondent

An employee of a decorator shop, Swapan, 22, was beaten to death allegedly by the shopowner for loss of a spoon at Sutrapur in the old part of the city early yesterday.

The shopowner, along with his brother and an accomplice called Swapan to the godown of the shop, beat him mercilessly and gave electric shock and left him there, police said. Police recovered the body later and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College for autopsy. Police quoting another employee of the shop, also said that he was tied, hung with a ceiling fan and beaten.

Swapan, son of late Abul Kashem of Kamalapur area, was called out of his residence near the railway overbridge in Kamalapur station at about 10 pm Thursday.

Swapan's mother, Mafia Khatun filed a case with Sutrapur thana. The shopowner and his brother and the accomplice were absconding, police said.

Snatcher shot
 An alleged snatcher Abul Kashem, 17, was arrested after being shot in his leg at Green Road in the city early yesterday.



Hunt for photo of Di with her latest beau

VAIL, Dec 22: The hunt for Britain's Princess Diana is on in this posh resort town, especially now that Queen Elizabeth II has asked her and Prince Charles to get a divorce, reports AP.

British tabloid editors are desperate for a photo of the estranged wife of the heir to the British throne with the man rumoured to be her current beau, Christopher Whaley. He is a wealthy bachelor she met at her health club.

A picture of the two is especially attractive now be-

Tactics of illegal toll collection changing

Star Report

Extortionists are resorting to increasingly diverse methods affecting various segments of the society.

Not even a road side cobbler or a street vendor is spared by these well organised networks of extortionists allegedly backed by an influential section of the society.

During field visits mainly in Shyamoli, Adabar, Kallyanpur and parts of Mohammadpur areas of the city, these correspondents learnt that residential houses, pharmacies, clinics, restaurants, shops and department stores are the regular source of income — in the form of illegal toll — for a particular section of jobless youths.

Factories, roadside parking places in these areas were said to be under constant vigilance of the extortionists. Besides, unutilised private lands are also source

Plane heading for Karachi forced to land in Bombay

BOMBAY, Dec 22: A Russian-made plane heading for Karachi was forced to land at the airport in this western Indian city today and the six members of its crew taken into custody, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AP.

The news agency quoted Gopinath Munde, deputy chief minister of Maharashtra state, of which Bombay is the capital, as saying that the plane was flying from Thailand to Karachi when it was directed to land by air traffic

Peshawar car bomb blast toll rises to 60

PESHAWAR, Dec 22: The death toll from a devastating car bomb blast in the Pakistani city of Peshawar late Thursday has risen to 60, rescue workers said today, reports AFP.

The search for more bodies was continuing and the death toll could rise further, they added.

Doctors in the North West Frontier Province city as two hospitals said some 200 people were injured as the remote controlled device

Leaders of both camps now spend more time in their areas

By Staff Correspondent

With no fresh move to end the persisting political impasse in sight, both the BNP and the opposition leaders now seem to take politics outside Dhaka.

Leaders of BNP and some top leaders of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami are now spending more time in their areas, though for quite different reasons.

BNP leaders, who have filed nomination papers for the general elections, are busy in election groundwork in their districts.

The Opposition is now

Dhaka-Riyadh accord on Hajj

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have signed a bilateral agreement for the coming Hajj, reports BSS.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof MA Mannan said this yesterday on his return from the Kingdom ending his four-day official visit. The agreement was signed on December 20 in Riyadh following a meeting, he said.

The agreement provides all necessary arrangements for the performance of Hajj by the Bangladeshis during 1996.