



Karmojibi Nari stages a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding fair compensation for the victims of Spectrum Sweater Industries factory tragedy.

SPECTRUM FACTORY TRAGEDY Compensation for victims demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari, an organisation of working women, yesterday demanding publication of a complete list of the victims of Spectrum Sweater Industries factory tragedy and compensation for the victims.

The nine-storey factory building collapsed in Savar in April, leaving over a hundred workers dead and many others injured.

The organisation formed a human chain at Muktangon in the city to press home its demand and called on the human rights organisations and trade unions to be united to realise the demand.

It also demanded a compensation of Tk seven lakh for each dead worker, employment opportunity for the female workers and identifying the vulnerable buildings.

Speaking at the programme, the leaders of Karmojibi Nari said the garments workers are most neglected in society although they play an important role in earning foreign exchange.

They blamed the government for its indifferent attitude towards the woes of 20 lakh garments workers. The issues relating to the demands of workers were never raised in parliament, they added.

The family members of the workers killed in factory building collapse are still going from door to door for com-

pensation and those who lost their jobs in the fallout are still looking for a livelihood, said Rokeya Rafique, executive director of the Karmojibi Nari.

Terming the proposed budget anti-poor, Training Director Mahmuda Imam said the government did not earmark any fund in the budget for helping out the poor workers when in need.

Arifa Akhtar Anu, Anjuman Ara, Shaheen Akhtar and Shabnam Hafiz also spoke.

Later, the activists paraded through the city streets in a procession.

Proceedings of case against 3 of Prothom Alo stayed

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed the proceedings of a defamation case filed against the editor, publisher and Magura correspondent of the Bengla daily The Prothom Alo.

After hearing a quashment petition filed by the three, a High Court bench comprising Justice SK Sinha and Justice Farid Ahmed also issued a rule upon the government and complainant to show cause as to why the proceedings of the case should not be quashed.

A news was published in the Prothom Alo with a headline "terrorism and extortion in the name of BNP" on December 21, 2001.

Mesbauddin Kayes, organising secretary of Magura BNP, filed a defamation case on December 30, 2001 in a first class magistrate court of Magura against editor of the Prothom Alo Matiur Rahman, its publisher Mahfuz Anam and Magura correspondent Kabir Hossain for publishing the news.

Earlier, the three had obtained anticipatory bail in the case from the High Court.

Advocate SM Rezaul Karim assisted by Advocate Abdur Razzak moved for the petitioners before the court.

WORKSHOP ON HIV/AIDS

Prevalence rate among IDUs doubles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the current prevalence of HIV/Aids in Bangladesh is less than one percent, the country is highly exposed to an epidemic outbreak of the disease for those who use drugs with needle, experts said at a workshop yesterday.

They warned that the injecting drug users (IDUs) and other drug users may cause a disaster as the infection spreads geometrically among them.

South-South Centre, Bangladesh organised the workshop on 'Impending HIV Epidemic among Injecting Drug Users and Our Response' for a consortium of NGOs comprising Care Bangladesh, Marie Stopes and Aposh at a city hotel.

"The rise of prevalence rate among the IDUs is alarming -- the findings show that the prevalence rate of 1.7 percent in 2002 has doubled to 4 percent in 2004," said Dr Yasmin H Ahmed, managing director of Marie Stopes, citing a surveillance report of the ICDDR,B.

The prevalence rate is 8.9 percent at one particular site of central Dhaka, she said, adding that a prevalence of 5 percent of any situation among any section of people is globally considered epidemic.

All sorts of high risk behaviour such as sharing of needles and syringes, resorting to drug use through injection, multiple sex partners and having commercial sex are prevalent among the IDUs, said Dr Yasmin.

"The HIV/Aids prevalence rate among the IDUs and drug users increases geometrically and it may rise up to 40 percent if the addicts are not dealt with properly," said Maj Gen (retd.) Dr ASM Matiur Rahman, advisor to the National Aids/STD Programme (NASP), who chaired the inaugural session.

There are 4.6 million IDUs in the country, he said.

The spread of HIV/Aids is on the verge of an epidemic as 90 percent of the IDUs share needles and syringes, said Women and Children Affairs Secretary M Hyder Ali.

"Asian experience shows that it is the IDUs who caused an alarming outbreak of HIV/Aids in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia," said Jalaluddin Ahmed, director of South-South Centre.

If an epidemic breaks out from this small section of people, the situation will be disastrous, said Steve Wallace, country director of Care Bangladesh. "We all have to act as connectors and knowledge brokers to prevent the spread of the disease and cure the IDUs."

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam and NASP Line Director Dr Fatima Parveen also spoke at the inaugural session.

Executive Director of AITAM Hospital Dr Masud Hassan, IDU expert Dr Gary Reid and Dr Tasnim Azim of the ICDDR,B took part in the business session moderated by Law Commission Member Dr M Enamul Huq.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Awami Swachchhasebak League observes a token hunger strike at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city in memory of the victims of the August 21 grenade attack.

CTG ARMS HAUL

Another accused arrested

UNB, Chittagong

A charge-sheeted accused in Chittagong arms haul case was arrested at a restaurant in Nasirabad Industrial Area of the port city early yesterday.

The accused, Bazal Ahmed, went into hiding after the arms haul.

He was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court at noon. The court sent him to jail.

Police and coastguards seized 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition from the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) on April 1, 2004.

As many as 43 people were charge-sheeted in the case. Of them, 18 are now in jail, 11 absconding and the remaining 14 were released on bail.

Hasina returns home on July 2

UNB, Dhaka

Awami President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will return home on July 2.

The opposition leader left Bangladesh on June 18 for France at the invitation of President of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Rene Vander Linden. She went to Moscow on June 25 from Paris.

In Moscow, People's Friendship University of Russia conferred upon Sheikh Hasina an honorary Doctorate degree in recognition of her "contributions towards establishing democracy, peace and human rights."

Awami League presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP, international affairs secretary Syed Abul Hossein, MP, former ambassador Ziauddin and forest and environment secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud are accompanying her.

Verdict in heroin haul case July 7

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Verdict in the sensational 24-kilogram heroin haul case against two Pakistani nationals and five others will be pronounced on July 7.

After completion of arguments from the prosecution and the defence, Judge Mohammad Shamsul Alam Khan of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka fixed the date.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 18 prosecution witnesses including Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury, the then director general of Narcotics Control Directorate (DNC).

The DNC arrested three Pakistani nationals -- Ibrahim, Rais Khan and Alekjan -- from a room of hotel Rajmoni Isha Khan in the city with 24-kilogram heroin on September 20, 1999.

Mohammad Amzad Hossain, the then assistant director of the Directorate of Narcotics Control, filed a case accusing Ibrahim, Rais Khan and Alekjan the same day.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Alekjan, Rais Khan, Ibrahim, Irshad, Zahangir, Kamal, Hanif and Dulal on November 24, 2000 and the court framed charges against Alekjan and others on August 31 last year. Earlier, Ibrahim died in jail custody.

Judge Mohammad Matiur Rahman of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on July 7 last year rejected the bail order of a Pakistani national Alekjan accused in the case, just two days after he was granted bail.

Accused Alekjan, Rais Khan, Irshad and three others were present in the court during the hearing.

Advocate Atiur Rahman defended the accused.