

RMG workers suffer health hazards for use of synthetic materials in factories

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said ready-made garment (RMG) workers are subjected to a variety of physical, chemical and biological hazards due to use of natural and synthetic materials in the factories.

Wage discrimination, long working hours, unhygienic environment, lack of water and sanitation facilities and inadequate rest and sleeping time are causing malnutrition and many other health problems to garment workers, they added.

They further said workers contribute a lot to RMG sector, the country's major foreign currency earner. So, the government and garment industry owners should pay more attention to them and ensure their health and security issues.

Doctors for Health and Environment organised the roundtable titled 'Health of the labourers of garment sector: Problems and solution' at WVA auditorium in the city to mark the May Day.

In a keynote paper, Occupational Health and Environmental Health of National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM) Associate Prof MH Salimullah Said said about 2.2 million workers are employed in the garment industry. Of them, 65 percent are women workers.

He further said RMG workers are subjected to a variety of physical, chemical and biological hazards due to use of natural and synthetic materials in the factories.

Health hazards like musculoskeletal disorder, urinary tract infection and anaemia and nutritional problems are stemming from bad working condition, long working hours, lack of water and sanitation and inadequate health care facilities in the factories, he added.

He recommended to take measures for improving the working place, ensuring adequate toilets, allowing workers to drink water and undertaking training programmes on occupational health safety for the

sake of the workers' health.

Sramajibi Nari Maitree Convener Bonhi Shikha Jamali said though health-related problems are major ones of the workers, the government and industry owners do not pay much attention to these problems.

She suggested decreasing working hours, ensuring decent wage and necessary health care services to the workers.

Dr Rawshan Ara of NIPSON said most of the women workers suffer from malnutrition and 15 percent of them suffer from severe malnutrition.

The nutritional and reproductive status of women workers is very much vulnerable and they suffer from lack of vitamins, iron and zinc, she said, adding that they also take less food what they need to take.

Mentioning the wage of the poor workers, Wajedul Islam Khan of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra said the minimum wage and the dearness allowance of the garment workers should be consistent with the current market prices.

He suggested increasing the minimum wage at Tk 4,500.

Doctors for Health and Environment General Secretary Shakeel Akhter recommended to ensure first aid services in the factories for primary health care facilities of the workers.

Garment workers Parul Akter and Nasima Akter narrated their problems they face in their factories.

With Rashid-E-Mahbub in the chair, the roundtable was moderated by Dr Mirzadi Sebrina Flora.

Doctors for Health and Environment Vice President Nazmun Nahar, Dr Nasrin Bina Sikder, Dr Mustaq Hossain, Prof Mamunur Rashid and Dr Fawzia Moslem of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also spoke.

Salahuddin freed on parole to attend father's janaza

UNB, Dhaka

Former deputy minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed was released yesterday on parole for six hours to attend the namaz-e-janaza of his father, Saidul Haque.

Saidul Haque died due to old age complications at the age of 97 at his village home at Shikdarpara in Pekua upazila of Cox's Bazar district at about 9:00pm on Thursday.

DIG (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told UNB that Salahuddin was sent to Cox's Bazar jail in the morning from the prison cell of BSMMU and released at 1:00pm on parole for six hours.

Family sources said Salahuddin, also a former BNP MP from Cox's Bazar-1, brought to Cox's Bazar jail from Dhaka at about 11:00am.

He was taken back to Cox's Bazar jail after his father's burial at their family graveyard.



Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria places a wreath at his grave in the city on Thursday marking his 77th birth anniversary.

Ties with Bangladesh to be strengthened further

Says British high commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury has said bilateral relation between the UK and Bangladesh has reached a high level and it should be developed further in the years to come.

Anwar Choudhury has said bilateral relation between the UK and Bangladesh has reached a high level and it should be developed further in the years to come.

He was speaking as chief guest at a gathering of students and guardians at the Burunga Iqbal Ahmed High School of Balaganj upazila in Sylhet on Thursday.

The programme was organised in connection with the inauguration of a newly built academic building of the institution.

The envoy said there are still many things to be done for the improvement of the education system in the country.

The government should take necessary steps on their own while the donors' assistance should be utilised properly for producing a brilliant generation, he added.

Choudhury said there are talents in the country, they just need proper care and support for making them more competent.

Sending unskilled manpower abroad is very tough now a days,

rather there is a good demand for qualified professionals everywhere in the world, he added.

He said a special programme will be taken up soon for establishing links between 400 schools in Bangladesh and 400 in the UK.

The students and teachers of these schools will maintain close link through Internet and other facilities, he said.

At the beginning, the programme will start between Burunga Iqbal Ahmed High School and a Manchester school, he added.

Choudhury said the British government will soon start a 100 million dollar project for raising the standard of English in Bangladesh.

Deputy Commissioner Harun Ur Rashid Khan, former chairman of Sylhet Education Board Prof Abdul Baqui Chowdhury, Vice-chancellor of Sylhet Metropolitan University Prof Kabir H Chowdhury and Iqbal Ahmed also spoke at the programme presided over by school managing committee chairman Advocate Khairul Islam.

Monju meets US Congressmen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (Monju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju last week met a number of US congressmen in Washington DC, reports News Agency ANA.

He also met members of different committees like foreign, international terrorism and administration.

Some Congressmen welcomed Monju warmly in the Capitol Hill, said highly placed sources.

Monju told ANA that he has paid some courtesy calls and there are possibilities to meet with some senators and Congressmen.

He said he had met with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat-Texas), Congressman Joe Wilson (Republican-South Carolina) and Congressman Cris Van Hollen (Democrat-Maryland) and talked many issues amid cordial environment.

Asked about the topic, Monju said it was just courtesy calls.

He has already met with Speaker of US Congress Nancy Pelosi, Joseph Crowley and some officials of State Department for South Asia Affairs.

Monju told ANA that an election is needed to be held by any means in Bangladesh.

He also said there is no alternative to hold an election for the sake of removing confusion among the foreign friends.



Ten women freedom fighters who were awarded Begum Rokeya Padak pose for photograph with the guests at an award giving ceremony at Ladies Club auditorium in the city yesterday. Narikantha Foundation organised the programme to mark its 10th founding anniversary.

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BBC Bangladesh Sanglap today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 36th edition of the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap will kick off at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city today.

Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta, BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (Retd) ASM Hannan Shah, journalist and cultural activist Kamal Lohani and Country Director of ActionAid, Bangladesh Farah Kabir will take part in today's sanglap as panellists.

The recorded version of the discussion will be aired on BBC Bangla radio at 8:00pm tomorrow and on Channel-i at 8:00pm on Monday.



Jatiya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju calls on US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee at Washington DC recently.

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Cab drivers protest hike in deposition money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand drivers of CNG-run taxicabs on Thursday observed a work stoppage in the city protesting an increase of rate of daily money deposition by the owners.

They also staged demonstration in the city's Matuall and Gabtoli areas against the decision of the cab owners, urging the government for taking measures in this regard.

The drivers alleged that in the name of the price hike of the CNG, the taxicab owners increased the rate.

They said although the government had fixed a rate of Tk 450 per day, they had to pay the owners Tk 560. But the cab owners at a sudden decision fixed Tk 920 for each cab per day.

According to witnesses, several thousand taxicabs were seen parking at different depots in the city as the drivers went on work stoppage.

Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association Chairman and former BNP lawmaker GM Siraj told The Daily Star, "Though there is a govern-

ment decision of driving taxicabs by the drivers against the deposition of a fixed amount of money, drivers run my cabs on condition of commission."

Replying to a question, GM Siraj said, "As the CNG price has been hiked, we have to collect extra charge."

Indian ship with rice arrives

An Indian commercial vessel carrying 3550 metric tonnes of rice arrived at Chittagong Port on April 29, says a press release.

India offered 40000 tonnes of rice, 10000 tonnes of wheat and 1000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder for the people affected by floods and other natural disasters in 2007.

About 12500 tonnes of rice have been supplied during December 2007-April 2008.

Supply of remaining 23950 tonnes of rice is also underway.

India also supplied 1000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder during February and March of 2008.

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