

Garment sector

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might be nearly impossible for many factory owners to meet the delivery deadlines.

According to a report from drapersonline.com, a fashion news website, international buyers Marks & Spencer, H&M, and Zara are facing the threat of severe delays in stocking deliveries following the closure of garment factories in Bangladesh.

Ifty Islam, managing partner of Asian Tiger Capital, an investment bank, said the minimum wage in Bangladesh's garment sector is the world's lowest. The cost of living has been increasing 10 to 15 percent a year, but salaries have not been adjusted, he added.

"The owners must compromise, and need to cut profit to raise workers' wages to a level which is acceptable."

The only solution is to increase wages for workers, but it will squeeze the profit margin for garment factory owners. So, foreign buyers should understand that they need to raise order prices as well, Ifty Islam said.

"We all should pay a little more. It will be a good balancing act."

PROTESTS
The workers damaged some vehicles, burnt tires, and vandalised some factories in Ashulia yesterday protesting the shutdown, police said.

They put up barricades at Jamgora and Baipail on Dhaka-Tangail highway as well.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) rushed to the spot, and brought the situation under control at noon. Road communication was restored after the demonstrators were removed from the highway.

During the demonstration 30 workers were injured, said local residents.

Meanwhile, Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain in a meeting with leaders of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and BGMEA said an initiative is underway to announce an acceptable wage scale for the workers before July 28.

He however issued a warning saying any chaos in the garment or any other industrial sector over wage raise will not be tolerated.

The government formed a minimum wage commission for the garment workers in January, headed by Ikeder Ahmed. The commission held some meetings, but could not reach any decision yet.

DEMANDS
An alliance of 14 garment workers' associations yesterday reiterated its demand that the government must fix the minimum wage at Tk

5,000 immediately.

At the same time, it urged the government to take necessary steps to open the closed factories in Ashulia, and to stop arrests and harassment of workers who have been protesting for the last four days.

At a media briefing in the afternoon, Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, president of Bangladesh Textile Garment Workers Federation, said the government must protect the rights of all workers.

"The government took a three-month time from April 27 to fix the minimum wage for ready-made garment workers. But no progress has still been made," he complained.

Criticising BGMEA for closing all factories in Ashulia, he said, "According to the existing labour law, the association or an owner must give notice prior to any closure or production suspension."

He also complained that the factory owners in Ashulia have been harassing protesters using police and hired goons for the last couple of days.

The alliance announced a demonstration at Muktangan of the capital today at 4:00pm, and demonstrations across the country on Friday.

Idrish Ali, president of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, and Moshrefa Mishu of Bangladesh Garments Workers Unity Forum also spoke.

RMG units

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factory in the name of demonstrations for payhike.

In the wake of severe labour unrest, owners closed down at least 250 factories at Ashulia in Savaron Monday.

At the hurriedly-called press meet, the BGMEA boss demanded that the labour leaders responsible for the unrest be identified and ousted from the unions.

He also urged the home secretary to retract his newspaper statement where he said "owners do not pay wages".

He called for legislation to stop labour unrest and provocation.

FBCCI President Annisul Huq, president-elect AK Azad, BKMEA President Fazlul Haq and former BGMEA president Tipu Munshi, among others, spoke at the briefing.

BGMEA has formed a crisis management committee headed by local MP Murad Jong.

Meanwhile, Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain in an interview with BBC yesterday said committees have been formed with local lawmakers in charge to make sure RMG violence does not recur.

WC MADNESS

No legal basis for hoisting flags of other countries

UNB, Sangsad Bhaban

There is no legal basis for hoisting flags of other countries in Bangladesh, as seen these days, for supporting the teams in World Cup Football, said Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Shafique Ahmed yesterday in the Parliament.

Shafique was replying to a written question from Awami League lawmaker Apu Ukil (women seat-2).

But the Minister said that the government has no plan to take action against the youths who hoisted flags of their favourite countries as this is a "sensitive" matter.

In this regard, he advocated for a move to create awareness through television, radio and newspapers so that the youths refrain from such activities.

Father-in-law

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On Monday night, he told Rab that Farzana got very upset in the first week of May when she heard the news of Smriti's pregnancy. Smriti is the second wife of her husband Rashedul Kabir.

According to Chief of Rab intelligence wing Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, Shafiqul said Farzana sought help from her parents-in-law for getting her husband back but the family favoured Rashedul, which led to a series of altercations that week.

Amid such situation, in presence of police and Farzana's relatives they forced her to sign an agreement on her leaving the house by June 30, he added.

Rashedul left house after he married Smriti in 2008 without their consent, but at times he used to come and put pressure on Farzana to evacuate the house so that he could move in with Smriti, Shafiqul said.

Detectives yesterday produced Shafiqul Kabir, his wife Noor Banu, their daughters Sukhon and Kabita and Kabita's husband Delwar Hossain Patwari before a Dhaka court. The court placed each of them on three-day remand.

Investigation officer of the case Sheikh Mahbubur Rahman in the remand forwarding said the arrestees needed to be interrogated to unearth the reasons behind the deaths and to arrest other two accused Rashedul and Smriti.

He said that mysteriously none of the Farzana's in-laws passed the night in the building on June 9, the day the tragedy took place, although Sukhon and her daughter were to stay on the ground floor of the three-storey building as Shafiqul and Noor Banu went to village.

Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch of police Monirul Islam said they are also investigating the "coincidence" of the in-laws not spending that night in the house.

Farzana's mother on June 11 filed a case with Kadamtoli Police Station against eight people including driver Al Amin under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Power deals

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requested Bangladesh to finalise an agreement within two weeks for appointment of consultant.

The officials also reviewed the progress of establishment of a coal-based power plant on joint venture between NTPC and BPDB. The NTPC has sent a 'Term Sheet' for joint venture agreement and it would be finalised when MoU is signed, sources said.

In connection with the technical assessment of old power stations for efficiency, improvement and renovation and modernisation, the BPDB has already furnished the details for Ghorasal power station, official sources said.

The two sides are likely to sign the "Bulk Power Tariff Agreement" in July when an Indian delegation visits Dhaka. The Power Grid Corporation of Bangladesh and the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited earlier signed an agreement to construct electrical interconnection between Bheramara, Bangladesh and Baharampur India.

The Bangladesh side felt that preparation and finalisation of Power Purchase Agreement for purchasing 250-megawatt power from India need to be stated soon.

Mofazzel Hossain, Joint Secretary, Power Division, of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, led the Bangladesh side while Dr M Ravi Kant, Joint Secretary of Power Ministry, led the Indian team.



A model of the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the construction of the much-awaited project yesterday.

PHOTO: FILE

Jatrabari-Gulistan

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government after a concession period of 24 years.

The concessionaire would be quick in completing the flyover construction within the tenure of the incumbent government, said the PM, adding that the DCC is the executing agency of the project.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said, "Revival of the Jatrabari flyover project would not be possible without the prime minister's initiative, as there were many complications."

The revised design of the flyover is of international standard, which would be the most convenient road link, he said.

Chairman of the concessionaire company Mohammad Obaidul Karim said the construction would be completed in two years after the relocation of Wasa, Titas Gas and BTTB utility lines.

Toll for using the flyover would be collected manually and digitally, he added.

The nine-kilometre dual carriageway flyover includes 13 slip roads (exit and entries) and will stretch from the Dhaka-Chittagong highway to Palashi. The minimum height of the flyover would be 5.5 metres while 7.2 metres at level crossing, according to sources.

The facility is also expected to provide faster road connectivity with 30 districts and the Chittagong port.

In 1996, the then Awami League government initiated the Jatrabari flyover and conducted a feasibility study but the succeeding four-party alliance government could not implement the project due to corruption and inefficiency, said the PM.

State minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak, local lawmaker Md Habibur Rahman Molla and DCC's Chief Executive Officer Md Abul Kalam Azad, among others, spoke at the inauguration ceremony chaired by Monjur Hossain, secretary of Local Government Division.

AL's anniversary

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historic Rose Garden in Old Dhaka. Later, the word 'Muslim' was dropped from the name of the party to give it a secular colour.

The AL led all democratic movements of the then East Pakistan starting from the Language Movement of 1952 to War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 under the leadership of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

To observe the day, AL has chalked out a day long programmes including hoisting of national and party flags atop at AL offices across the country at 5:15am, placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi at 7:30am and a discussion at 4:00pm at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the discussion as chief guest while leading political leaders and intellectuals will also speak.

AL General Secretary and

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday urged all the party leaders, workers and activists to observe the day across the country in a befitting manner through holding discussion, placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu, among others.

Both the AL president and general secretary gave separate messages on the occasion greeting party leaders, workers, supporters and well-wishers.

The AL president, in her message, congratulated party leaders, workers, supporters, well-wishers and said that the nation remembers with respect the struggling role of AL in every great achievement of the Bengali nation, reports UNB.

"Insha Allah, the party will remain beside the people in future as it was in the past," she said.

Awami League, a symbol of glory of giving leadership during the long struggle for independence and the Liberation War, has now become an institution, she added.

Saarc home ministers

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scheduled for June 26 in Islamabad.

The proposal to strengthen police cooperation, women and children trafficking, prevention of smuggling of counterfeit notes and drugs will be highlighted at the meeting said diplomatic sources.

They said the Home Ministers of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will discuss ways to strengthen the Colombo-based Saarc Terror Offences Monitoring Desk and Drug Offences Monitoring Desk, which are the nodal agencies to fight against these problems, Foreign Ministry sources said.

Home Secretary is expected to represent Bangladesh though no decision has yet been made regarding the Home Minister's presence at the conference said Foreign Ministry sources.

A meeting of Police Chiefs and Home Secretaries of the Saarc countries will precede the conference on June 24 and 25. DG of RAB Hasan Mahmud Khandaker will represent IGP of Bangladesh Police.

Earlier, the eight member countries of the Saarc agreed to build up a network among their police forces. Implementation

of the agreement will feature in next week's discussion.

The Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement, reached at the Saarc Summit in Colombo in 2008, has not yet been ratified by Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal.

The agreement will create greater scope for cooperation among the security forces of the member countries in hunting, arresting and handling over of terrorists and criminals to their respective countries.

A new proposal for cooperation on maritime security mooted by Sri Lanka and Maldives will also be discussed, said official sources.

The conference will also discuss Saarc Visa facility and review possibilities for its category expansion. At present members of parliaments, judges of higher courts, top ranking business leaders, prominent sports persons and senior journalists can avail the facility.

The first meeting of its kind was held in Dhaka in 2006 and the second in New Delhi in 2007. The 3rd SAARC Home Ministers' conference has been postponed numerous times due to inability of certain member countries to attend the meeting.

Transparency

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People know nothing about the military budget and how the money is spent, they said, adding, even lawmakers don't know about the allocation for the Armed Force Division (AFD) in the new budget.

Speaking at the inaugural session of a two-day workshop on "Civil-Military Relations: Trust Building" at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday, the speakers suggested revitalising and redefining the role of ISPR (Inter Services Public Relations).

The ISPR can take proactive steps for more interactions with civilians and improve relations with them, they added.

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised the workshop with the support of the Defence Institute Reform Initiative (DIRI), the USA.

Speaking as the chief guest, lawmaker and chairman of parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry M Idris Ali termed the military spending a "blackhole".

"The defence allocation is more than \$1 billion, but people don't know what happens with the money. There should be transparency about whatever takes place in the area of military," Idris, also a former defence secretary, said.

He added the draft defence policy has been sent to the AFD to incorporate opinions.

"There are many ideas that may be included in the policy, one of which is creating a national service body under which youths aged between 18 and 35 will be given military and other training to serve the country," he said.

"Much of the routine activities of Bangladesh military are shrouded in secrecy away from the public. There is no discussion about how the money will be spent," Registrar of BRAC University Air Commodore Ishtiaq Ilahee Choudhury said in his presentation on "Improving Military's Ability to Relate with Civil Society in Bangladesh".

He said healthy civil-military relations based on mutual respect and understanding is important for building a democratic society. "A strictly apolitical military institution acts as a pillar of democracy rather than a threat to it," he observed.

In his presentation styled "Identifying and Promoting Common Goals to Build Confidence and Trust in Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh", Prof Syed Anwar Husain of Dhaka University

Pak-born

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Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum, in Manhattan's Federal District Court, asked Shahzad a series of questions to ensure he understood his rights.

She asked him if he understood he might spend the rest of his life in prison, to which he said he did.

Asked by Judge Cedarbaum if he was sure he wanted to plead guilty, he launched into a statement, saying he wanted "to plead guilty and 100 times more".

He said he wanted to let the US know that if he did not get out of Iraq and Afghanistan and stop drone attacks and meddling in Muslim lands, "we will be attacking US".

Shahzad, 30, who wore a white skull cap, told the packed court: "One has to understand where I'm coming from. I consider myself... a Muslim soldier."

He said he had chosen a warm Saturday night because Times Square would be crowded with people whom he could injure or kill.

He said he had packed the car with three separate bombs, hoping to set off a fertiliser-fueled bomb packed in a gun cabinet, a set of propane tanks as well as gas canisters rigged with fireworks to create a fire-ball.

He told the court he waited between two and a half minutes and five minutes for the bombs to erupt.

"I was waiting to hear a sound but I didn't hear a sound. So I walked to Grand Central [station] and went home," he said.

A street vendor saw smoke coming from the vehicle and alerted the police.

Shahzad was arrested two days later as he tried to take a flight to Dubai from New York's John F Kennedy airport.

He co-operated with investigators for two weeks, waiving his rights that protect arrested suspects from incriminating themselves, before requesting a lawyer, justice officials say.

Sentencing was scheduled for 5 October.

The most serious charges against Shahzad, including attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempted act of terrorism transcending national boundaries, carry mandatory life sentences.

'BOMB-MAKING TRAINING'
During their investigation, the FBI traced the purchase of the Nissan Pathfinder SUV to Shahzad, a transaction that eventually led to his arrest.

highlighted different phases and topsy-turvy in civil-military relations since independence.

He explained the issue of politicisation of military from 1972 to 1990 and militarisation of politics between 1975 and 1990 and the civil-military relations in post-Ershad era.

"Over the four decades Bangladesh has had both the worst and hopeful times in the relationship and the responsibility, for which devolves on both the civil and military segments of the society," he said.

"Burying the past civil-military relations needs to be forward-looking and the necessary changes of mindset involving both sides are in order to keep pace with the fast changing times," said Prof Anwar.

Ambassador Harun-ur Rashid also raised the issue of military spending. He said people want to know what the military do in peacetime.

Prof Shahiduzzaman, Prof Amena Mohsin, former army chief Lt Gen Mabbubur Rahman, Chief Information Commissioner Mohammad Zamir, Chief General of Staff Lt Gen Md Mainul Islam and Editor of New Nation Mostafa Kamal Majumder also addressed the workshop presided over by Chairman of BISS Board of Directors Maj Gen Mohammed Firdous Mian.

South Korea

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were eliminated from the World Cup along with the Greeks.

The Super Eagles, who have never beaten an Asian side at the World Cup, opened the scoring through Kalu Uche (12) before South Korea hit back in the 38th minute through Lee Jung-Soo.

In a free-flowing game, the Koreans took the lead in the 48th minute through a Park Chu-Young freekick, but Yakubu Ayegebeni converted a penalty with 20 minutes to play.

The Everton striker, however, was guilty of missing two clear-cut chances, including one sitter, as the game ebbed and flowed from one end to another with attempts aplenty on goal.

South Korea started brightly and Lee Chung-Yong had an excellent chance in the first minute after capitalising on a woeful attempt at a clearance from Rabiu Afolabi.

Against the run of play in the opening quarter, Nigeria's Chidi Odiah made a determined run down the right flank and squared the ball which Uche tapped in after holding off a feeble defensive effort by Cha Du-Ri.

But South Korea hit back through Lee Jung-Soo, who got around the back of Rabiu Afolabi to scramble the ball past goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama from a Ki Sung-Yeong freekick.

Almeria midfielder Uche had almost doubled Nigeria's lead just before the Asian team's equaliser but his well-struck shot rebounded off the post with Jung well beaten in goal.

South Korea took the lead after Park Chu-Young curled a freekick around the wall and past Enyeama into far side of the goal.

Some careless defending saw Ayegebeni gifted a chance but Lee Jung-Soo just managed to get back and steal the ball away, and then came the Everton player's horrendous miss as he failed to bury an inch-perfect Yussuf Ayila cross into the back of an empty net.

Another Nigerian attack did pay dividends, however, as Kim Nam-Il brought down Obasi in the box. U stepped Ayegebeni to convert the penalty but Nigeria could muster no more attempts on target and the South Koreans went through.

Argentina

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that was tipped over.

These close shaves were the signal for sustained pressure from the South Americans, whose goalkeeper Sergio Romero was a virtual spectator at chilly Peter Mokaba Stadium.

Greece finally showed some attacking intent when a superb lobbed pass from captain Giorgos Karagounis was just too long for Glasgow Celtic striker Giorgos Samaras to reach.

Tzorvas was fast becoming the busiest footballer on the field as he foiled Maxi Rodriguez and made another superb save on the stroke of half-time to deny a curling Messi shot and leave the match goalless at the break.

The second half followed a similar pattern with Argentina continually pressing only to be denied by a series of Tzorvas saves until Demichelis abandoned his defensive duties and turned scorer.