

# Padma PolyCotton workers want jobs back

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

About 700 workers of a garment unit yesterday staged a peaceful sit-in on the premises of BGMEA office in the city, demanding immediate reinstatement of their 206 colleagues, suspended for 'misconduct' and enforcing unlawful strike.

The sewing workers of the Padma PolyCotton Knit Fabrics Ltd, based in Tejgaon industrial area, started to gather at the office of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association from 9am and sat there for the next four hours.

They came to seek the sector's trade body's help, so that the colleagues get back their jobs. According to them, the workers have been put under suspension for 'being outspoken'.

The workers said when they joined their duties after Eid vacation they found 135 of their colleagues suspended and served with showcase notice. Later another 71 workers also got the same order.

"Police and factory staff barred the suspended workers from entering the factory," said a worker. "There are also incidents where an on-duty worker has been summoned to the office and forced to leave the factory."

"Those who always spoke in favour of their colleagues have been singled out to gag their voice," said another worker.

At 1:00 noon, the sit-in ended after police, who maintained strong presence since the morning to ward off any untoward incident, assured the workers of requesting BGMEA and the factory owners to settle the issue by October 13.

"We have requested the BGMEA to play its part in solving the problem," said SM Shiblee Noman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police.

"We also urged them to ask the factory owners to put up a list of sus-

pending workers after conducting fair investigation within the next seven days so that the innocent workers can join work," he said.

The workers pointed out that the local ruling party leaders who took responsibility to solve the issue are yet to bring any good news for them.

In the face of mass boycott by most of the factory's around 2,300 workers at the garments section, the production has come to a halt since Monday.

Padma PolyCotton, which employs 5,000 workers, exports garment products to Europe and the United States.

Factory officials acknowledged suspension of 206 workers for 'creating indiscipline'.

Akhter Us Samad, manager (administration) of Padma PolyCotton, said, "On August 4 and 5, they did not turn up at the factory, as they joined rallies in demand of minimum wages."

"On September 8, the last working day before the Eid vacation, they defied the authorities' disapproval not to arrange any musical programme on the factory premises. But they went ahead and prompted other workers not to join work, putting a delivery order worth \$500,000 at stake," he alleged.

"Due to work abstention, we could not deliver our products on time," he told The Daily Star, adding that the sewing section was also closed on September 18 and 19.

He alleged that the on-duty workers had given ultimatum to the authorities to reinstate the suspended workers.

However, the workers admitted they were in usual festive mood on the salary day, but they did not cross limit.

Samad of Padma PolyCotton, a 100 percent export-oriented garments unit, said their production is being hampered due to work abstention, as all the sections of the factory work simultaneously.

Labour laws were followed in taking decision on the issue, he said.

"We have officially informed the factory and organisations inspection department, labour department, local administration, police and BGMEA of our decision."

BGMEA officials said they also came to know about the September 8 incident, and requested the factory owners not to react immediately, as their action could spark off unrest in the factory as well as in the total sector, which fetched over \$12 billion from exports last year.

A 19-member committee, comprising representatives from BGMEA, factory owners, local ruling party organisations, police, labour department, factory and organisations inspection department and workers, has also been formed to sort out the issue, said Rafiqul Islam, joint secretary (labour) of BGMEA.

"But the committee could not give any result, as the workers called for reinstatement of co-workers bypassing the committee," said Islam.

He said the BGMEA has urged the factory owners to resolve the issue as soon as possible. "They can suspend the 'real wrongdoers' as per laws after conducting fair investigation."

Workers said their livelihood is at stake, as the government and the BGMEA, mainly an owners' association, are virtually doing nothing in solving the crisis.

"If we don't get salary on October 10, the usual salary day at Padma PolyCotton, we will fall in trouble," said a 25-year-old female worker, who helps her husband maintain a family of five members.

The latest incident comes as the deadline for implementation of minimum wage for the country's 3 million garments workers nears. From November 1, all garment units will have to execute the government decision on minimum wage, which has been raised to Tk 3,000 from Tk 1,662.50.



Dancers perform at the launch of KFC's new dessert "Krusher" at the restaurant's Gulshan branch in Dhaka yesterday. Akku Chowdhury, executive director of Transcom Foods, franchisee of KFC, is seen in the background.

# More to KFC's dessert menu: Krusher comes in 5 flavours

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Yet another item has been added to KFC's dessert manu.

Krusher, the international food chain's latest mouth-watering item, appeared first yesterday at its Gulshan outlet in Dhaka.

The item is made from a combination of chocolate, cookie bits, coffee, dairy and ice. "You don't only drink it. You slurp, munch, crunch, gulp and do much more." KFC defined the frozen drink this way.

The drink is now available in five flavours-- Choco Lash, Charred Coffee, Strawberry Smoothie, Virgin Mojito, Black Mojito.

"This is perhaps the most exciting addition to the KFC menu till date," said Akku Chowdhury, executive director of Transcom Foods Ltd.

Transcom Foods, a concern of Transcom Group, is the franchisee of KFC in Bangladesh.

"When it comes to Krusher, it's not just about the great taste and a cool drink -- it's about the experience," Chowdhury added. "Gulp it, crunch it, crush it, grind it, chomp it -- it's your call. But I can guarantee that it will be an experience like never before."

Both the Mojito Krushers are priced at Tk 215. Strawberry Smoothie sells at Tk 270, while one has to pay Tk 250 for enjoying the

taste of Chareed Coffee and Tk 230 for Choco Lash.

Colonel Harland Sanders is the founder of the original Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). There are over 14,000 KFC outlets in 105 countries and territories around the world. It is part of Yum! Brands, Inc, which is the world's largest restaurant system with over 32,500 KFC, A&W All-American Food, Taco Bell, Long John Silver's and Pizza Hut restaurants in more than 100 countries and territories.

Transcom Foods, also the franchisee of Pizza Hut in Bangladesh, launched KFC on September 6 in 2006. Now it has six outlets in the capital.



Visiting members of the Dutch delegation named Maritime Trade Mission Bangladesh pose in front of a billboard welcoming them at the Western Marine Shipyard in Chittagong yesterday. The shipyard's Managing Director Sakawat Hossain briefed the team. Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director Nurul Kabir was also present.

# Dhaka index soars to new high

## STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks rose for the 10th session, taking the key index to a new high.

The DSE General Index, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, reached a peak of 7,412 points, yesterday gaining 85 points, or 1.16 percent.

Stockbrokers however were worried about the rising trend, which in their view is "irrational".

"There is no fundamental reason for the current upward trend," said Md Shakil Rizvi, president of the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

"I think it's because of a mismatch between demand and supply. Demand for shares is increasing by the day, but the supply side cannot match the huge demand," he said.

So, he said, the regulator's market cooling measures are turning out to be ineffective. Instead of controlling the

market with margin loans or price-earnings ratio, he said, it is important to increase the supply of new shares.

The DSE chief urged the government to immediately offload its stakes in the companies already listed on the exchanges.

"Offloading of shares in the already-listed companies will not take much time, as it's a matter of decision," he added.

Most sectors advanced yesterday including all the financial sectors -- banks, non-bank financial institutions and insurances -- pharmaceuticals, cement and power.

Z-category shares however suffered a big loss on fears of being delisted. The SEC's delisting directive also targets four securities: Apex Weaving, Monno Fabrics, Dhaka Fisheries and Padma Cement. The first three were the top three losers of the day.

Advancers beat losers 166 to 75, with one remaining unchanged on the premier bourse, which traded more than 11.70 crore shares and mutual fund units on a value of Tk 2,436 crore.

Peoples Leasing and Financial Services topped the turnover leaders with 38.18 lakh shares worth Tk 90.74 crore being traded on the floor. Chittagong stocks rose, with the CSE Selective Categories Index gaining 118 points, or 0.85 percent, to 13,946.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange traded more than 1.45 crore shares and mutual fund units on a value of Tk 206 crore.

Of the traded issues, 124 advanced and 60 declined, with 10 remaining unchanged on the port city bourse.

UCBL topped the turnover list with 76,000 shares worth Tk 10.14 crore being traded on the port city bourse.



# Hitachi Asia's MD in town

## STAR BUSINESS DESK

Masanori Iwanaga, managing director of Hitachi Home Electronics Asia(s) Pte Ltd, has arrived in Bangladesh to attend a business conference.

Iwanaga will attend the annual dealers' conference of Magnum Marketing Ltd, the authorised distributor of Hitachi home electronics products, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre today.

He is expected to attend a business discussion with Magnum's high officials and visit its showrooms in Dhaka.

# Samsung sells 5m smartphones

## REUTERS, Seoul

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd said yesterday that it has sold more than 5 million Galaxy S smartphones since the June launch, putting the smartphone laggard on track to challenge bigger rivals.

A weak lineup of smartphones has one of the weakest points for Samsung, the world's No.2 handset maker.

# Even the American rich are cutting back

## REUTERS, New York

Bill Gates and Warren Buffett are urging US billionaires to give away their money, but economic uncertainty is deterring rich Americans from increasing their giving, say bankers to the very wealthy.

Chief executives of Wells Fargo Private Bank, Credit Suisse Private Bank, Bessemer Trust, Silvercrest Asset Management and Bank of America's US Trust told the Reuters Global Private Banking Summit that some rich people were reassessing their giving as the country recovers from its worst recession in decades.

"Whereas the typical American house-

hold is trying to figure out how to balance its checkbook and pay its bills, the wealthy (are) trying to do that, even with its philanthropy," Wells Fargo Private Bank CEO Jay Welker said in New York.

"Philanthropy is a part of... what can I afford to do this month, or this quarter, or this year?" he said.

Welker praised Gates and Buffett's Giving Pledge campaign, which urges billionaires to give away at least half their fortunes to charity, but said that "what they don't give away still makes them wealthier than everybody else in the world."

The bankers said America's wealthy were concerned about the economic recovery and whether Congress would

extend tax cuts for richer US households, enacted by former President George W Bush, that are due to expire at the end of December.

"There is a fear that if the money is permanently lost, they might not be able to make it again," said Moffett Cochran, chief executive of Silvercrest Asset Management.

"Our clients are probably not spending their money as freely as they once did. I think that's motivated by a lot of things including guilt at having still a lot," he said.

Cochran said that while many of his clients were involved in philanthropy, others were not interested.

He mentioned one wealthy Wall Street

client, who when asked if he wanted to consider getting involved in philanthropy and including his only son, replied: "I want my son to learn how to make money before he starts giving it away."

Keith Banks, chief executive of US Trust, said that many wealthy Americans believed that "their wealth brings a desire, almost a responsibility, to do positive things with it" and that despite the economic woes, that mind-set had not changed.

"But I would say if anything they are being more selective in what they're doing and what they're supporting," he said.

"In the past where some of them might write 10 checks, they may give the same

# HP to launch webOS phones

## REUTERS, Barcelona

Hewlett-Packard Co will introduce smartphones in early 2011 using the webOS software it acquired through its \$1.2 billion Palm buy earlier this year, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

"You will see us coming early next year with new phones," Senior Vice President Eric Cador told an industry conference.

HP bought Palm, an early pioneer in handheld devices, to tap into the fast-growing smartphone industry and get access to Palm's acclaimed webOS operating system.

"More importantly we acquired webOS," Cador told the conference in Barcelona, adding Palm's intellectual property was "extremely fundamental" in the deal.

HP, the world's largest technology company by revenue, is already a dominant force in PCs, servers, services and printers. But without a credible smartphone offering, it risked being left behind in a rising and highly profitable market, one that rivals both at home and in Asia are increasingly moving into.



Abul Barkat, chairman of Janata Bank, attends the inauguration of the bank's 860th branch at Begumganj in Noakhali on Monday. SM Aminur Rahman, managing director, presided over the programme.



Bangladesh Foundry and Engineering Works Ltd (BFEW) has agreed recently to use Scancement, a product of Heidelbergcement Bangladesh Ltd (HCBL), for the construction of all its upcoming projects including "Baghbari Power Plant". Ramakanta Bhattacharjee, deputy managing director of HCBL, and K Rahmatullah, managing director of BFEW, were present at the deal signing ceremony in Dhaka.