

STOCKS	COMMODITIES
DGEN 1.62% ↑ 4,210.58	Gold ↑ \$1,728.37 (per ounce)
CSCX 1.82% ↑ 8,166.90	Oil ↓ \$87.86 (per barrel)

ASIAN MARKETS			
MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI
0.88% ↑ 19,339.90	0.48% ↑ 9,446.01	0.80% ↑ 3,069.95	0.85% ↑ 1,980.12

CURRENCIES			
USD	EUR	GBP	JPY
81.10	103.02	129.02	0.96
BUY TK	SELL TK		
82.09	107.02	133.00	1.07

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DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 2012, e-mail: business@thedailystar.net

WB panel to track progress in Padma bridge probe

External team arrives in Dhaka for the second time

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

An external panel of the World Bank will start talks with the Anti-Corruption Commission from today to know the progress the anti-graft watchdog made in investigating the evidence of corruption in the Padma bridge project.

The panel will hold several meetings with the anti-graft body till December 6, said an ACC official.

A finance ministry official said the team is also scheduled to meet Finance Minister AMA Muhith today.

Earlier the external panel came to Dhaka on October 14 for the first time.

ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said they will meet with the WB external panel today afternoon when their working programme will be chalked out.

Rahman said, "In the meetings we will present the progress in our investigation into the graft allegations and our future plans."

Chairman of the external panel former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo reached Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

The other two panel members are Timothy Tong, former commissioner of the Independent Commission against Corruption of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; and Richard Alderman, former director of Britain's Serious Fraud Office.

In a statement on November 28, WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein said, "The external panel of internationally-recognised experts will advise the World Bank and co-financiers on the adequacy of the government's investigation."

The finance ministry official said, whether the financiers, including the WB, will finally provide fund to the Padma bridge project depends on the report of the external panel. Already on November 13, the WB sent a third report to the ACC on corruption evidence.

The ACC official said the third report contained detailed evidence of graft against the public and private officials concerned.

The official said the WB prepared the third report based on information received from the Canadian government and other sources.

The third report also mentions the names of those accused in the earlier report but the latter contains more evidence, the official said.

Prior to the panel's second visit to Dhaka, the co-financiers met in Manila for preliminary discussions on revising the project implementation arrangements from November 28 to 30.

The WB said adequate progress in investigating the corruption evidence is necessary to allow project implementation to move forward.

The original \$1.2 billion WB credit for the bridge was cancelled on June 29 due to an insufficient response by Bangladeshi authorities to evidence of a conspiracy of corruption involving senior public officials.

Subsequently, additional actions were undertaken, and on September 20 the government agreed to go by four conditions that also include proper investigation into the allegations.



People wait at Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, ahead of a nine-hour daily shutdown of operations yesterday. The shutdown will continue for more than five months. Passengers arrived at the airport much earlier than before, fearing hassles.

Nine-hour daily shutdown at Shahjalal airport begins

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Flights in and out of Shahjalal International Airport were operated smoothly yesterday ahead of a nine-hour daily shutdown of operations for more than five months for maintenance work.

The daily airport traffic that consists of 185 flights, including 90 international ones, and around 15,000 passengers in 24 hours will now have to be dealt within the 15-hour window.

Yesterday was the first day of the shortened operating hours, and many passengers said they did not experience any inconvenience, even though the airport looked crowded.

"It took me an hour to come out of the airport after completing all formalities," Ershad Hossain who travelled from Riyadh to Dhaka told The Daily Star.

There was no unusual queue in front of the immigration and customs desks, he said.

There was less traffic on the road to the airport yesterday, as it was a weekly holiday.

Fearing to be a victim of traffic jam, some passengers came to the airport much earlier than they were asked to report.

Abdus Salam, who is supposed to fly to Riyadh at 8:30pm by a flight of Biman Bangladesh, said he reached the airport at 1:30pm, as he started earlier from his village home in Narsingdhi to avoid traffic jam.

Doubt over justice in Ashulia fire

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A minister and the leader of a garment lobby group at a BBC Sanglap said people responsible for the last week's fire tragedy should be punished, but the audience at the show expressed doubts over justice.

The debate was created after Rahimul Alam from the audience raised a question: "Would it be possible to punish the responsible persons for the fire incident at

"The government is investigating the incident and justice will be done, at least for this incident," he said.

Otherwise, the country and its economy may face a serious crisis, the minister said.

"It may leave a negative impact, and it would be very bad for the country, as we are still an import-dominated country," he said.

Admitting a lack of monitoring by the government, the minister

done. "It will put a negative impact on exports and economy," he said.

"Everyone, including us, will have to take the responsibility," he said.

The BGMEA president said the absence of a planned industrial zone for the garment factories is also a reason for these incidents.

"We have been demanding for long an industrial zone so that we can relocate our factories there. But none paid heed to us," he said.

Former education minister Osman Farruq said people's doubts over getting justice are nothing new. "Many investigations were done in the past, but none got punishment," he said.

He said, already a group is trying to divert the investigation stating the Ashulia incident a conspiracy.

"These are political comments, and such remarks should not be made before the investigation is complete," he said.

"Exports will definitely be hampered after the latest incident," he said.

Shirin Akhter, president of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote, a platform of workers, said the fire incident took place due mainly to negligence and violating rules.

She said the customers in the EU and US have already started raising complaints against the Bangladeshi garment manufacturers after the tragedy.

Anwarul Islam Faruk, a survivor of the fire incident, said the duty managers held them back from escaping the fire.

"Even the fire alarm rang for only three seconds and I now think someone might have switched off the alarm," he said.



The third episode of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, a joint initiative of BBC Media Action and BBC Bangla Service, is ongoing at the BIAM auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Tazreen Fashions on November 24?"

Rahimul was in doubt that the culprits will not be punished.

The BBC Bangladesh Sanglap is a joint initiative of BBC Media Action and BBC Bangla Service.

Commerce Minister GM Quader at the dialogue at BIAM Auditorium said common people are in a confidence crisis as they did not see any punishment in the past for these incidents.

said inadequate workforce and a lack of monitoring are the main reasons for inappropriate supervision in the garment sector.

Echoing the minister, Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said: "Whoever they are, they should be punished."

He said it would not bring good news for the country if justice is not

GARMENT FIRE US ready to help Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

US Secretary of Labour Hilda L Solis on Friday assured that her department was ready to help Bangladesh with technical assistance and expertise in the readymade garment sector.

"The US Department of Labor stands ready to help, with technical assistance and expertise, to work with the government of Bangladesh to ensure that this horrific tragedy (Ashulia fire breakout) becomes a watershed moment for Bangladeshi workers' rights," she said.

The comments of Solis came through a statement of the US secretary of labour issued from Washington.

She also stressed support for stronger protections, from workplace health and safety to workers' right, to help them get organised and bargain collectively.

"I join US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan Mozena in extending heartfelt condolences to the people of Bangladesh and the many families who lost their loved ones," Solis said.

The fire breakout at Tazreen Fashions killed around 111 people on November 24.



Hilda L Solis

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Unrest shuts two RMG factories in Ishwardi EPZ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Persistent labour unrest shut Roshita Knitting Wear Ltd and Megha Textile Ltd, both Chinese-owned, in the Ishwardi Export Processing Zone.

"The continuous worker agitations of the past eight-month have hampered the exports, so the authorities have decided to close them down indefinitely," Sumon Hossain, an executive officer of the two factories, told The Daily Star.

Mahmud Hassan, Ishwardi EPZ's general manager, blamed the shutdown on the confronting workers.

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