

Abul stumbling

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WB panel met with the ACC officials to review the draft report filed by the ACC enquiry team.

Sources in the ACC said the two sides had a difference of opinion over the draft enquiry report, as the ACC dropped some names, including that of Abul Hossain, though the WB gave sufficient evidence of corruption against him along with others.

The WB panel argued that there was no scope for excluding their names from the enquiry report, said the sources.

On November 13, the WB Integrity Vice Presidency sent the ACC a third report on corruption evidence.

The report contained detailed evidence of corruption against public officials concerned as well as others, said an ACC official wishing anonymity.

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

The third report mentioned the names of those against whom corruption allegations had been raised in an earlier report. But the latest one contained more evidence, said the official.

The ACC thinks that all the corruption evidence provided by the WB might not be acceptable in Bangladesh courts as some laws vary from country to country, said a source in the ACC enquiry team.

ACC Commissioner Mohammad Shahabuddin said, "There may be a difference between the laws of our country and theirs. What they consider as corruption might not be regarded as crime in our country."

These issues should be taken into consideration, he told reporters.

On the draft enquiry report, he said, "The report stated what they [the alleged conspirators] have done individually or collectively."

He said the report men-

tioned that the offences the conspirators had committed could fall within the purview of the Corruption Prevention Act, 1947 and the Penal Code.

Shahabuddin said the commission may sue the alleged conspirators tomorrow after evaluating the enquiry report.

The ACC commissioner said less than nine people would be sued for their involvement in the corruption conspiracy, while the ACC chairman said the number would be less than 10.

Referring to the report, the ACC chairman said corruption had been committed in the bridge project but no bribe was exchanged.

The ACC launched the enquiry in September last year after the WB raised corruption allegations in the project.

The WB external panel headed by Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, earlier visited Dhaka in October.

The two other 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.

ACC sources said that unless the anti-graft body files a First Information Report, it cannot proceed from its enquiry to an investigation as expected by the global lender.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after the Bangladesh government agreed to the WB's terms and conditions.

Vienna

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second most livable city while three German cities -- Munich, Dusseldorf and Frankfurt -- follow close behind.

"Overall, European cities continue to have high quality of living as a result of a combination of increased stability, rising living standards and advanced city infrastructures," said Slagin Parakatil, Senior Researcher at Mercer. This is despite economic turmoil, political tension and high unemployment in some European countries.

Australian, New Zealand and Canadian metropolises round out the top ten list.

Mercer's survey results are based on an analysis of local living conditions comprising 39 factors in 10 categories. Political considerations include government stability and crime rates. Economic factors take into account banking services and currency exchange laws. Health considerations include access to medical care and pollution levels. Transport, housing and recreation are also taken into account.

City scores help multinational companies calculate compensation packages for the employees they dispatch overseas. A lower score often correlates into a better compensation package that includes hardship allowances, according to Mercer.

Countries with unstable governments or undergoing civil strife tend usually have lower scores. Eight African cities dominate the bottom ten in this year's survey.

"The ongoing turmoil in many countries across North Africa and the Middle East has led to serious security issues for locals and expatriates," says Mercer's Parakatil. "Companies need to be able to proactively implement mitigation plans, such as emergency repatriation, or adjust expatriate compensation packages accordingly."

The cities that score the lowest are: Belfast, Northern Ireland (Western Europe); Detroit, Michigan, (United States); Dushanbe, Tajikistan (Asia-Pacific); Tbilisi, Georgia (Eastern Europe) and Port-au-Prince, Haiti (North America).

PM slams BNP

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making them ministers after 2001 election.

"Is there anything more shameful than giving support to the Jamaat-Shibir, who killed thousands of people and acted to eliminate intellectuals just before the surrender of the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971?" she questioned.

The premier also said Jamaat-Shibir's parent party is the BNP and its main task is to resist the government from holding the war crimes trial.

She reiterated that the trial of war criminals must be held in the soil of the country as it is the demand of the people who has given the Awami League (AL) government a mandate to try them.

Hasina said whatever the verdict comes from the trial, it would be implemented, and Jamaat and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, would not be able to stop the trial by killing people and attacking the law enforcers.

The premier also thanked the people who had built up resistance against Jamaat-Shibir at some places across the country during yesterday's hartal.

She urged the countrymen to build up united resistance against Jamaat-Shibir so that they could not attack people and foil the war crimes trial.

Hasina said the International Crimes Tribunal, where the war crimes trial is being held, has a special provision of making appeal.

Whereas no other court in the world where such kind of trial was held had the appeal provision, she added.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said the BNP-Jamaat has been conspiring to foil the war crimes trial at a time when the trial is going to a successful direction.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu said time has come to take a political decision to root out the fundamentalist forces from the country and safeguard democracy.

Other 14-party leaders including Syed Ashraf Islam, Enamul Haque spoke at the meeting.



Patterns for sweatshirts and tank tops emblazoned with US Marine Corps logos at fire-ravaged Tazreen factory.

PHOTO COURTESY

Clothing patterns

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Worker rights groups in the US expressed outrage that an overseas factory with clearly identified safety problems would be selected to manufacture clothing for a licensee of the United States Marines.

"The fact that Marines logo clothing was found in the rubble of the sweatshop fire should serve as a wake-up call to the US government to put into place safeguards to ensure decent working conditions in government supply chains and among licensees," said Liana Foxvog of the International Labour Rights Forum.

As with Wal-Mart, Disney, Sears, and other well-known American clothing brands whose clothing was found on the Tazreen factory floor immediately after the blaze that killed 112 workers last week, both the US Marine Corps and the North Carolina-based company that was making items under a licensing agreement with the Marines said they did not know about or approve of any arrangement to make garments there.

"We never purposefully produced garments there. Ever," said Bob Humphreys, chairman and CEO of Delta Apparel, which is the parent company of the brand Softe.

Humphreys said his company is "turning things upside down" to figure out why order sheets found at Tazreen identified Softe as the company that placed the request for the Marine Corps products. He said in 2011 his company had placed an order with Tazreen's parent company, Tuba Limited.

When Softe received a shipment of 11,000 garments from Tazreen at that time, Softe officials complained to Tuba.

"We told them no other garments could be made in that facility, it was not authorised," Humphreys said.

The Marine Corps was equally perplexed, especially because its licensing agreement with Softe specifically spelled out that its products were supposed to have any Marine Corps logos affixed at the Softe plants in North Carolina, and had not provided any approval to manufacture anything at Tazreen.

"Tazreen Fashions factory is not an authorised manufacturer of MJ Softe licensed Marine Corps branded merchandise," said Jessica O'Haver, director of the Marine Corps Trademark Licensing Office.

Advocates with the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity discovered the order book in the burned out Tazreen building and photographed it. The photos include order sheets dated July 2012, designs for hooded sweatshirts that say "Semper Fi" or "US Marines," matching sweat pants, and a tank top that says "The Few. The Proud."

Humphreys speculated that Tuba, which had an order from Softe, had moved production to Tazreen without telling his company.

He said none of the items being made in Bangladesh were part of the company's contract with the Department of Defence -- those items are required by law to be made in the United States. Softe also has licensing agreements with several branches of the military to make T-shirts, sweatshirts, and other items carrying military logos, which are sold commercially and on military bases around the world.

Humphreys said most of those items are made in the US or in Latin

America. Softe items made elsewhere in the world represent a tiny fraction of its business. "All we contracted with Tuba would be less than two tenths of one percent," he said.

Workers groups expressed dismay that Softe and other companies have largely declined to accept responsibility for producing clothing in the Tazreen factory, even after photographs have surfaced showing order books, sketches of items, labels, and actual garments they make were inside the factory at the time of the fire.

Several, including Wal-Mart and Disney, have said orders were placed in the factory by a firm serving as a middle man, and that neither company had authorized work at Tazreen.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones in this horrific tragedy," said a Disney spokesperson. "Our records indicate that none of our licensees have been permitted to manufacture Disney-branded products in this facility for at least the last 12 months. We have been working collaboratively with governments, NGOs and other companies to address the issues associated with manufacturing in Bangladesh and we are committed to continuing these efforts."

ENYCE, a clothing label owned by hip-hop mogul Sean Combs acknowledged that a firm hired to produce its items had placed an order with Tazreen.

Tazreen had been the subject of a critical audit by Wal-Mart inspectors in 2010, and after the fire the manager acknowledged the nine-story building where 1,500 workers laboured had no fire exit.

Tazreen fire victims

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workers will total Tk 6.72 crore.

Of the Tk 6 lakh given to each family yesterday, Tk 2 lakh came from the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund and Tk 1 lakh each from the labour and employment ministry, BGMEA, Bankers Association of Bangladesh and Hong Kong-based RMG importer Li & Fung.

The prime minister called upon all to help hunt down those instigating workers to set fire to garment factories, reports UNB.

"You have noticed that workers are frequently being instigated to torch garment factories. Why is it happening? ... It needs to be identified who are instigating workers to set fire to factories by giving them money..." UNB quoted her as saying.

Hasina urged all to remain alert to prevent recurrence of fire incidents like the one at Tazreen factory.

Referring to the recent arrest of RMG workers for attempting to set fire to a garment factory, she said such "destructive game" was very unfortunate for the country.

She said her government is assisting the families of the fire victims according to its capability.

"I know we won't be able to bring back those who have lost their lives ... But we'll stand beside you and continue to help," she added.

The prime minister also said the government would do whatever it can for the

victims of flyover girder collapse at Bahaddarhat in Chittagong.

Earlier, as per her directives, family members of the 43 victims were brought to Dhaka from different districts under government arrangement. They will also be taken back home.

Meanwhile, at a press briefing at the trade body's office in the capital, BGMEA Vice President Faruque Hassan said that Tk 50,000 would be given to each of those injured in the blaze.

BGMEA will also open a disaster relief fund account to collect contributions from buyers, shipping lines and RMG manufacturers soon, Hassan said.

BGMEA Vice President SM Mannan Kochi said they had already taken responsibility for the treatment cost of the 55 injured in Tazreen fire.

Of them, 22 are now under treatment in different hospitals in the city and the others have already left hospital. Fatema, an injured worker, died yesterday, raising the toll to 112, he said.

Hassan said BGMEA will rehabilitate the fire victims by offering them jobs in apparel factories, helping for 10 years the families of those killed if they do not have any earning members and paying for medical expenses of the injured.

Also yesterday, after a meeting with the trade body and labour leaders, Mikail Shipar, labour secretary, said BGMEA would disburse salary of 990 victim workers at the Industrial Relations

Institute in Tongi at 10:00am today.

Tazreen will pay salary to the workers in three categories. Those who worked for up to three months will get pay for November and Tk 1,000.

Those who worked for three months to one year will get salary for November and one month's gross pay. The workers in the third category -- those who worked for one year and above -- will receive salary for November and two months' gross salary, the secretary said.

The workers, who deserve, will also be given money against their earned leave, he added.

"SUBVERSIVEACT" Meanwhile, the probe committee on investigating the Tazreen fire believes that the November 24 blaze was an act of subversion, reports ATN Bangla.

Additional Home Secretary Mainuddin Khandaker, also chief of the committee, made the observation after the committee interrogated the factory authority, including its owner Delowar Hossain, and 13 labour leaders.

"We have considered three probable dimensions -- whether it was a mere accident, or the owner had set fire to get rid of debt or other liabilities or if it was a subversive act. Among the three -- subversive act is more probable," said Mainuddin, reports NTV.

The committee will submit the report to the ministry soon.

Azad abducted

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The three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazole Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice M Shahinur Islam completed recording their testimonies and cross-examination.

During his 20-minute testimony, 53-year-old Dev said Bachchu Razakar along with seven to eight armed men had come to their house around 3:00pm on May 18, 1971. He told Dev's father he wanted to marry his 17/18-year-old sister Anjali, the witness added.

"As my father turned his proposal down, Bachchu and his cohorts took away my sister forcibly," said Dev, adding, "My father humbly requested the Muslim leaders of our village to take initiative for her release."

Bachchu released his sister after seven to eight days as the matter was informed to his father-in-law Chan Quazi, said Dev.

"My sister returned home one day, but her condition was not well. Around 2:30pm that day, cohorts of Bachchu Razakar attacked our house to abduct my sister again."

"My sister realised that they would take her away again," said Dev, adding, "She took her life taking poison to save her honour."

After hearing the news of Anjali's suicide, Bachchu's cohorts left, Dev said, adding, Bachchu came to their house that evening and asked his father to bury Anjali.

"My father refused to do it, as we are Hindu and her body was cremated accordingly. Nine to ten days after the incident, Bachchu Razakar and his men looted our house and took away even the tin sheets of the roof."

"Afterwards, we left for India," Dev concluded.

During his 21-minute testimony, 60-year-old Rawshan Ali Biswas said he had gone to Dev's house on May 18 after hearing a hue and cry and seen Bachchu and his cohorts taking his sister away forcibly.

"I heard later that Anjali was confined in the house of Chan Quazi and after six to seven days she returned home alone," said Rawshan, a farmer by profession.

Anjali committed suicide as Bachchu's men tried to abduct her again, he added.

"Bachchu was Razakar. He used to assist Pakistani army [during the war]. After receiving training in Faridpur, he killed numerous people and raped many women," added

Rawshan.

"This Bachchu Razakar broke my house and looted houses of my neighbours. I had to go into hiding. Almost all the Hindu families of our village had to take shelter in India in fear of Pakistani army and Razakars," said Rawshan.

State-appointed defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan cross-examined the witnesses before the court adjourned the proceeding until today.

The tribunal indicted Azad with eight charges of crimes against humanity on November 4 and has been holding his trial in absentia as he is on the run.

India

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people of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin and "stateless persons" will continue to come under the 60-day gap rule, official sources said here yesterday.

The restriction was imposed in 2009 after the Mumbai terror attack of November 26, 2008, when it was found that terrorist David Headley of Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba had "grossly misused" his multiple-entry visa. With the visa, he had made nine trips to India and prepared footage of attack targets for the group.

The Indian home ministry, however, made it clear that any applicant for an Indian visa who has any Pakistani lineage, even if it goes two generations back, must be referred to Delhi by the Indian missions for prior clearance.

In its November 23 order, the home ministry said, "The provision relating to the two-month gap between two visits of a foreign national to India on a tourist visa has been reviewed by the government. It has now been decided to lift the restriction of two-month gap on re-entry of foreign nationals coming to India."

The move to review the visa restriction was initiated by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in January this year after the tourism ministry raised concerns that the negative perception following the restrictions had affected the flow of tourists.

The PMO had asked the ministries of home and external affairs to review the restrictions, including the possibility of bringing in more countries under a visa-on-arrival scheme.

Sorry only

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was injured.

The US embassy termed the attack "an affront to the entire international community".

Jamaat, however, did not accept responsibility for the attacks on law enforcers, and vandalism and torching of vehicles across the country during the hartal. Instead, it accused law enforcers and the ruling party men of attacking its activists.

A flash procession of Jamaat and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir activists attacked the US embassy vehicle that happened to be passing the procession, said Abu Saleh, sub-inspector of Khilkhet Police Station.

The pro-hartal activists also attempted to set fire to the car, the SI claimed, adding that the activists had fled the scene before police reached the spot.

Kelly McCarthy, press and information officer of the embassy, yesterday said a US embassy vehicle was attacked in the vicinity of Pragati Sarani and Airport Road yesterday morning, injuring driver and several policemen in the vehicle.

McCarthy said the injured driver was receiving treatment for his injuries.

"The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the attack on our diplomatic vehicle in Dhaka today," she said, adding, "The United States places a high priority on the safety and security of diplomatic personnel and any attack on diplomatic property or personnel is an affront to the entire international community."

The committee will submit the report to the ministry soon.

She said the US embassy appreciated the assistance and support of the government and Dhaka Metropolitan Police to protect American citizens and US embassy property.

"We call upon the perpetrators to be held accountable for this unprovoked attack on a diplomatic vehicle and its innocent occupants," she said.

In the statement issued last night, Md Shafiqur Rahman, acting secretary general of Jamaat, said, "After carrying out a preliminary enquiry into the matter [attack], we accept responsibility for this unfortunate incident, which is the first of its kind."

"We condemn it. We offer our apology to the US embassy and to the victims and will provide compensation."

Jamaat, in another statement, thanked people for making the hartal a success. It held police and ruling party men responsible for attacking its pickets.

It claimed that 400 of its activists were arrested by law enforcers.

In a late night development, Havilder Siddiqur Rahman, who was in charge of the team assigned to escort the US embassy officials, filed a case accusing Saiful Azam Munna, Solaiman, Jasim, Khokon Sikder, Rabiul Islam and around 50 more unnamed people in this connection, police said.

The five named accused were picked up from the spot and they would be produced before a court today, said Kamal Hossain, sub-inspector of Khilkhet Police Station.