

Alim's security

FROM PAGE 20
Rahman's cabinet, on his way to and from the tribunal.

The court also directed its registrar to convey this order to the chief prosecutor or the prosecutor concerned and the DMP commissioner "immediately". Registrar AKM Nasiruddin Mahmud said his office had followed the directive.

Since then, Alim went to the tribunal four times, but the DMP did not provide security for him, Munshi Ahsan Kabir, one of Alim's counsels, told The Daily Star. Alim's family also said the same.

Eighty-one-year-old Alim is now living at his son's house in the capital's Banani area. He is the only war crimes accused who is enjoying conditional bail due to poor health.

Asked over phone on Monday, Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (public relations) of DMP, said he was busy and requested this correspondent to call him later. Two hours later, Masud told The Daily Star to talk to the deputy commissioner (protection and protocol) of the DMP.

"He looks after that matter," said Masud.

Asked, Kuddus Amin, DC (protection and protocol), said, "I don't know anything about the matter. You should talk to the DC [media]."

The tribunal also said the chief prosecutor or the prosecutor concerned would inform the DMP commissioner or police officer concerned on which dates such security measures should be provided.

Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arief Tipoo on Tuesday said, "I cannot say anything about the matter as I was out of station for some days."

Tipoo also asked to talk with Rana Dasgupta, the conducting prosecutor of the case.

Rana Dasgupta was not available for comments as he was in Geneva for to take part in an international conference.

Rescue

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However, Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said it was quite possible for the army, district administration and police to know how many workers were in the Rana Plaza factories when the building collapsed on April 24.

He also believes the operation should have been faster.

Yesterday, with 18 more decomposed bodies hauled up, the total number bodies recovered reached 558 so far and 459 of them were handed over, according to district administration control room, while 2,989 were rescued alive.

While the body search continues, the relatives of unnumbered missing people wait at nearby Adhar Chandra High School ground.

Some of them, extremely exhausted, were found holding photographs of the missing. Some, faintly weeping, were wandering around the school ground in search of corpses of daughters, sons, brothers and sisters.

Sufia Begum, who lost trace of her daughter Ruma Akhtar, son Amjad Hossain and son-in-law Monir Hossain, all of whom worked as garment workers at Rana Plaza, has been waiting at the school ground for past eleven days.

Dhaka district administration, a week after the tragedy, has begun preparing a fresh list of missing persons, said Anisur Rahman, a deputy secretary at Dhaka deputy commissioner's office.

He added the administration registered 184 complaints about missing persons in three days until yesterday.

"Dhaka district police authorities earlier recorded 1,200 such complaints but the list was later abandoned considering it erroneous with duplicate entries."



Hefajat

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The prime minister's call to call off the programme.

It said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had not given any assurance of meeting its 13-point demand.

"In her speech, there was an effort to confuse the nation through contradictory and wrong interpretations [of the demands]," said Mufti Fayeazullah, joint secretary general of Hefajat-e-Islam.

"That's why, we have decided to continue with the May-5 Dhaka blockade programme," he said.

Additional Secretary Khandaker Mainuddin of the home ministry said law enforcers would cooperate with Hefajat in holding peaceful rallies at the entry points of the capital.

However, Hefajat's appeal for permission to hold a rally in front of Baitul Mukarram mosque this afternoon was turned down.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Hassan Mahmood Khandker, who yesterday had a meeting with different deputy commissioners of Dhaka and superintendents of police of different districts surrounding the capital, told The Daily Star that public life would not be disrupted during the siege.

Asked whether people would be able to get in and out of the capital, the IGP said they would try their best to make sure people do not have to suffer.

The organisers of today's siege expressed the hope that around three lakh people from Chittagong,

one lakh from Sylhet and 50,000 from Rajshahi would join Hefajat-e-Islam activists and supporters of Dhaka.

According to sources, many Hefajat adherents, some of whom support different pro-Islamist components of the BNP-led 18-party combine, reached Dhaka over the last two days and had also attended the 18-Party rally at Shapla Chattar in the capital yesterday.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in her rally speech yesterday asked the audience if they were ready to stay there for 24 hours.

Amid chants and slogans in support of her suggestion, Khaleda said Hefajat's siege programme was scheduled for today and that was why she issued an ultimatum to the government to meet the opposition's demand for restoration of the caretaker government system within 48 hours.

Hefajat had announced the siege programme on April 6 during its rally at Motijheel to press home its demands.

Four cops

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forehead and received other injuries elsewhere in the body.

Unable to speak, he was undergoing treatment at the neurosurgery unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The other three were admitted to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital.

The law enforcers came under attack around 1:30pm, when they asked the Jamaat-Shibir men not to take out sticks and other weapons, hundreds of which they had kept in a van near Pubali Filling Station, witnesses said.

On information, other police officials came in and rushed them to the hospitals.

"Without provocation, several hundred people swooped on police while they were on duty," said Nazmul Alam, DMP deputy commissioner of Motijheel division.

Asked about the reason for police inaction following the attack, he said, "We did not take action to honour the opposition's rally and avert clashes."

Azizul Huq told The Daily Star, "When we saw the sticks and other weapons in the vehicle, our seniors had requested them not to take them out so that they could not use the weapons to attack anyone."

He said the attackers belonged to Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir as they had many banners demanding release of Delawar Hossain Sayedee and other Jamaat leaders.

Respond

FROM PAGE 20
meeting with Barguna Awami League leaders at the Gono Bhaban in the capital.

She alleged that opposition party, in the name of waging a movement, had been killing people to protect war criminals.

"But she [Khaleda] won't be able to save the war criminals as the war crimes trial is a mass demand," said Hasina, also president of the ruling AL.

"I am urging the opposition leader to shun such politics and practice sound politics."

She also urged the AL men to make the party strong, and unite the mass people to prevent the opposition's attempt to foil the ongoing war crimes trial.

She, however, reiterated that her government would rehabilitate the injured of Savar tragedy.

Awami League leaders Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Kowim Selim, Abdul Latif Siddique, Kazi Zafarullah, Mahbulul Alam Hanif, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, and Bahauddin Nasim, among others, were present at the meeting.

On Thursday, Sheikh Hasina urged BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia to sit for a dialogue in or outside the parliament to resolve the present political crisis.

AL general secretary Syed Ashraf Islam, later on that day, also echoed the prime minister, saying that his party would invite the opposition through a letter in a day or two if the opposition chief responded to the PM's call with a positive note.

Forgetful

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Vice-chairman Sadeque Hossain Khoka and BNP Standing Committee Member Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain gave her the name of the Islamist group.

On top of that, Khaleda also forgot the name "Tazreen Fashions", as she mentioned the fire incident in the garment factory November last year.

Even after being given the right name, she ended up calling it "Tanzeen Garment" while she slated the government for its apparent failures to take actions during the deadly blaze.

Act within

FROM PAGE 1
Chattar, it should not think that the Hefajat activist will leave the streets.

Then she claimed that the Hefajat men have no involvement in politics but the government branded them as militants to the foreigners.

Pointing to the PM's call for a dialogue, Khaleda said, "Now you [PM] are urging us to sit for a dialogue and calling for joining photo session and also parliament session. Who knows [may be] you will invite [me] after some days for a cup of tea."

Amid clappings from the audience, the former prime minister said, "But I am inviting her [PM] to a cup of tea at my house to discuss the form of caretaker government and how the next election will be held."

Khaleda also warned the government of dire consequences if it fails to meet opposition's demand for restoring CG system. "We have given you enough time," she said, referring to the prime minister.

"Dialogue or Sanglap is not enough. You will have to announce clearly that the election will be held under a neutral caretaker government. There is not much need to sit for a dialogue. You will bring proposal in parliament. Organise election under the caretaker government system if you have courage," she added.

"Create a congenial atmosphere for talks; mention specific agenda. The constitution will have to be amended. We are ready for talks."

Khaleda, leader of the opposition in the House, said people at home and abroad have no trust in Sheikh Hasina. "You [PM] cannot be trusted. You always changed like you changed your dress. You wear hejab and bear tasbeeh when you go to Saudi Arabia. And you wear sidur and tilak when you go to India."

Towards the end of her 70-minute speech, the BNP chief asked the opposition leaders and activists if they were ready to stay at the Shapla Chattar for 24 hours.

The crowd burst into cheers and chanted slogans supporting her proposal.

How textile kings weave

FROM PAGE 20
million people, however, few are sympathising with the textile tycoons and their bottom lines. Western retailers are powerful, but so too are the garment moguls.

Thanks to their political clout and now a new Industrial Police force that crushes dissension at their plants, labour activists say, it is the factory owners themselves who keep garment workers' wages lower than anywhere else in the world -- and all too often get away with lax safety standards.

The collapse on April 24 of an eight-storey building near Dhaka that housed several garment factories was a harrowing reminder of the collective failure -- by the authorities, owners and buyers -- to ensure that cheap doesn't mean dangerous.

Until now, there has been little pressure here to improve safety conditions and wages for the 4.5 million Bangladeshis working in the industry. That inertia stems, in part, from how deeply the industry has woven itself into the power structure.

More than 30 garment industry bosses are members of parliament, accounting for about 10 percent of its lawmakers. Other owners, like Mohammed Sohel Rana, the owner of the building that collapsed, have strong political ties: He was a local leader of the youth wing of the ruling party, the Awami League.

Rana was arrested trying to escape across the border to India and faces charges of unlawful construction causing deaths.

"At least 50 percent of the members of parliament have business links of some sort," says Babul Akhter, a leader of the Bangladesh Centre for Workers Solidarity, an organisation that works with labour unions. He alleges that many of these politically connected garment makers take

advantage of their clout to disregard the minimum wage levels stipulated under the law.

Activists such as Akhter who campaign for safer factories and better wages are often treated as enemies of the state in a country whose economy would be devastated if Western brands pulled out.

LAST OUTPOST OF CHEAP
How Bangladesh remains so competitive is, in part, the story of powerful First World retailers playing factory owners, such as Azim, off each other to secure the lowest price.

It is also the story of a government that stifles labour activism both to protect the country's economic lifeline and to please business magnates who have become part of the political and social establishment.

It's a set-up that suits everyone, including customers in the troubled economies of Europe and North America who want discounted T-shirts and trousers from big brands such as Wal-Mart, Target, H&M and Loblaw.

What makes it all possible is the Bangladeshis who make the clothes, many working in hazardous conditions and some earning less than \$2 a day.

RACETO BOTTOM
Several plant owners, factory managers and representatives of retailers in Dhaka, none of whom would speak on record about the subject, said the brands are paying less and less. One said a buyer paid him \$5.00 per piece for a particular make of shirt in 2011 and then offered \$4.50 for the same thing a year later. Another estimated that overall prices have fallen by 40 percent over the past two years.

Sometimes buyers refuse to negotiate because they know competition among

ILO rolls out roadmap

FROM PAGE 1
Dhaka visit from a high-level ILO mission.

"We need actions, not words. We must move forward. We need political will and commitment," said Gilbert Fossoun Hougbo, deputy director general of the UN agency for field operations, as the ILO unveiled the six-point short and medium terms measures.

Under the measures, the government will place the amended labour law in June session of parliament for passage.

The law will reflect the tripartite partners' inputs for protecting, in law and practice, the fundamental rights to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, as well as occupational safety and health, the statement said.

The government will assess, by the end of this year, building and fire safety of all active export-oriented ready-made garment factories, and initiate remedial actions, including relocation of unsafe factories, said the declaration.

The tripartite partners called on the ILO to assist in the mobilisation of technical and financial resources required to undertake the assessment.

Under the action plan, the government will recruit, within six months, 200 additional inspectors and ensure that the Department of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments is upgraded to a directorate with an annual regular budget allocation.

"Inspection is one thing but the credibility of the inspection is another thing," Hougbo said.

"I don't expect all the buildings to be inspected in two weeks because it is time-consuming. Let's also be pragmatic. In our view, there is a sense of urgency in addressing all those issues," he said.

The statement said the National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety in the Ready-made Garment Industry would be implemented in full, and would extend the scope for including the issue of structural integrity of buildings.

The tripartite partners urged the ILO to organise training programmes for

With agony

FROM PAGE 1
are you, please do justice."

Most of the dead on the fourth floor and above have been recovered and so now remains those who worked on the second and third floors at New Wave Apparels and Phantom Apparels.

An army personnel working in the rescue at the collapsed Rana Plaza, where a strong stench of decomposing human flesh lingers in the air, said they were yet to break into the second and third floors of the building that housed five garment factories.

"You can rest assured that many more decomposed bodies are yet to be recovered from those floors; the job of removing the huge concrete is very tedious and time consuming," he said.

In the long corridor of the school's main building, some 30 body bags were laid down. The bodies were so decomposed that they remained unidentified and unclaimed.

However, a few bodies were identified; not by appearance but by some other ways.

Shahinoor's body was pulled out of the rubble at 12:00noon. Rescuers found a mobile phone along with it, and having pulled out the sim card and inserted it into another cellphone, they called the last number she had dialed. The person from the other side immediately identified the victim as Shahinoor from Shonatala, Bogra.

Some other dead bodies were found with identity cards.

As days are passing by, rescuers fear that bodies still trapped in the rubble will go beyond recognition. And the painstaking recovery operation from thousands of tons of concrete mess may become much lengthier than expected.

Robbery

FROM PAGE 1
Taznagar village in the upazila, was recovered Friday afternoon, 10 days into the devastating collapse of Rana Plaza that killed more than 550 people.

She was a mother of two. According to Khadiza's husband Yunus, the authorities concerned handed the body over to them in the afternoon. At the same time they gave him Tk 30,000 for Khadiza's burial, he added.

The very evening, the family hired a microbus and started for home.

"As we reached near Ershad bridge on Parbatipur-Badarganj road in Rangpur around 2:30am, a gang of robbers attacked our microbus and took away the money and five mobile phone sets from us," said Yunus.

The robbers also beat up all the people in the microbus, including the driver, mercilessly, as they tried to resist the robbery, he said.

The driver was hurt the most in the attack, added Yunus.

On information police rushed to the spot and sent the victims home hiring another microbus.

HIGHLIGHTS

- New labour law in June
- 200 more inspectors in 6 months
- Injured workers to be reemployed

people have raised questions about safety standards in factories.

There is no alternative to implementing these steps if the sector wants to fend off the current pressure, said the economist.

European Ambassador to Bangladesh William Hanna, US Ambassador Dan Mozena, Canadian High Commissioner Heather Cruden, United Nations Resident Coordinator Neil Walker and BGMEA President Atiqul Islam were also present.

Experts have welcomed the initiative, saying it was needed for the country's apparel sector that is now under internal and external pressure.

"It is a timely step," said Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"The initiative has been taken at a time when everyone -- international buyers, the EU, the USA, consumers, the world media and even the Pope -- expressed their concern. Our stakeholders, civil society and common

Israel

FROM PAGE 20
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly warned in recent weeks that Israel would be prepared to take military action if chemical weapons or other arms reached Hezbollah which would embolden his country's avowed enemies.

Syria's assistant information minister, Khalaf Muftah, told Hezbollah's Manar TV that he has "no information about an aggression that was staged, and said reports of an Israeli raid "come in the framework of psychological war in preparation of an aggression against Syria."

In January, the Israeli air force is believed to have targeted a shipment of advanced SA-17 anti-aircraft missiles bound for Hezbollah. Israel has not formally admitted to carrying out that airstrike, though officials have strongly hinted they were behind the attack.

Syria's civil war, now in its third year - thought to have killed more than 70,000 and displaced more than one million - has further complicated the situation. It is fought between forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and rebels, mostly from the disparate Free Syrian Army.

The conflict has spilled periodically across the ceasefire line and Syria's borders with Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey, threatening to engulf the region.

It also threatens to deprive Hezbollah of a key supporter in Assad, in addition to its land corridor to its other key backer - Iran.

Israel and Hezbollah fought an inconclusive 34-day war in 2006 that killed 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israelis.

While the border has been largely quiet since, the struggle has taken other forms. Hezbollah has accused Israel of assassinating a top commander, and Israel blamed Hezbollah and Iran for a July 2012 attack on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria.

Israeli officials believe that Hezbollah's arsenal has markedly improved since 2006, now boasting tens of thousands of rockets and missiles and the ability to strike almost anywhere inside Israel. In October, Hezbollah launched an Iranian-made reconnaissance drone over Israel, using the incident to brag about its expanding capabilities.

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