

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A BIG LETDOWN?

Faced with a barrage of criticism over labour rights, this month the government has amended the country's labour law. But experts and labour leaders think the law might raise issues that it was supposed to solve. *the Star* takes a look at the law that experts and labour leaders think is a big let down.

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A dense cluster of shanty settlements stand in a sprawling line near Savar Bazaar. Hundreds of garment workers sleep on the floor, which is nothing but beaten mud. At least half of them used to work in Rana Plaza. Most of the families still carry the pain of the tragic incident. We move to a small room where 27-year-old Shirin Sultana lives with her family. Her ashen face is a reminder of the devastation. She seems to be asleep, tired and exhausted, tears run down her eyes.

Sultana worked in Ether Tex as a machine operator, which was on the sixth floor of Rana Plaza. When the structure collapsed, she managed to evade the rubble of pillars, squeezing herlf into a dark room. "The whole room was engulfed in thick dust. I couldn't breathe properly. I found five frightened workers trapped in the same room. We panicked and tried to rush in the darkness. But it was locked. Unfortunately, by that time a pillar fell on my leg. I was fortunate to survive. The other six died on the spot. My left leg was injured and trapped under the pillar. I could feel blood running down my injured leg. I cannot recall anything after that."