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Orders to go away if RMG unrest lingers

Global retailers warn as protests enter fourth day

STAR REPORT

Global clothing retailers have warned of grave impacts if the garment unrest continues and production remains halted for long, as protests continued for the fourth day yesterday after overnight negotiations failed to resolve the disputes over minimum wages.

A halt in production means delayed or costly shipment, or even cancellation of work orders, a senior official of a Spanish retailer said.

"We are observing the situation. Production suspension is an ominous sign when the sector was turning around after some deadly disasters," the official said, asking not to be named.

Production at hundreds of garment factories in Dhaka and on its outskirts had remained suspended for three days until Monday due to the unrest that stemmed from the demand for a minimum wage of Tk 8,000.

However, the situation improved a little yesterday, after Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan met factory owners and labour leaders on Monday night and assured the workers of a pay rise by November.

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In the wake of labour unrest over pay hike, a notice on the gate of an Ashulia garment factory announces closure. Inset, Workers demanding a rise in their minimum monthly salary to Tk 8,000 block the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road in Fatullah industrial area. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



The Daily Star
launches



On Friday we launch a special feature series titled "Positive Bangladesh". We believe Bangladesh has changed a lot and many of us don't know about it. We also believe that many of us, especially the youths, are thinking out of the box and are trying to change Bangladesh forever. Regrettably again, we don't know about it. We plan to tell these stories in the "Positive Bangladesh" series to be published thrice a week, focusing on those individuals, groups and organisations trying to bring about changes. The inspiring stories of these individuals and groups, both small and big, spearheading this transformation will no doubt encourage us all and reinforce our belief in ourselves and in our country. We invite our readers to join us in this journey of knowing our change-makers, and urge them to inform us of any activities of innovation that they think deserve to be featured in the "Positive Bangladesh" series.

-- Editor

RECKLESS DRIVING Mother dies in front of child

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another life was lost in a road accident in the capital yesterday. This time a six-year-old girl had to watch her mother getting crushed under the wheels of a bus.

Roksana Begum Laila, 37, was returning home in Rayerbagh of Jatrabari with her school-going daughter Nusrat Samia by a rickshaw after dropping her younger son Badiur Rahman Leon at Motijheel Ideal School, said Roksana's brother-in-law Anisur Rahman.

"An Ananda Paribahan bus that plies between Gulistan and Narayanganj hit the rickshaw from behind near the north gate of Inland Container Depot at Kamalapur," said Masud Kader Jewel, a witness to the incident that happened around 12noon.

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CPD for Tk 6,560 minimum wage

Tk 8,200 recommended after one-year experience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has recommended Tk 6,560 as the minimum wage for an entry-level worker in the country's apparel sector.

Its Additional Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem made the proposal at a dialogue "Revision of the minimum wage in the RMG sector in 2013" in the capital's Cirdap auditorium yesterday.

"There is a huge gap between the monthly salary required and the existing scale. A board-based acceptable revision of minimum wage is hence pivotal to rebuild the image of the garment sector," he said.

The CPD came up with the recommenda-

tion after conducting a survey, because a Minimum Wage Board comprised of representatives from the government, workers and factory owners is working to set the entry-level wage.

The proposed minimum wage has been estimated based on the upper poverty line of Tk 6,444.

Moazzem said as per their recommendation entry-level workers would get a basic salary of Tk 4,300, house rent of Tk 1,720 and medical allowance of Tk 540 in the first year of their work at a factory.

The gross salary would reach Tk 8,200 following a 20 percent increase in the second year, he added.

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Garment makers see 'conspiracy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BGMEA yesterday described the local and international media reports on minimum wages and working hours as a "conspiracy" against the highest export earner of the country.

"A conspiracy has begun at local and international levels to destabilise the industry at a time when negotiation is going on to fix the minimum wage for the garment workers," said SM Mannan, acting president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

"As part of this plot, these motivated, false and misleading news reports are being published in the local and international media," he said, referring an investigative report of the BBC on working hours of garment workers and a report of Bangla daily Prothom Alo on minimum wages.

These reports will hamper the apparel industry in Bangladesh, he said. "We never expect such reports from an

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Fakhrul blames minister for labour unrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting general secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday passed the blame on to a cabinet minister for the current crisis in the garment sector.

The minister, who is known as a leader of transport workers, had turned into a leader of garment workers lately, and incited them to violence, Fakhrul said.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan held a rally in the capital on Saturday, demanding a hike in wages for the garment workers.

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For her special contribution to poverty alleviation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receives an award from Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, honorary president of South-South News, at the headquarters of International Organisation for South-South Cooperation in New York on Monday.



PHOTO: PTD

PM receives int'l award for poverty reduction

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received an award for Bangladesh for its stellar performance in poverty reduction during the present government's tenure.

The International Organisation for South-South Cooperation (IOSSC) gave the award at a function at its headquarters in New York on Monday.

Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, president of the South-South News, handed over the award to

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Next JS polls to be free, fair

PM tells Commonwealth chief in New York

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the upcoming polls in Bangladesh would make its democratic process and constitutional rule sustainable.

Expressing her resolve to hold the next general election in a free, fair and neutral manner, she said, "We will have to uphold the constitution and begin the practice of transferring power under a democratic process from a certain stage."

The premier made the remarks during a meeting with Commonwealth Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma at Hotel Grand Hyatt in New York on Monday.

She arrived in the city earlier in the morning on an eight-day official visit to attend the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters after the meeting.

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PROTEST OVER POWER PLANT Long march starts for Sundarbans

AKRAM HOSEN, travelling with long march

People in their hundreds joined a long march yesterday demanding cancellation of the Rampal power plant project.

Protesters had held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka before over 1,200 people set out on the "Save the Sundarbans" long march towards Rampal, Bagerhat around 11:00am.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports has organised the long march. The committee in association with several leftist parties, including the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB),

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PADMA BRIDGE PROJECT

Delay pushes up cost

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The delay in the construction of Padma bridge continues pushing up its expenditure as a new project of Tk 325 crore has been launched to protect the project area at Mawa point from erosion.

Erosion reaching up to 100 metres along a 300-metre stretch at Old Ferryghat of Mawa has endangered the 1.70-km embankment protection area.

If not checked, erosion would also affect the area of approach road, said project officials.

The communications ministry has therefore been compelled to take up the new project. The ministry was supposed to take up a project to safeguard the area last year, but had to give up the plan

thinking of an additional expenditure from public exchequer.

The move comes a year after the government launched a Tk 100 crore project to protect the construction yard from erosion at Janjira point, the other end of Mawa. The international contractor to be selected for the main bridge construction was supposed to do the job.

"The expenditure could have been avoided had there been no delay in Padma bridge construction," said a project official at Mawa, requesting anonymity. "Any further delay will only increase the cost," he added.

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'I'm scared of my wife'

Jokes Obama

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The US president, Barack Obama, says he hasn't had a smoke in years -- thanks in no small part to his fear of the first lady, Michelle Obama.

Obama, who was caught chatting off-guard with a UN official on Monday

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