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DHAKA WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

COMMODITIES

#### PM inaugurates Paira seaport

UNB, Patuakhali

**STOCKS** 

...... Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday opened Paira seaport, the country's third seaport, at the Rabnabad Channel in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district.

Hasina also laid the foundation stone of a modern and self-reliant naval base—BNS Sher-e-Bangla—of Bangladesh Navy with aviation facilities, at a function on the port premises.

The distance of Rabnabad channel is 31km from the sea boundary, 316km from Chittagong, 130km from Mongla port and 340km from the capital.

The port is also expected to reduce the pressure on the country's two other sea ports-Chittagong and Mongla—and facilitate transit, ensuring economic and social development of the country's southern and central region, Hasina said.

A techno-economic feasibility study, including environmental impact assessment, for development of Paira port has been completed through the Institute of Water Modeling following the approval of the shipping ministry.

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# Garment workers seek clarity over wage

Protesters act over misinformation; 100 factories shut and 30 injured in clashes

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY with ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUI, RASHAD AHAMAD

...... Confusion over new salary structure and rumours of casualties in other garment factories have been causing the labour unrest in Ashulia and Gazipur over the last couple of weeks, much to the frustrations of garment owners.

"When I went to the management to find out how much I would get under the new salary structure, I was informed that it may be Tk 8,500," said a female worker of Rose Dresses in Jamgarah in Ashulia. She now gets Tk 8,000 per month,

meaning a pay rise of possibly just Tk 500 is forthcoming in contrast to the 77 percent salary hike for entry-level workers. "This is totally unfair. An entrylevel worker would get a raise of Tk

2,300 whereas I, an experienced worker, would get only Tk 500. How is this just?" Amena Khatun, a sewing operator in another factory in Ashulia, too,

felt hard done by. "The new salary structure doesn't bring any good news for us-they didn't think of our interests but only of entry-level workers. This is unacceptable."

Mamun, a sewing operator at Quaval Textile at Konabari in Gazipur, however, is holding his reservations until he hears an official announcement from the factory



two workers in Gazipur earlier. They are also calling for higher wage.

Police stand guard to disperse the garment workers who took to the streets in the industrial zone of Ashulia yesterday, following the death of

announcement.

"We just heard from workers in other factories that a pay rise is on the way. The authorities didn't tell us anything yet but people are getting all worked up and fighting."

The factory management and owners, however, are at a loss over the confusion surrounding the new wage structure.

notification yet and we have even informed our workers so. I don't

know where this information is coming from," said Mominul Islam Momin, a general manager of Kader Composite Spinning Mills.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, a former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and managing director of Envoy Group, said the new pay scale will be imple-"We haven't got the gazette mented once the gazette notification arrives.

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#### Wal-Mart audit finds progress at factories

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Calls for more transparency in safety at apparel factories in Bangladesh are paying off, as audit results released by Wal-Mart show.

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The US retail giant became the first major retailer to release a largescale audit of Bangladeshi factories it sources garments from, outlining the failure and improvement rates in fire and building safety at 75 facilities.

Ten of the 75 factories had failed initial assessments and improved their scores in follow-up inspections, Wal-Mart spokesman Kevin Gardner told Bloomberg. Only two plants did not meet standards during the follow-up assessment and Wal-Mart will no longer use those locations, he said.

The retailer hired Bureau Veritas to check some 200 factories it uses in the country, with plans to publicly release the results from the audits.

In an interview, Wal-Mart executives said the company stopped doing business with two factories that were unable to meet fire and building safety standards during remediation, although one factory owner plans to open a new facility.

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#### Agrani to shut savings schemes of account holders without TIN

Rural savers will be affected by the move

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Agrani Bank is set to close down savings schemes of account holders without TIN certificates on November 30, although there is no such directive from Bangladesh Bank.

The branches have already informed the customers of the bank's move to shut down their monthly income scheme (MIS), monthly deposit scheme (MDS) and Agrani double benefit scheme (ADBS) accounts should they fail to provide a tax identification number before the end of this month.

The move to close down the accounts before the expiry of the schemes has been met with much indignation, particularly from customers in rural areas. For instance, a MIS account holder in a written

letter to the bank said the closure of her account would put her in great financial difficulty as she met her monthly household expenditure with the interest she received from the scheme, where she deposited the remittance her husband sent from abroad. If necessary, the bank can deduct 15 percent from

her monthly interest earnings but cannot close the account before its expiry, the account holder said. The MIS is a three-year scheme introduced in March 2012. In rural areas, most account holders do not have

TINs and will be affected by the move, a branch manager in Satkhira said. Moshiur Ali, general manager of Agrani Bank, told The Daily Star that the bank management has been

mulling over the decision following the deluge of complaints from customers.

Meanwhile, Agrani Bank also directed its branches not to open any new account of the three schemes.

According to the bank's officials, Agrani is sitting on a huge pile of liquidity that they are unable to reinvest due to sluggish business conditions.

## ILO calls for far-reaching measures for garment sector

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Poor conditions still remain a challenge for many factories particularly in the garment sector in Bangladesh despite some recent concrete actions taken to address health and safety issues, according to the International Labour Organisation.

"Improving working conditions in Bangladesh's readymade garment industry is crucial for achieving sustainable growth in the country," the UN agency said in a new report.

The report—Bangladesh: seeking better employment conditions for better socioeconomic outcomes—was published on Monday and prepared by the ILO Research Department in

Improve job prospects and working conditions

Strengthen wage-setting policies Create more formal jobs

Inspect all garment factories

Adopt international labour inspection standards

Undertake concrete measures to retain trade preferences

consultation with the UN agency's tripartite constituents in Bangladesh.

and social policies are introduced,

The report warned that unless a comprehensive set of labour market

Bangladesh will be unable to maintain its economic momentum and improve living standards in a sustainable way.

"And while the RMG sector is central to the economy, new measures need to be far-reaching."

The report said the economic growth in the last two decades in the country has created jobs, including in export-related industries, but with harsh working conditions and low pay.

Recent accidents have brought the issue of occupational health and safety risks in the garment sector to world attention, including a factory fire in November 2012 that killed 117 workers and the Rana Plaza collapse in April this year that killed over 1,000 workers - the latter being one of the worst industrial disasters on record.

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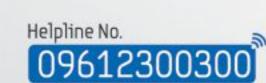








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## Better policies to bring more investment in telecom

Analysts say as ITU Telecom World kicks off in Bangkok

Jon Fredrik Baksaas, president and

Group CEO of Telenor, which is the

majority shareholder of Bangladesh's

leading mobile operator Grameen-

KOWSHER JAHAN KHALED, from Bangkok

The governments and policymakers in the Asia region should focus more on easing their regulations to attract more investment in telecommunication infrastructure, analysts said at an international conference yesterday.

They said the ICT sector is going through a major transformation, especially in Asia, and the governments should create an enabling environment to give a boost to people's affordability.

Telecom leaders, from public and private sectors, content developers and academics met at the ITU Telecom World 2013 at Impact conference centre in the Thai capital to share their experiences and expectations.

International Telecommunication Union, a United Nations body, is organising the four-day summit that will shed light on the future changes in the fast-growing digital world. The speakers said affordable Indonesia, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

handsets and internet, and better policies will go hand in hand to improve the socio-economic conditions in the countries like Thailand,

International Telecommunication Union Secretary-General Hamadoun Toure speaks during the opening ceremony of the ITU Telecom World 2013 in Bangkok yesterday.

> phone, stressed the need for developing more local contents to take the benefits of the recent development in the telecom sector to the masses.

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SCREEN MIRRORING)

