

Menendez: Help workers in Bangladesh

ROBERT MENENDEZ

November 24 marks one year since a tragic fire at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Bangladesh killed 112 workers. When the fire alarms went off that day, managers acted with indifference and forced workers to stay at their stations.

Months later, devastation again struck Bangladesh's workers when the Rana Plaza building collapsed, killing 1,132. Inspectors had declared the building unsafe, yet management compelled the workers to enter with threats of lost pay or termination.

These twin tragedies galvanized world attention on the terrible conditions under which Bangladeshi workers produce over \$20 billion worth of clothing for consumers abroad each year.

For many Americans, Bangladesh is a far-off nation on the other side of the world. The challenges workers face there seem distant.

But in this country we have risen in solidarity when workers' rights have been ignored. Just as

the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City resulted in dramatic changes to US factory safety standards, the tragedies in Bangladesh are a call to action for consumers in America.

The principles of fairness and equality for working men and women are deeply interwoven within the fabric of our nation's history.

No one will want to wear clothes made in Bangladesh if they are stained with the blood of workers.

After these tragedies, I urged the Obama administration to suspend preferential duty-free status for certain products from Bangladesh. Our government responded and since the suspension of Generalized System of Preferences benefits, Bangladesh's government has dropped charges against labour activists and begun to allow local unions to form.

In addition to pressure from our government, American and European companies are working together to establish common standards for fire and building safety. A 77 percent increase in

the minimum wage was announced but is not yet enacted. The AFL-CIO's Solidarity Centre is training union organisers and the International Labour Organisation has established a programme to help develop durable institutions to protect workers' rights.

But considerable long-term work remains. Unions have a troubled history in Bangladesh. In the past they were subject to undue influence by political forces with agendas that did not put workers first. This legacy will be difficult to overcome -- workers need to feel safe in joining a union and management needs to understand that unions can play a constructive role in worker safety as well as factory production.

However, there are disturbing signs of backsliding, so western governments and consumers must remain vigilant.

Some factory managers have intimidated union organisers and thugs have reportedly attacked workers who dared to organize. Dozens of workers have died in fires in Bangladesh's factories

since Rana Plaza collapsed. We have a responsibility and an opportunity to bring about change in Bangladesh's garment industry.

First, the United States must remain vigilant and ensure that labour law reforms are correctly implemented and labour organisers are protected from anti-union activity. We should also increase funding for efforts, such as the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Centre programmes, that support workers' capacity to organise and engage in collective bargaining.

Second, the government of Bangladesh and the garment industry associations should immediately develop and apply tough sanctions against factory owners who engage in anti-union activity.

Finally, international companies must continue to require their supplier factories to abide by strict safety and labour standards. The latter will require long-term, well-resourced programmes to educate their suppliers on workers' rights and constructive worker-management relations. They should also implement a zero-

tolerance policy for suppliers who consistently engage in anti-union activity.

A Bangladesh with a fully empowered work force and safe factories will require sustained action by its government, apparel companies, domestic factory owners, organised labour as well as the international community. It will take time, but this time there can be no going back.

A year ago, the world woke up to the horror caused by unsafe working conditions in Bangladesh. We owe it to the victims and the four million garment workers in Bangladesh, who produce a lot of the clothes we wear, to maintain pressure until Bangladesh's workers are given the rights they deserve and the tools they need to protect themselves.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Senator Robert Menendez, D-New Jersey, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The committee recently issued a report titled "Worker Safety and Labour Rights in Bangladesh's Garment Sector." Source: CNN



Dewan Mujibur Rahman, managing director NRB Commercial Bank, and AKM Sajedur Rahman, chairman of Voluntary Organisation for Social Development, attend a programme recently to sign an agreement to disburse Tk 20 crore as agriculture loans.

Ecne, purchase panel restructured

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) and Cabinet Committee on Public Purchase have been restructured under the new polls-time government.

The number of Ecne members has been increased to 12 from nine, the Cabinet Division said in a notice yesterday.

The newly included members are: Land Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Health Minister Rowshan Ershad and Telecos Minister Rashed Khan Menon.

The purchase committee also got two more ministers as members, in addition to nine ministers. They are: Land Minister Amir Hossain Amu and State Minister for Youth and Sports Mujibul Haque Chunnu.

Apple buys motion sensor maker PrimeSense

BBC NEWS

Apple has purchased PrimeSense, an Israeli firm that specializes in making 3D motion detection technology.

PrimeSense is best known for developing gesture control for Microsoft's Kinect sensor, and has made strides towards bringing the technology to mobile.

Apple's deal is likely to spark speculation about its plans to develop new products such as Apple TV.

PrimeSense confirmed the deal with Apple in a statement to the BBC but said they could not comment further. Apple did not disclose the financial details of the deal but said it had taken place. Some reports claimed it had paid \$360m (£222m).

"Apple buys smaller technology companies from time to time, and we generally do not discuss our purpose or plans," said an Apple spokesman.

The deal comes at a time when firms are increasingly experimenting with gesture control. In October 2011, Apple filed for a patent for new ways to control devices that do not involve physical contact.

Its filing, entitled Real Time Video Process Control Using Gestures, talked about allowing users to "throw" content - the ability to transfer it from one of the firm's products to another - using contact-free hand movements.

BTRC toughens up on Citycell for dues

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Furthermore, the company is also struggling to clear its dues to its network equipment supplier. It was supposed to take part in September's 3G auctions but was unable to do so -- due to failure to arrange the \$20 million earnest money.

The company, which runs on the restricting CDMA technology, intended to move to the widely-used GSM technology to provide better handset options to its subscribers but was unable to do so due to its pending amount with BTRC.

Asked about the company's financial state, Mehboob Chowdhury, chief executive officer of Citycell, said the operator is close to receiving fresh funding with which it would be able to turn around its fortunes.

Citycell is 45 percent owned by Singapore's SingTel, 31.43 percent by Pacific Motors Ltd and 23.57 percent by Far East Telecom Ltd.

SingTel stopped injecting funds into the company in 2012, and according to its 2013 annual report it placed a nil value to its ownership stake in Citycell.

বিমান বাহিনী সদর দপ্তর
শিক্ষা পরিদপ্তর
ঢাকা সেনানিবাস

নং ০৩/২০১৩-১৪

তারিখ ১৪ নভেম্বর ২০১৩

বই ক্রয়ের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ বিমান বাহিনীর বিভিন্ন এস্থাগারের জন্য বই ক্রয়ের নিমিত্তে বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্সধারী প্রত্নক সরবরাহকারী/প্রকাশকদের নিকট হতে সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিয়ম প্রয়োগে সীলনামুহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। বই এর তালিকা এবং দরপত্র দাখিলের শর্তব্লী সম্বলিত সিডিউল ৪০০.০০ টাকা (অর্ধেক্ষে মূল্যে বিমান বাহিনী সদর দপ্তর অর্থনৈতিক কক্ষ) ঢাকা সেনানিবাসে আগমনি ০১ ডিসেম্বর ২০১৩ হতে ০৫ ডিসেম্বর ২০১৩ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে (সকাল ০৮:০০ হতে ১৪:৩০ ঘণ্টা দিনব্যাপ্তিত) পাওয়া যাবে। দরপত্র দাখিলের শর্তব্লী অনুসরণকরত আগমনি ২৬ ডিসেম্বর ২০১৩ তারিখ ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে বিমান বাহিনী সদর দপ্তর অভ্যর্থনা কক্ষে রাখিত দরপত্র বাস্তবায়ন করে যাচ্ছে। এই দিন ১২:৩০ ঘটিকার দরপত্র দাখিলকারীদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহি উপস্থিতিতে দরপত্র বাস্তবায়ন করে যাবে) প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ বই ক্রয় কর্তৃপক্ষ যাকার প্রয়োগে দাতাদের পরবর্তীতে যথে নিয়মে ক্রয়দাশেশ প্রদান করা হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শনে ছাড়াই যে কেন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সরবরাহ করেন।

শিক্ষা পরিদপ্তর
বিমান বাহিনী সদর দপ্তর
আইএস পি আর/বিমান/২০১৩/১৪
ঢাকা সেনানিবাস, ঢাকা-১২০৬
ফোনঃ ৮৭৫৬৪২০ সম্পর্ক ৩১৮

GD-4513

Ticfa raises mixed reactions

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"Ticfa should be a positive one for us. With the deal now in place, the US should also include the garment items in the GSP scheme for duty privileges so that both Bangladeshi manufacturers and US retailers are benefited," said Reaz-Bin-Mahmood, vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the garment makers' platform.

If the US government allows duty benefits to the garment exports from Bangladesh, American retailers will feel encouraged to place more orders, he said.

"If we utilise the deal positively we will have some positive impacts for us."

Currently, Bangladesh pays 15.3 percent duty on garment exports to the US.

"The deal will help strengthen our business relationship with the US," said Mohammad Hatem, vice president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the knitters' platform.

"But the US should not show any one-sided attitude, as Bangladesh does not have such a bargaining power to win with the US. We welcome the deal," Hatem said.

Former BGMEA president Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez said the deal would bring troubles to the garment sector, as the government signed it without much homework.

"The US will now press so many compliance issues on us. We are not yet prepared."

"We are inviting troubles in the name of winning back GSP to the US market."



APEX

Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex, poses during the annual strategic business conference session yesterday. Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director, was also