

CEPZ workers go berserk over new pay scale

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Thousands of garment workers yesterday vandalised several factories, vehicles and clashed with police in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone in the port city, demanding salaries under the new pay scale and improved working condition.

Workers of two garment makers—Section Seven Ltd and Section Seven Apparels Ltd—gathered in front of the former's factory building in the area to voice their demands at around 8am.

After some time, the agitated workers started hurling brickbats and vandalising nearly five factories, including Excelsior Shoes Ltd and Peninsula Garments.

They attacked three cars, torched a motorcycle and built numerous fires on the road and clashed with the law enforcers, when 10 workers and seven policemen got injured.

Around four platoons of police were deployed there who opened fire rubber and shotgun bullets and tear gas canisters to take control of



Police try to calm the agitated workers in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone yesterday, who vandalised factories and vehicles, demanding implementation of the new pay scale and improved working condition.

the situation, said Arifur Rahman Arif, deputy assistant director of Industrial Police 3 in Chittagong.

The clashes lasted till noon, and the workers left the place after the concerned factory authorities agreed to pay salaries as per the new scale on January 9, said SM Abdur Rashid, general manager of CEPZ.

The factory authorities also agreed to meet the workers' other demands in phases at a meeting at the office of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones

Authority, Rashid said.

Anwarul Islam, one of the workers, said his factory pays him Tk 4,600 a month. The authorities did not increase the salary in December, which they were supposed to do, he said.

"The authorities rather forced us to increase production saying the wages would be increased."

Many workers also alleged that the supervisors at the factory often beat them and also forced them to work

on last Friday without any overtime.

The workers also complained that there has been no water in their lavatory since the past week. The factory management could not be contacted despite several attempts.

The workers said they informed the factory authorities several times about the problems, but they took no action. The workers were said that they were free to leave the job if they could not handle the situation.

They also complained to Bepza



ANURUP KANTI DAS



EATL

Lutfur rahman, vice chancellor of Daffodil International University, and Nizamudding Ahmed, chief executive of EATL, attend the signing of an agreement for collaboration between their organisations in research and development, mobile application development and training recently.



ABB

Ali Reza Iftekhar, newly elected chairman of Association of Bankers, Bangladesh Ltd, speaks at the 16th annual general meeting of the association, at Spectra Convention Centre in Gulshan, Dhaka on Tuesday.

Blackberry sues company over keyboard patent

AFP, Montreal

Blackberry Ltd. said Friday it had filed a suit in a California court against Los Angeles firm Typo Products for violating its patents with a Blackberry-like keyboard made for Apple's iPhone.

The struggling Canadian maker of the Blackberry smartphone said that Typo's \$99 keyboard case, which attaches a Blackberry-like physical keyboard to an iPhone 5, "blatantly copied BlackBerry's keyboard."

"This is a blatant infringement against BlackBerry's iconic keyboard, and we will

vigorously protect our intellectual property against any company that attempts to copy our unique design," said Blackberry's chief legal officer Steve Zipperstein.

"We are flattered by the desire to graft our keyboard onto other smartphones, but we will not tolerate such activity without fair compensation for using our intellectual property and our technological innovations," he said in a statement.

Typo was created by media entrepreneur Laurence Hallier and show-biz personality Ryan Seacrest, together with inventor-designers Ryan

Foreign aid disbursement edges up 2pc

FROM PAGE B1

The government aims to bring in \$6 billion in foreign aid this fiscal year. In the first five months, 24 percent, or \$1.43 billion, of the target has been locked down.

The ERD official said the government is in talks with development partners at present for around \$8 billion of funds. If the partners commit to the sum, the ERD is hopeful that fiscal 2013-14's commitment target would be met.

Banks witness modest weekend transactions

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Arifur Rahman, head of United Commercial Bank's New Eskaton branch said his branch handled a good number of customers yesterday. "But Friday was a dull day for us," he said.

Shahinur Alam, foreign trade in-charge of One Bank at Dhaka Export Processing Zone, also said the same on the cash withdrawal trend.

"Basically, our clearing and cash counters were open on these two days. There was no such work for other desks," Alam said.

Banks remained open on many weekly holidays last year as shutdowns and blockades called by the opposition disrupted services.

Thrashed by politics, garment troubles

FROM PAGE B1

"Fourth quarter business was not good due to the severe political turbulence. We have received many claims during the last few months of 2013," said a senior official of Pioneer Insurance, another prominent insurer, preferring not to be named.

Other than political activism, which was rampant in the closing months of the year, the sector was hit by several incidents of fire and labour unrest at garment factories.

Garment workers on the outskirts of Dhaka went on a destructive spree over their wage demands in the middle of last year, while the arson attack on Standard Garment on November 29 yielded claims of around Tk 500 crore.

The industry was also hit by the overall subdued nature of the economy arising due to

the political uncertainty: people are purchasing fewer cars and entrepreneurs are not taking up any new projects.

Amidst the downbeat environment, some insurers, however, witnessed a modest growth in their premium earnings.

The Pioneer official said they are yet to finalise the accounts for 2013, but the company's profit after tax was slightly over Tk 18 crore for the nine months till September 2013, up from 5.88 percent year-on-year.

Green Delta earned Tk 261 crore from premium last year, up from previous year's Tk 260 crore but Tk 39 crore short of 2013's target.

At present, there are 44 non-life insurance companies in the country, competing for premiums worth Tk 2,340 crore.

Garment factory warned of danger before fatal fire

FROM PAGE B4

Five fires and building collapses killed more than 1200 workers in the 12 months between November 2012 and October last year, the worst period for industrial accidents in the country's history.

But the garment industry is vital to Bangladesh's economy. The \$20 billion industry generates 80 percent of the country's export earnings, and employs more than 4 million workers, many of them women, most of them poor, and with few other employment prospects.

The industry has been vital in lifting millions from poverty but faces increasing pressure from international buyers because of dangerous working conditions, regular industrial calamities, non-existent or corrupt regulation, and industry recalcitrance in fixing systemic problems.

Bangladesh is a desired producer of low-cost clothing because its labour costs are the lowest in the world. The minimum wage for a garment worker was lifted in December from Tk 3,000 taka a month to Tk 5,300.

Who is minding the ship?

FROM PAGE B4

But what about the two-star performers of the Bangladeshi economy: RMG exports and remittances? Together they fetched some \$36 billion in FY2013, which is about 24 percent of our entire GDP. Anything that hurts these resources would have serious consequences for the economy as well as our social stability.

Both are affected by global developments, including policy decisions in host countries. The RMG sector is particularly vulnerable owing to the reliance on GSP benefits in Europe. We have seen from the examples of many developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East how policy decisions on trade and immigration in host countries are influenced by the beneficiary country's political environment. This is especially true if the prevailing political governance is not considered as compatible with internationally acceptable norms. So, the choice of political governance at

home cannot be completely isolated from this reality.

Bangladesh is a proud and energetic nation. It has confounded the prophets of doom and shown that development is possible even when faced with daunting resource constraints and natural disasters. The guiding spirit in all of this effort has been a dynamic people who are basically very hardworking, honest, easy to be content and cherish all types of freedom. There is an ongoing demographic transition that holds the promise of further progress with development. The challenge for political governance is to match this positive spirit instead of countering it and become a binding constraint. The earlier we resolve the political impasse, the lower the cost to the economy.

The writer is vice chairman of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh. He can be reached at sadiqahmed1952@gmail.com.

Why India's brick kiln workers 'live like slaves'

BBC NEWS, Andhra Pradesh

Just outside of the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, by country roads in a flat green landscape, smoke rises off huge furnaces.

The heat hardens mud clay into the bricks that are making modern India.

Close by the air is acrid with coal soot, catching in the throat.

Like a scene from a long-gone age, men and women walk in single file up and down steps as if climbing a pyramid. They strain under a load, balanced in yoke-like hods, to deliver freshly-moulded bricks to the furnace.

Down below, knee deep in water, their clothes ragged, workers hack at clay in a wet pit to make mix into mud.

"The work is hard standing in the water, lifting the bricks," says Gurdha Maji, 35, as he packs mud into a brick mould and levels it off.

"We make 1,500 bricks a day. Only after six months will we get released."

Nearby, there is a mound of coal. Woman and children squat at the edge. Most are barefoot. With ungloved fingers a woman holds down a piece of coal and smashes it with a hammer. Two children, barely four years old, their faces smeared black, break coal by hitting pieces against each other.

"All of this is against the law," says Aeshalla Krishna, a labour activist with the human rights group Prayas.

"This is against the minimum wage act of 1948, the bonded labour act of 1976, the interstate migrant workers act of 1979. Child labour. Sexual harassment. Physical abuse. It's all happening. Every day."

The bricks are used to build offices, factories and call centres, the cityscapes of a booming economic miracle, and more and more, these buildings are used by multinational companies with a global reach.

Yet, Krishna says he doesn't know of any bricks made under working conditions that

would be acceptable under international standards.

The six-month season is now beginning when tens of thousands of families travel, mostly from the state of Orissa to work in the brick kilns of Andhra Pradesh.

Among many reports of abuses, labour contractors last week were accused of cutting off the hands of two workers who tried to leave their jobs.

The brick kilns we visited comprised the most poverty-wracked communities of India.

Children were everywhere. There was no safety equipment. Stories of illness, withheld wages and other issues were common place.

"They work 12 to 18 hours a day, pregnant women, children, adolescent girls," says Krishna. "Their diet is poor. There is no good water. They live like slaves."

The situation has been like this for decades, if not centuries. Until recently, it was widely accepted as something that would improve slowly time. Campaigners say there's been little sense of urgency.

But in 2011, the United Nations and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) combined forces to introduce new guidelines for multinational companies operating in countries like India.

These companies now have a direct responsibility to check on human rights abuses anywhere in their supply chains.

"It's a real game changer," says Tyler Gillard, the OECD's legal adviser.

"Any alleged abuses of human rights associated with the production of materials such as bricks and directly linked to a company's operations, products or services is a serious issue."

Britain has set up a National Contact Point for alleged abuses and this year made changes to its Companies Act to require companies to include human rights issues in their annual reports, from 1 October.

<div>  Office of the Executive Engineer MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA House-32, Road-10, Sector-6 Uttara, Dhaka-1230 Tel: 7911910 </div>				
Memo No: 1437/MODS Zone-9			Date: 30/12/13	
Invitation for Tender				
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh				
01.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Local Govt., Rural Development and Co-operatives/Local Govt. Division.		
02.	Agency	Dhaka WASA.		
03.	Procuring entity name	Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA.		
04.	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.		
05.	Invitation for	Tender for works in Multiple Lot.		
KEY INFORMATION				
06.	Procurement method	Limited Tendering Method (LTM).		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
07.	Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget, Dhaka WASA.		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
08.	Tender No.	07 & 08.		
09.	Tender package name	As per SI. No. 17.		
10.	Tender last selling date	21/01/14 (during office hours).		
11.	Tender closing date and time	22/01/14 up to 12:00 noon.		
12.	Tender opening date and time	22/01/14 at 2:00pm.		
13.	Name and address of the office(s)			
14.	Selling tender document (principal)	1. Janata Bank, Karwan Bazar, Corporate Branch.		
	Selling tender document (others)	2. Agrani Bank, WASA Branch, Dhaka. 3. Accounts Division, Dhaka WASA, WASA Bhaban. 4. Office of the Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10.		
	Receiving tender document	1. Office of the Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA, House-32, Road-10, Sector-6, Uttara, Dhaka. 2. Office of the Superintending Engineer, MODS Circle-2, WASA Bhaban, Kawran Bazar. 3. Office of the Superintending Engineer, Drainage (R&D) Circle, Segunbagicha. 4. Office of the Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-5, T.B Gate, Mohakhali, Dhaka. 5. Office of the Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-6, Fakirapul, Dhaka.		
	Opening tender document	Office of the Executive Engineer, MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA, House-32, Road-10, Sector-6, Uttara, Dhaka.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
14.	Eligibility of tenderer	All class (Civil) contractor enlisted in Dhaka WASA.		
15.	Brief description of works	As per SI. No. 17.		
16.	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk. 300/- (three hundred) only.		
17.	Pack/Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)
	17/1	Supplying of Wooden Chair & Table for different pump house at MODS Zone-9	Different Site	7,000/-
	17/2	Repair and maintenance of R.C.C Pavement at Uttara-5 No. pump house premises for loading-unloading water browser	Uttara	7,000/-
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
18.	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Kazim Uddin.		
19.	Designation of official inviting tender	Executive Engineer.		
20.	Address of official inviting tender	MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA, House-32, Road-10, Sector-6, Uttara, Dhaka.		
21.	Contact details of official inviting tender	Telephone No. 7911910		
22.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.			
WASA-PI-01/2014 GD-54		Md. Kazim Uddin Executive Engineer MODS Zone-9, Dhaka WASA		