

More needs to be done

RMG industry sees some good initiatives for workers' safety, but not enough

SOHEL PARVEZ

As the dawn breaks, shanties surrounding the garment factories on the outskirts of the capital wake up. Within an hour or so, footpaths and streets swarm with young female workers marching towards their factories.

To many the sector is a symbol of pride and hope. Sadly to some others, it is a symbol of disgrace and source of despair.

Pride because the sector brings home \$25 billion in export earnings and employs 44 lakh poor people on top of giving a solid boost to women's empowerment.

Disgrace because its poor safety measures and working conditions, aimed at exploiting abundant cheap labour, have led to repeated deaths inside factories violating workers' basic rights. The collapse of Rana Plaza, which claimed lives of 1,134 garment workers on

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2 YEARS OF RANA PLAZA DISASTER



Meherunnesa breaks down in tears yesterday at the site where Rana Plaza used to stand. She had lost her son Abul Kalam in the building collapse two years ago.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

WORKERS' SAFETY EU, US to work closely with Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union and the United States yesterday said they, in close cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, will remain closely engaged with Bangladesh to ensure that economic growth and sustainable development go hand-in-hand with workers' safety and rights.

The commitment was reiterated on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse, the worst industrial accident in the history of Bangladesh, that killed at least 1,134 workers.

"Our commitment to Bangladesh is strong and enduring," the US and the EU said in a joint statement.

US Secretary of State John Kerry; EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini; US Secretary of Labour Thomas E Perez; EU

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AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT ON PAHELA BAISHAKH

Online bullying aimed at protests, secularism

SC lawyers file GDs over explicit Facebook posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The large-scale barbaric sexual assault on women during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations was the moment when an everyday crime, both overlooked and concealed for a long time, was committed in an organised way, said a Supreme Court lawyer.

The female lawyer of the apex court along with a colleague filed two complaints with Banani Police Station on Tuesday after coming across Facebook

posts they described as shocking, threatening, and sexually explicit.

They saw several posts like the one declaring, "I will openly rape you [girls] on the streets. I believe in direct action... As long as you show [your skin] we will keep touching you."

All the posts are linked to the gruesome Pahela Baishakh attack, and The Daily Star has obtained the screenshots of the posts that were submitted to the police.

In disparaging words, one post by

the username Arefin Ahmed Shehim goes on to denounce the "TSC issue", suggesting that the assault was too small-scale.

"Such misogynist and hateful comments have swamped Facebook over the past week," the lawyers told The Daily Star yesterday, requesting anonymity.

Talking about her outrage, one lawyer said, "We simply wanted to encourage citizens to raise their voices

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Plagued by perennial problems, Dhaka and Chittagong -- our two major cities -- go to polls on April 28. What will a mayoral hopeful do to solve those problems if elected? How all the modern amenities will be ensured? What is his vision for the future of the city? Looking for the answers, The Daily Star has talked to a mayoral candidate.

Traffic jam-free Dhaka

Promises Babul, JP-backed mayoral candidate in Dhaka north

RASHIDUL HASAN

Elected mayors have plenty of scopes to serve the city dwellers in a better way in spite of having limited jurisdiction, says Jatiya Party-backed mayoral aspirant for Dhaka North City Corporation Bahauddin Babul.

"I know a city mayor does not have adequate authority and financial mandates for fulfilling their lofty pledges they make to persuade voters. Even then I believe we can do a lot to bring changes to the facelift of the city if we are sincere," he said in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

The previous mayors of undivided Dhaka city corporation were busy with making their fortune instead of paying proper attention to serve the city dwellers, he alleged.

"I want to see Dhaka as a world class city in next 10 years,"



Bahauddin said, adding, "I want to give words to my valued voters that I will serve them better if I am elected as the mayor because my only aim is to do good for the city I am hailed from and was brought up in as well. I do politics only to serve people, not to earn money."

"I have been keeping in touch with the city dwellers for the last 34 years irrespective of their professions and classes. I have seen their problems from close distance. It would not be exaggerated if I say that I will be the perfect

mayor to resolve their problems," he claimed.

He also called upon voters not to consider political affiliation of the candidates. "Instead, I urge voters to consider whom they think will be able to serve them better before casting their votes."

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ASHULIA BANK ROBBERY 2 suspects arrested

One more victim dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday detained two suspected bank robbers of the grisly bank heist in Ashulia and recovered sharp weapons.

Babul Sarder, 32, of Shibchar in Madaripur and Mintu Pradhan, 28, of Shibbaloy in Manikganj were arrested at a house at Kalma of Ashulia, said police.

Gleaning information from them, law enforcers recovered eight daggers, four machetes, gun powder, a gunpowder-weighing device, a machine for making explosives, splinters, a pistol magazine, two motorbikes and some books from a house at Ayous Para in Tongi.

Meanwhile, injured Ayub Ali, 70, died at Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar around 8:00pm yesterday, said hospital sources. With this, the death toll from the robbery rose to nine.

Ayub was a former member of Bangladesh Rifles, now Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

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A couple on a motorbike crashes into a rickshaw near Ahsan Manzil in Old Dhaka yesterday around 1:30pm. Both of them were injured and taken to a hospital. Bikers riding their motorcycles rashly have become a problem in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Hectic campaign on as polls near

Many candidates go to mosque for campaign during juma prayers violating electoral code of conduct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With less than two days left for campaigning in the polls to three city corporations, candidates especially Awami League- and BNP-backed mayor aspirants are working from dawn to midnight to woo voters.

Some, particularly the ruling AL-backed candidates, have reportedly violated electoral code of conduct by seeking votes in mosques yesterday after Juma prayers, when mosques see the highest gathering in a week.

Campaigning in religious establishments is prohibited.

Candidates were seen coming up with unusual pledges to woo voters.

The Jatiya Party-backed mayor candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation Saifuddin Ahmed yesterday pledged that he would not take any salary or remunerations if he was elected mayor.

"Instead, I will distribute my salary and other remunerations to the poor and the destitute," he said after offering prayers at Chati Mosque in Kamrangirchar.

Saifuddin's rival, Sayeed Khokon, the AL-backed candidate, asked for votes after offering prayers at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Khokon inside the mosque called upon the devotees to cast their votes on his electoral symbol "hilsa fish".

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115 children killed in Yemen: Unicef

AFP, Geneva

At least 115 children have been killed and 172 maimed in the violence raging in Yemen since Saudi-led air raids began on March 26, the UN children's agency said yesterday.

"We believe that these are conservative figures," Unicef spokesman Christophe Bouliera told reporters in Geneva, saying at least 64 of the children killed between March 26 and April 20 were victims of air strikes.

The UN agency said another 26 children had been killed by unexploded ordnance

and mines, 19 by gunshots, three by shelling and three by "unverified causes related to the conflict".

Seventy-one of the children died in the north of the country, Unicef said.

Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies launched the air war at the end of March in an attempt to restore the authority of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee abroad last month as Iranian-backed Huthi fighters swept across the country.

The World Health Organization said Thursday the overall death toll in Yemen had topped 1,000, and the UN's human

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Armenia marks centenary of 'genocide'

AFP, Yerevan

The leaders of France and Russia yesterday joined ceremonies marking the centenary of the massacre of some 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman forces, a hugely emotional event that remains a diplomatic minefield.

During a commemoration at a hilltop memorial in the Armenian capital Yerevan, French President Francois Hollande urged modern day Turkey to end its refusal to

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KONKA FRIDGE
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PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 25

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-25	12-45	4-45	6-27	8-00
JAMAAT	5-00	1-15	5-00	6-31
				8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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