

Upturn in garments export to US

Return of confidence should yield greater results

THERE has been a noticeable bounce-back of confidence among the US retailers in Bangladeshi garments. This is attributed to an improvement in safety environment of the garments sector induced by the Rana Plaza disaster and a generally positive appraisal by Accord and Alliance, the agencies designated to inspect the compliance status. To a large part though, a rebound in the American economy buoyed up demands.

Thus, in effect, we see a virtual breaking of the jinx. Where all throughout last year, garment exports to the US declined by 3.17 percent year-on-year basis to \$4.64 billion during January-November period, from January-May, 2015 alone exports rose by around 8 percent. From March in particular, the retailers' confidence picked up. The president of BGMEA maintains that Bangladesh has been receiving the work orders 'shifted out of China'.

In the current spate of garment imports from the US, Bangladesh ranks sixth among the top 10 exporting countries. China, India, Vietnam, Pakistan and Mexico are ahead of us, according to data released by the US Department of Commerce. The US being the single largest destination for our garment exports, we have to make the most of the market potential through product diversification and aggressive salesmanship. The \$5.6 billion US export market for us leaves ample room for expansion.

To that end, we need to be more competitive with our product, maintain compliance standards and ensure timely deliveries underpinned by a stable political order.

DB Police impersonators on the rise

State's responsibility to stop it

THE number of incidents of abduction carried out by criminals posing as DB Police, have apparently gone up in the capital prompting the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to ask the public to help catch the imposters. In the event of individuals trying to arrest people by claiming to be DB Police, the DMP has urged citizens to demand ID cards and check if they are wearing the specific vests that such officials are required to wear during operations. This is hardly a solution to a rather frightening problem. It is unlikely that ordinary citizens, who harbour a general wariness for law enforcers of any brand, will have the temerity to ask for ID or even know how to make sure the vests are authentic.

The arrogance of law enforcers when making arrests intimidates the ordinary citizen into remaining silent. In any case such items can easily be duplicated, something only the law enforcers can put an end to.

Rather, the most obvious solution is for citizens to demand an arrest warrant if anyone comes to arrest them. This brings to the fore Section 54 of Cr.P.C, a law that allows for arbitrary arrest without any warrant. Such a law gives scope for abuse by errant law enforcing personnel, sometimes egged on by political influence. With numerous instances of real law enforcing personnel going rogue, criminals are finding quite easy to convince their victims that they are indeed law enforcers.

It is of course crucial that such imposters are caught and brought to book. But along with that the state must have a monitoring system to make sure that the real law enforcers do not abuse the laws they are authorised to enforce. Only then will the public have the confidence and courage to challenge suspected impersonators.

COMMENTS

“Far bigger than it looks”
(July 12, 2015)

▼

Kalo Jam

Instead of giving clothes to hundreds, I think giving that money to a handful of poor people would be better. Giving them clothes will not reduce their poverty; it will only enrich cloth manufacturers.

“27 killed in stampede”
(July 11, 2015)

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Ami Charulota

It's really very sad. The persons who were giving zakat should have been more careful. They should take responsibility for this and the government should take action against them.

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Masud Choudhury

The persons who distributed the zakat should be tried for all those deaths.

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Khan U Aku

Zakat should be given in such a way that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. We all love publicity and fame.

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Sayedeh Sohag

People who are involved with this incident should be punished. People like them give zakat in a way to gain others' attention.

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Razib Ahmed

The government should ensure proper distribution of zakat.

Balancing Trust and Exits



KNOT SO TRUE

RUBANA HUQ

concluded the 100-page deal over its nuclear programme. By this time tomorrow, Greeks would probably know the details of their deal now being worked out by the finance ministers. It is the unpredictability of mankind that keeps us on our toes. One never knows when the next leaf is going to be turned and how the next chapter is going to be read. Yet, with super egos backing our faith, we pretend to be under control when in reality, even the very next minute is ambivalent and as irresolute as ever.

Who would have thought that Tehran today qualifies to “open new horizons” and become the latest player to join “the international battle” against “the increasingly brutal extremism that is engulfing the Middle East” at a time when just a few days ago, Iran’s intentions were regarded as the most disingenuous and absurd, when it was considered to be operating through Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)? And suddenly, all seem to have changed and

sanctions seem to be all set to be lifted, benefiting Iran to the tune of almost \$150 billion in the first year. There you go. The international definition of Trust today varies from time to time and before you know it, winds will have changed course, yet once again.

Who would have thought that Greece would be offered a new lifeline with the toughest prerequisites imposed by the same member states, which had adhered to the 15-year-old currency pact together for so long? Who would have thought that two weeks ago, the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, leader of the anti-austerity party Syriza, who won a landslide victory through a referendum that refused to accept a European offer of fresh financial assistance in exchange for tough new austerity measures, would today be crucified? Who would have thought that Greece, of all nations, would fall under the suspicious category, not be “trusted” to pay out and hence, suffer a bitter setback? Greece today is suffering one of the worst economic declines in modern history, according to a tweet from RBS Economics and of course, Greece is not at war. But contrary to many of our expectations, Greece will now be forced to cut wages, making its 25 percent unemployment scenario even worse, and eventually will have to come to terms with the fact that the Europeans are more attached to the Euro than they were to the gold standard which was created in 1930s.

Who would have thought Bangladesh

would miss its export target? We earned US\$25.5bn in the year to the end of June, which was a 4.5 percent increase on the prior year but Bangladesh's Export Promotion Bureau also declared that it was US\$1bn below the country's target. But then again, there's another news of our exports to the US increasing by 2.98 percent in 2014-15. So, in between the doldrums of uncertainties, we, by habit, choose to do what we deem the best. In this regard, one such news on BGMEA leaving the board of the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, a platform of North American retailers working to improve safety in the Bangladesh garment sector, is an issue worth pondering over.

There is no denying the fact that the lives of garment manufacturers have become more than challenging these days. Most of us operating with small and big sized factories have to face the multiple directives, which are handed down by both the platforms, Alliance and Accord. We may have a thousand and one reasons not to agree with what they require us to do, but the fact is we have to win this battle. It is not a battle against either Alliance or Accord, but it's a battle where we have to fight against our own demons. I don't blame the BGMEA President at all. With so many factories complaining of being forced to remediate and incurring huge expenses that are not supported by anyone, he is undoubtedly under tremendous pressure. However, comments by Finance

Minister AMA Muhith describing Alliance and Accord as a 'noose for the garment industry' have added fuel to the fire even further. In response to all this, on June 19, Alliance expressed its deep concern over the comments made by the finance minister and the BGMEA president and had urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government to clarify their position over their ongoing efforts to improve safety in the RMG sector.

It is foolish to assume that brands and retailers don't have sourcing choices in the world. Most humbly, if we are to thrive in the RMG sector and if we are to support the four million plus workers in the sector, the only way is to work with the two bodies which have been set up to ensure remediation in the country. If we are to win over the current challenges, we need to work with (and not without) both these platforms. Frequent trips to Accord or Alliance office won't hurt any manufacturer. Endless negotiations won't kill. Getting dates in the “Corrective Action Plan” to be accepted by these two platforms maybe an uphill task, but there's nothing we can't solve if we are working with the tide. Swimming against the tide will only attract negative international attention, which we certainly can't afford, at a time when the international balances between trusts and exits are dangerously too close for comfort.

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US ELECTIONS 2016

A crowded bandwagon of hopefuls

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

IN another fifteen months, the world's eyes will be riveted on the United States to see who the next US President will be. As Obama leaves office after a full eight years of Democratic rule of the presidency, the Republicans will be all out to capture the office they lost to him for two terms in succession. To the Republicans, it is essential to capture the office to establish total control over the government as they already rule the Congress. It is not only to regain control of the White House, but also to demolish the legislations and reforms that Obama had brought about, starting with health care, immigration, and environment, and in foreign policies that curtailed US involvement in foreign wars.

As of now, a full dozen candidates are vying for Republican nomination. Prominent among them are Jeb Bush, brother of former President George Bush, Chris Christie, Governor of New Jersey, Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Mike Huckabee, Donald Trump, the much talked about billionaire, and Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin. The Governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, the first Indian American to declare Presidential candidacy is also in the running.

The Democratic Party has five candidates up to now who have officially declared that they will run for presidency. The person with most name recognition is Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of State, and more famously wife of former President Bill Clinton. Long before she had officially declared her candidacy, Hillary had been hyped by party supporters as the logical presidential candidate. The others who will be contending for winning the delegates include Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, Martin O'Malley, former Governor of Maryland, and Jim Webb, former Senator from Virginia. But none of them has the same clout and popular appeal as Hillary Clinton.

In this early stage, it is difficult to tell who the final nominee of each party will be, because there is a long process awaiting them. Nomination process for US presidential candidates is rather complex and lengthy. All presidential hopefuls from each party have to go through a series of stages to get the nomination of their respective parties. These include campaigns to win the support of delegates, going through either caucuses or primaries in all fifty states, and then going to the national convention of each party to get the final nomination.

Both major political parties in the United States select their presidential candidates through a process of primary elections or caucuses. However, voters do not directly select presidential nominees in these primaries or caucuses. Instead, they choose delegates from their respective states who will attend a national party convention to nominate a presidential candidate for their party. Delegates are individuals chosen to represent their states at their party conventions prior to a presidential election. The rules for selecting delegates, which are dictated by the parties, can be perplexing - the guidelines vary not only by party, but by state, and sometimes by congressional district.

Primaries are held for most public offices, including

the presidency. In a closed primary, voters must declare which party they support and can vote only in that party's primary. In an open primary, voters from any political party can participate. For the presidential race, some states have winner-take-all primaries. That means the candidate with the most votes claims all that state's delegates. Other states award delegates by proportion.

Caucuses are simply meetings, open to all registered voters of the party, in which delegates to the party's national convention are selected. When the caucus begins, the voters in attendance divide themselves into groups according to the candidate they support. At the end of the caucus, party organisers count the voters in each candidate's group and calculate how many delegates to the county convention each candidate has won. The nominee for president is announced at the national party convention of each party held in the summer before the elections.

Summer of 2016 is still one full year away, but the field is crowded and the presidential hopefuls from

the most expensive wars in history is not sitting well with a large section of the population. The flamboyant billionaire, Donald Trump, with his ill-advised remarks on Mexican immigrants and other loose lip comments on foreign policy has already proved to be an egocentric candidate and an embarrassment to his party. Marco Rubio is a political green horn, and though he will be attractive to Hispanic voters because of his Cuban origin, his relative inexperience and absence of clout within the party may stand against him. Scott Walker, the firebrand conservative may try to move up with his rhetoric, but he will have to prove his mettle in the coming months.

In the Democratic Party, for now all eyes are on Hillary Clinton, and she is the most likely candidate to win the party's nomination unless something goes seriously wrong either with the ongoing scrutiny of her campaign funds (connection with donations to Clinton Foundation), or something murky about her conduct as Secretary of State over the Libyan embassy fire sur-



each party are at campaign meetings around the country, particularly the states which hold early caucuses and primaries to win their delegates. No one knows who will win the Republican nomination as none of the candidates has yet shown a dedicated following like Hillary Clinton among the Democrats.

Of the twelve candidates from the Republican side, currently Jeb Bush is leading the opinion polls, with Donald Trump, Senator Marco Rubio and Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin trailing behind. The other hopefuls are competing with one another at the lower end of the pack. But these poll numbers will change as the election time draws nearer. Some candidates may even withdraw before the primaries if the going is not good for them.

Even though Jeb Bush is at the top of the polls, he has a long battle ahead not only within the party following but also the electorate at large. For the conservatives in the party, he is not conservative enough. Besides, the legacy of his brother credited with two of

faces again. Otherwise, she really has no contender among the current Democratic nomination hopefuls.

No matter who gets the Republican nomination and whether Hillary Clinton is the final Democratic choice, the ultimate selection of president will be with the American voters. The Republicans' goal is to capture the presidency so that they can have control of both the legislature and the executive. The Democrats will fight hard to retain their hold on the executive to boost their political existence and ensure that the policies of the current president are not whittled away by a Republican president with the help of a cooperative legislature. But the success of the Republicans will not only depend on who they nominate as presidential candidate, but also the voters who have to decide whether they want one party to dominate both executive and the legislature or have a balance of power by dividing control over the two branches.

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The writer is a political analyst and commentator.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

l e t t e r s @ t h e d a i l y s t a r . n e t

Unreasonable 7.5 percent VAT on private universities

All conscientious people should speak against imposing 7.5 percent VAT on private universities' tuition fees. Studying in private universities is already too expensive. There is absolutely no reason for the government to make it more burdensome for the students studying there. Because of private universities, a huge number of students now can get higher education as the public universities have insufficient number of seats. When the government constantly mentions that education is one of its highest priorities for the country, such policies simply go to disavow that point. We should work together to convince our government to be true to its word and make it easier to get higher education, not harder.

Dr. Hasan Uz Zaman
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Income imbalance in USA

Recently, I came across an AFP news report which states that the US economy needs to prop up the income of the poorer section of its society. What is possibly happening there is that the rich are getting richer, while the poor are becoming poorer day by day. If this trend is not arrested and reversed, then the USA may have to face darker and possibly violent days ahead that will have a global impact. The US authorities should be aware of the potential dangers of this trend and take timely measures to contain this situation.

S. A. Mansoor
Dhaka