

RMG supply chain plagued by graft

FROM PAGE 1
stakeholders, including buyers and global brands or their agents, garment factory owners and exporters, workers, compliance auditors, factory inspectors, merchandisers, shipping agents and bankers.

The TIB conducted the study jointly with Transparency International, Germany.

The TIB said this is a qualitative study through which it could detect the stages of corruption in the supply chain of garment industry. It didn't quantify the amounts of illegal transactions that take place in the supply chain.

"Sometimes such corruption is coercive, and sometimes it is done through collusion between different parties," said TIB Senior Programme Manager (research and policy) Shahzada M Akram, presenting the findings.

The study found that buyers occasionally take various strategies to cancel orders.

Those include imposing new compliance conditions on suppliers, manipulating compliance reports, raising false allegations and cancelling orders at will.

Iftekhazuzaman said buyers sometimes hold local factories hostage for making a quick buck, using their business and financial power. Some of

them place orders to non-compliant factories to buy goods at low prices.

Though buyers' representatives or agents monitor the entire production process to ensure product quality, a section of buyers, at times, raises false allegations about product quality after shipments reach the destinations, said the TIB.

Sometimes, buyers threaten exporters with cancelling the order and sending back the shipment. In these cases, buyers basically blackmail the production units to get discounts on goods, said the TIB.

On occasions, buyers cancel orders fearing fall in product demand in their markets. At times, it is done with the intention to buy stock lot, according to the report.

The TIB found that a section of buyers manipulates compliance reports on supplier factories when they are not interested in taking delivery of goods. They contact auditors or inspection firms, seeking to manipulate reports to show the suppliers haven't met all conditions. This makes it easier for buyers to cancel orders.

"This is abuse of business power. They have such a tendency. We have to resist it," said Iftekhazuzaman.

The TIB divided the supply chain of the garment industry into three stages - order placement, production and supply -- and said anomaly starts with

bribing compliance auditors for preparing reports in line with the buyers' requirements.

Small factories offer bribes to merchandisers to get orders as they don't have contacts with large buyers or proper documents. Besides, owners or managers of some factories enter into contracts with merchandisers to pay commission on the value of orders, it said.

According to the TIB, there is prevalence of bribes for influencing purchase decisions of buyers or agents.

Sometimes, merchandisers force garment factories to buy accessories from specific sellers. Moreover, factory owners import duty-free raw materials in quantity higher than the amount required, and sell the unused materials in the domestic market.

There are also allegations of violation of labour rights, it said.

To reduce irregularities in the supply chain of the garment sector, the TIB put forward a set of recommendations that include sudden inspection of factories.

It also advised the buyers to formulate a "Moral Code of Conduct" for themselves.

The TIB proposed that the government should issue a specific identification number for each factory to check anomalies.

Rajuk starts

FROM PAGE 20
Dhanmondi, which are supposed to be a serene posh neighbourhoods, have virtually lost their grandeur due to illegal commercialisation, as Rajuk have been silent, said locals.

Powerful businessmen were altering residential buildings and using residential plots of land to run luxury hotels, hospitals, restaurants, corporate offices, shops, beauty parlours and bars, they said.

Housing ministry top officials termed such commercialisation illegal and blamed Rajuk for its inaction and, in cases, its complicity in the illegal act for the situation.

"Roads clogged with illegally-parked vehicles of businesses, unwanted crowd, overwhelming traffic, and deafening noise late into the night are just some of the things that have made our residential life unbearable," said Manzoor Hossain, a resident of Gulshan.

Commercial businesses on residential plots is a gross violation of the master plan for the capital, Town Improvement Act, Building Construction Act, and building rules, said an official of the Department of Architecture.

Commercialisation of a residential neighbourhood gravely harms social, cultural, and emotional development of children, he claimed.

World now Ebola-free

FROM PAGE 20
stopped in west Africa," the UN health agency announced on Liberian state radio.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon warned the region can expect sporadic cases in the coming year but added "we also expect the potential and frequency of those flare-ups to decrease over time".

Rick Brennan, WHO chief of emergency risk management and humanitarian response, hailed an important milestone but told reporters in Geneva that "the job is still not done", pointing out that there had already been 10 small flare-ups because of the persistence of the virus in survivors.

Reaction to the announcement was muted in Monrovia, where locals have become accustomed to good news on Ebola being followed by setbacks, and there was no official programme of celebration.

"We are happy to hear that Liberia is once more Ebola-free. At least now we know that our health workers are up to the task as they are no longer giving the virus a chance to spread," said teacher Abenigo Kollie, 45.

Aminata Kanneh, a 32-year-old entrepreneur, told AFP people were "no longer afraid" because recent flare-ups were dealt with quickly.

"The pronouncement today is a joy but does not call for celebration because we may experience another outbreak," she said.

Liberia, the country worst hit by the outbreak with 4,800 deaths, discharged its last two patients from hospital -- the father and younger brother of a 15-year-old victim -- on December 3, 2015.

Africa's oldest republic was the last country still afflicted by the outbreak that infected almost 29,000 people and claimed 11,315 lives, according to official data.

The real toll is suspected to be much higher, with many Ebola deaths believed to have gone unreported.

After the last patient is declared in the clear, a 42-day countdown -- twice

the incubation period of the virus -- begins before the country is proclaimed Ebola-free.

Ebola causes severe fever and muscle pain, weakness, vomiting and diarrhoea. In many cases it shuts down organs and causes unstoppable internal bleeding. Patients often succumb within days.

From a Guinean infant who was the first victim the epidemic quickly spread into neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone, notching up more deaths than all other Ebola outbreaks combined.

Liberia was first to be declared free of human-to-human Ebola transmission in May, only to see the virus resurface six weeks later.

It was officially credited with beating the epidemic for a second time in September before another small cluster of cases emerged.

The WHO came under fire for its sluggish response to the epidemic, which local healthcare systems were woefully under-equipped to handle. Over 500 healthcare workers died in three west African countries at the height of the outbreak.

The World Bank estimates the economic damage of the outbreak, which devastated the mining, agriculture and tourism industries in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, at \$2.2 billion over 2014-15.

WHO director Margaret Chan described the next three months as "the most critical," as foreign medical groups shut down operations in west Africa and national health ministries take over.

The European Union which, combined with individual contributions from its member states, mobilised almost two billion euros (\$2.2 bn) for the Ebola response, said it would shift its focus from emergency to development.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed Wednesday his country had developed an Ebola vaccine, although he did not say what it was called, how it worked, who was developing it or if it had gone through trials.

Cops name 3 arrestees

FROM PAGE 20
outfit's top leaders. It started gaining strength only after some former activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, pro-Jamaat student front, joined it, added the official.

ARRESTEES IDENTIFIED
At the briefing, Monirul also disclosed the identities of the three JMB members who were arrested on Wednesday from Kamrangirchar on the outskirts of the city.

They are Mohammad Arman, Jahid Hasan Rana alias Mushab and Noor Mohammad alias Lengra Master.

Yesterday, the DB remanded the three for six days each through a Dhaka court.

Detectives took the three to the capital's Hazaribagh and conducted a raid there. The "shootout" took place during the raid.

According to detectives, Rana was among the five JMB men who took part in the attack at Hossaini Dalan. Arman stashed bombs, which were used in the attack, at his Kamrangirchar house and later sheltered the attackers.

Noor used to give shelter to JMB men at his Savar residence.

Detectives claimed to have recovered two guns, a knife, two bullets and a motorcycle, which was used in Ashulia operation, from the Kamrangirchar house and Hazaribagh.

The November 4 attack on cops in Ashulia, in which a policeman was killed, was not preplanned. Some JMB operatives went to the area to attack two foreigners who used to go for their morning walk near BKSP there, said DB sources.

"But they failed to find the two foreigners. While returning, they attacked the police checkpoint to avenge the death of their fellow member Javed in a grenade blast in police custody [in Chittagong]," said a DB official.

Monirul said the JMB's bomb-producing den in Mirpur was frequented by the dead and the three arrestees. The militants also received training there.

Militants used to undergo two-month training before carrying out any planned attack, he added.

DB officials claimed that the JMB men rented some houses in and outside the capital of which at least 14 have been busted so far by law enforcers.

According to Monirul, the country's northern region is the den of JMB. Only a handful of JMB operatives are active now in the capital.

The bodies of the two shootout victims were at the Dhaka Medical College morgue last night, said hospital sources.



Actor Alan Rickman passes away

BBC ONLINE
Actor Alan Rickman, known for films including Harry Potter, Die Hard and Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, has died at the age of 69, his family has said.

The star had been suffering from cancer, a statement said.

He became one of Britain's best-loved acting stars thanks to his roles, including Professor Snape in the Harry Potter films and Hans Gruber in Die Hard.

Harry Potter author JK Rowling led the tributes, describing him as "a magnificent actor and a wonderful man".

Emma Thompson, who appeared with Rickman in productions, including Love Actually, and was directed by him in The Winter Guest, said he was "the finest of actors and directors" and "the ultimate ally".

She wrote in a statement: "Alan was my friend and so this is hard to write because I have just kissed him goodbye."

"What I remember most in this moment of painful leave-taking is his humour, intelligence, wisdom and kindness."

"His capacity to fell you with a look or lift you with a word. The intrinsigence which made him the great artist he was - his ineffable and cynical wit, the clarity with which he saw most things, including me, and the fact that he never spared me the view. I learned a lot from him."

She added, "He was, above all things, a rare and unique human being and we shall not see his like again."

Announcing his death yesterday, a family statement said: "The actor and director Alan Rickman has died from cancer at the age of 69. He was surrounded by family and friends."

IGP promises stern action

FROM PAGE 20
According to the victim, Sub-Inspector Masud Shikder of Mohammadpur Police Station and his team beat him up for Tk 5 lakh on Taj Mahal road. The SI also threatened to kill Rabbi in "crossfire" and falsely implicate him in a narcotics case.

Masud was closed on Monday.

Rabbi was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on Tuesday.

DMCH Director Brig Gen Mizanur Rahman yesterday said alongside physical illness, Rabbi was also suffering from trauma.

He was facing trouble in sleeping. Whenever he tried to sleep, the horrific memories of torture haunted him, Mizanur told a private television chan-

nel.

Meanwhile, in a meeting at Joypurhat, IGP Shahidul reiterated that the force will work to curb militancy, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

"The soil [of the country] is not a place for any militant group," he said while speaking as the chief guest in the meeting organised by Joypurhat district police.

In the monthly crime conference yesterday, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said if any policeman harasses people, the police force will not take the responsibility for it.

The responsible policeman has to face the music, the police commissioner said at the DMP headquarters.

Landslide kills Bangladeshi in Malaysia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A Bangladeshi man was killed in a landslide near a hill station in Malaysia yesterday, just two days after he migrated to the country.

The victim, Kashim Munshi, 38, died after the landslide buried his makeshift hut at Kampung Sungai Getan in Terisu near the Cameron Highlands in the morning, reports Malaysiakini, a local online news portal.

He was reported to have been staying alone in the hut near a vegetable farm where he worked. He reached Malaysia only two days ago.

Muhammad Haziq Hazmi, chief of the Cameron Highlands fire station, said firemen were dispatched to the scene after they received a distress call from the villagers around 8:25am local time.

"We managed to retrieve the body, which had been buried under earth and handed it over to the police at the spot," he was reported as saying.

The Malaysiakini report, however, did not say what had triggered the landslide.

IS, Qaeda

FROM PAGE 1
November 2015 with respondents aged 15 to 34 in Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories.

More than 90 percent of respondents in Morocco and the UAE called both extremist groups a "complete perversion of Islam," as did 83 percent of respondents in Egypt and more than 60 percent in Bahrain and Jordan.

More than 55 percent of respondents in the Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia also said the radical groups were distorting Islam's teachings.

More than 30 percent of those polled in many countries, including 69 percent of respondents in the UAE and 50 percent in Morocco, said "corrupt, repressive, and unrepresentative governments" were the main causes of young men and women joining extremist groups.

Others blamed extreme religious teachings and poor levels of education.

"In most countries, the majority says that religion does not need to be reformed" but rather that religious discourse "needs to be made more relevant," the polling firm's chief James Zogby said while releasing the survey results.

The Daily Star

FROM PAGE 5
accolades for their outstanding performance.

Directors Shahnaz Rahman and Shamsur Rahman were also present at the programme.

Marking the newspaper's turning to 26, colourful processions were brought out in different divisional headquarters as well as many other districts.

The Chittagong Bureau of The Daily Star organised a celebratory procession that was brought out from Chittagong Press Club with the participation of journalists from different media houses, readers of the newspaper, leaders and members of newspaper hawkers' associations, and members of newspaper agents' organisations in the port city.

Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation AJM Nasir Uddin, Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University Prof Dr Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, former mayor and president of Chittagong city Awami League ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, general secretary of Chittagong city BNP Dr Shahadat Hossain and many other dignitaries attended a ceremonial cake cutting programme in the afternoon, at the Chittagong Bureau office of The Daily Star.

Mayor Nasir said The Daily Star was taking everyday news to the readers with objectivity. He congratulated all the staff of the newspaper for their glorious journey of 25 years and wished further success of the newspaper in the future.

Attending the celebratory programme at Sylhet Central Shahid Minar, Ain o Salish Kendra Executive Director Sultana Kamal said the uniqueness of The Daily Star was its non-partisan position.

Civil society members, readers, students, professionals and well wishers took part in The Daily Star's celebration programme in Sylhet as elsewhere in the country.

Second phase

FROM PAGE 20
this year, while those from the remaining 32 districts, also including Dhaka, will participate in the other two phases next year.

Foreigners can join the congregation anytime.

Devotees from 17 districts have joined this year's first phase on January 8-10. The second part is for the ones from 16 districts -- Jhenidah, Jamalpur, Faridpur, Netrokona, Narsingdi, Comilla, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Feni, Thakurgaon, Sunamganj, Bogra, Khulna, Chuadanga, Pirojpur and Dhaka.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising Biswa Jtema, also called the World Muslims' Congregation, every year since 1946. In 2011, the organisers had split the congregation into two phases to deal with overcrowding, ensure better management and security.

Saudi executes Yemeni for killing employer

AFP, Riyadh
Saudi Arabia on Thursday executed a Yemeni man for murdering and robbing his employer, raising the number of death sentences already carried out by the kingdom this year to 52.

Yaser Qawza broke into the home of his Saudi employer Falwa al-Jarad, tied her up and beat her to death before robbing her money and jewellery, according to an interior ministry statement.

The beauty of wild Rangan

FROM PAGE 20
biggest charm -- quietude. When we stepped into the forest, we were saddened to witness a number of changes. Flowers, fruits or leaves go through changes in the forest almost on a weekly basis. At the outset of the last spring, I came across quite a few shrubs by the walking trails through the forest. They were in bad shape, some trampled to near-death by passers by. The branches bore no signs of flowers at that time. I paid another visit towards the end of spring and I found the trees were in full blooms. But during this recent visit, we found the shrubs graced with flowers.

Shah Khan, a US student of Bangladeshi origin and a profound nature lover, was moved by the abundance and fragrance of these flowers. The leaves and flowers somewhat resemble our well known rangans. A few days later, I came across the same

flowers in the botanical garden. At first look I took them for cultivated rangans. These flowers are, in fact, the wild variety of rangans (*Ixora cuneifolia*). I was greatly amazed to discover the existence of this wild variety. So far we have seen that all the rangans varieties are cultivated -- it never occurred to me that there might be wild rangans. Later, I came to know that there are 5/6 more varieties of these rangans.

These flowers are known as *Bettoful* or *Kesua* trees in many places. These are evergreen shrubs. The leaves are 15 to 22 cm long. The white flowers are 3 cm long. The red fruits are pea-shaped. The flowering season lasts from March to June. They grow naturally in Sylhet, the Chittagong Hill tracts and Cox's Bazar. As per the Flora and Fauna encyclopedia of Bangladesh, this is an endangered variety in the country now.

The writer is a nature lover and botanist.

'World's first family robot'

FROM PAGE 20
million in funding.

It uses voice and facial recognition to identify who it's talking to and what they are asking it to perform.

A front-facing camera can also take images and automatically post them on social media.

The company uses its own proprietary software, but it is now asking third-party app developers to contribute apps that will expand its capabilities even further.

"Alpha 2 is just like a smartphone but without a screen, so you can download applications from an app store," said an Alpha 2 representative.

"So you can make Alpha 2 do anything. For example, if you want it to be

a nurse, you can download health management, or if you want it to be a teacher, you can download an app to teach English.

"Alpha 2 can also learn from language and habits, to be smarter."

At CES in Las Vegas this week, the company revealed that it will begin selling Alpha 2 for around \$1,300 when it's released in March.

Alpha 2 has 2GB of RAM, 16GB of storage, and operates on Android. It has to be connected to Wi-Fi and its battery life currently only lasts an hour.

An Alpha 2 can communicate with other Alpha 2 humanoid robots and all the droids will have their own social network in the future, the company said.

French jets strike IS comms centre in Iraq: minister

AFP, Paris
French warplanes bombed an Islamic State communications hub near Mosul in northern Iraq overnight, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Thursday.

"Last night we bombed a Daesh telecommunications centre, a propaganda centre, near Mosul," Le Drian told BFMTV, using an Arabic acronym for the IS jihadists.

"We have struck seven times since Monday," Le Drian said of the French bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria.

"Daesh is pulling back in Iraq" where it has lost control of the cities of Sinjar and Ramadi, Le Drian said.

IS fighters seized Raqa in Syria in early 2014 and declared it the capital of their so-called caliphate. In June the same year, the jihadists seized Mosul.

Another major Iraqi city, Ramadi, fell in May 2015 but local Iraqi forces -- backed by coalition air support and troop training -- recaptured the town at

the end of last month in what was seen as a major blow for the jihadists.

Sinjar was recaptured in November with the help of Kurdish forces.

Since coalition air strikes began in August 2014, the Pentagon estimates IS has lost about 40 percent of the territory it once held in Iraq, and about 10 percent of the land it claimed in Syria.

"The battle for Mosul will have to be taken on one day," Le Drian said, adding that it would be "much more complicated."

"Iraqis and Kurds must be sufficiently war-hardened to take on this battle."

Defence ministers from the seven countries taking part in the anti-IS coalition -- France, the United States, Australia, Germany, Italy, Britain and the Netherlands -- will meet in Paris on January 20 to discuss their military strategy.

"We are going to see how to increase our efforts in Iraq and Syria," said Le Drian.