

Editor (The Daily Star)
Mahtuz Anam

Editor (Star Weekend)
(Dilshad) Elita Karim

Staff Writers
Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan
Fayeka Zabeen Siddiqua
Naziba Basher
Apurba Jahangir
Nilima Jahan

Columnist
Osama Rahman

Staff Photographer
Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo

Graphics & Illustrations
Manan Morshed

Make-up
Md Saiful Islam

General Manager, Production
Selim S H Chowdhury

Published by the Editor from
Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon
Industrial Area, Dhaka on behalf
of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel
C.A., Dhaka-1000.



PHOTO: SHINGKHANU MARMA

“Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.”
— Henry David Thoreau, *author, Walden.*

SNAPSHOT

WORKER'S RIGHTS |

“It was my husband's last working day before Eid. He went to the factory the night before and was supposed to come back at 7 am in the morning with his Eid bonus. At around 6 am, I heard a huge bang and felt intense tremors in my home. I thought it was an earthquake and ran out of the house. Suddenly, I noticed my husband's office is on fire and a few minutes later, I saw some men carrying my husband's dead body,” says Nigar Sultana, wife of Md Anisur Rahman, who was killed instantly by the explosion at Tampaco Foils, a packaging factory at Tongi BISIC area. Twenty four factory workers were killed by the fire accident-- one of the deadliest fire accidents this year that again revealed the bleak, exploitative working condition in Bangladeshi factories. According to a

outside. More than 200 workers were injured and lost their livelihood in that incident. Still, many of these victims and their relatives have not any compensation. Bangladesh's indifference to workers' rights was exposed again when Rana Plaza, an eight storeyed building with faulty design, collapsed killing around

tragedy, which is considered as the deadliest garment factory accident in history and deadliest accidental structural failure in modern history, has made Bangladesh one of the most unsafe places for workers. American presidential candidate Donald Trump was severely criticised by

explosion revealed that the factory owner had installed gas line booster illegally in the factory to increase production without thinking about the safety of the workers. However, as these industries create the lifeline for Bangladesh's economy, owners of these industries have been reported to accumulate huge amounts of wealth on the toil of these workers. Bangladesh earns 22 billion US\$ alone from garment exports every year and the owners of these garment factories are some of the richest citizens of the country. One of them, Syed Makbul Hussain, chairman of Tampaco Foils has spent crores of taka to purchase land for his personal burial site at Banani grave yard, on the other hand, six burnt dead bodies of the unfortunate workers have to be buried as unidentified (Daily Prothom

TRAGEDIES NEVER TO BE REPEATED

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTO: ABU SYEED SUMON



PHOTO: JEWEL PAUL

MAILBOX

thestarmagazine@gmail.com



Concerns of a Worried Foreigner

As a foreigner, currently staying in Bangladesh, I have the following concerns; due to security reasons foreigners are requested - by their respective embassies - to be vigilant at all times. We are advised 'not to open the door' of our private residence to unknown people (especially after dark). However from news reports we learned that 'plain-cloth police' (or intelligence agencies) have the practice to pick-up people (for

interrogation) from their residence, even after dark. According to press reports, it seems that the law enforcement agencies are unwilling to show identification if they take people away (for interrogation). Police/intelligence agencies refuse to provide information to the relatives (or lawyer) of the arrested person, or simply deny they are involved in the arrest (regardless of the witness statements of relatives of the person 'taken away').

So what are my (our) rights? What can I do if 'plain-cloth' (unknown) people, stating that they are police or intelligence forces, knock on my door? Do I let them in or can I refuse? Can I ask for identification? How can I recognise if the identification they show me is authentic? Can I refuse to comply with their demands? Do I have to go with them in their vehicle to be transported to their office/department? Do I have the right to be accompanied by a family member/friend/lawyer? How can I be sure that the person claiming to be a police/intelligence person is not a criminal or terrorist but a real police with the legitimate authority to take me away for questioning (or legal warrant to enter to search my private residence)?

I forward these questions because of sincere security worries. It is imperative to respect the law in Bangladesh however it is difficult to obey (understand) the law if that law is not clearly explained to all (including foreign embassies).
A concerned foreigner

The Need for Social Work

I really liked the article titled "The Need for Social Work" published in the *Star Weekend* on September 23, 2016. This article emphasises on the fact that the media needs to play a bigger role in highlighting those individuals who perform acts of kindness voluntarily. And, it will inspire people, especially the youth, to be engaged in various types of social works. I am really surprised to see a glaring example of how media can influence social good in the society. That is, *The Daily Star* ran a report on September 12, 2016 with the headline "Giving Love to the

Forgotten" about a youth named Saiful Islam who set a unique example of humanity by selflessly serving unidentified patients at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) since 2013. Through this news report, the information of this selfless youngster reached the concerned authority. Eventually, Chittagong District Administration honoured the young man generously. The news of his recognition was also published in *The Daily Star* on September 23, 2016 with the headline "Youth Honoured for Selfless Service." I think this is really inspiring and a ideal example of a socially responsible media.
Forhad Milon
Chittagong University



PHOTO: MD ATA ISLAM KHAN MOJLISH

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

study by Solidarity Centre, a labour rights organisation, at least 10 fire incidents have been reported in Bangladeshi garment factories alone in 2016.

Fire incidents, building collapse, explosion and chemical accidents have been killing hundreds of workers in Bangladesh every year. In the last fourteen years at least two thousand workers have been killed and at least ten thousand workers injured in these disasters. In 2012, fire at Tazreen Fashion Factory killed 117 workers, many of whom could not be rescued as all the gates of the factory were found locked from the

twelve hundred workers and injuring at least two thousand. The commercial building housed banks, shops and also a garment factory and to run the factory, two diesel generators were installed illegally. Experts said that vibration from these heavy generators created cracks on the wall of the building which were ignored by the owners and it has been reported that workers were forced to work inside the ramshackle cracked building against their will. If we could take any lesson from Tazreen tragedy, we could have saved thousands of lives. However, due to sheer negligence, Rana Plaza

the US media and citizens for purchasing garment product from Bangladesh. Every year, before Eid festivals, workers from different industries can be seen protesting on the streets in demand of their due salary and Eid bonus.

Besides salary, in many factories workers are simply treated like slaves. The Tazreen tragedy revealed that workers during working hours used to be locked from the outside, the Rana Plaza collapse revealed that workers were forced to work in a building which was showing symptoms of sudden collapse for several months, and the recent Tampaco Foils

Alo, September 17, 2016). Millions of workers are working in more than five thousand garment factories in Bangladesh. Around 4,000 of them are members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) that make clothes for international brands and employ about 3.5 million workers (The Daily Star, April 24, 2014). International brands who are regular buyers of Bangladeshi products should enhance their compliance supervision so that workers' rights and safety can be ensured properly in their workplaces. ■



www.bsr.com

Earthquakes Don't Kill People. Buildings Do! Build Safe!

