



## RMG FACTORIES High price, low wage put workers in a fix

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Shanta Akhter, a 29-year-old garment worker, lives in a small room in the basement of a building in the capital's Mirpur-7.

The 72sqft windowless room can fit only a small bed. Her clothes hang on a single hook, and cooking utensils are piled in a corner on the floor.

She shares this small space with Nahida, another garment worker.

"My overtime payment is irregular ... I've to often borrow money to buy essentials ... This month, I took a loan that amounts to my salary to repay previous loans. I am currently having to buy my daily necessities on credit.

"My daily meals include lentils and leafy vegetables. Meat is out of my reach," she told The Daily Star.

Shanta's salary is Tk 8,300. However, her monthly expenditures amount to Tk 9,000 – Tk 4,500 for house rent, Tk 3,000 for groceries, and Tk 1,500 for education expenses of her daughter, who lives in her village home.

**A 2023 report by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance highlighted that a working person's monthly "living wage" should be at least Tk 51,994.51 to be able to support a family.**

As her expenses exceeded her monthly income, she now shares them with her roommate. Shanta now spends around 81 percent of her salary, while Nahida contributes 75 percent of hers for monthly expenditures of their shared living space.

Nahida, who earns Tk 11,000 per month, said, "My diabetes medicine, which I must buy every month, costs Tk 1,500. After other expenses, sometimes it becomes difficult for me to buy it."

Their neighbour Hosna, also a garment worker, has not been able to work for a while as she is pregnant.

Near the end of her third trimester, she said, "My doctor suggested I have milk and eggs every day. As my husband and I both can't afford to have milk and eggs, he gets them only for me."

Hosna, when working, earns Tk 10,800 per month. Currently, her husband, another RMG worker, is the lone earner with an income of Tk 10,200.

The couple's monthly expenditure includes Tk 6,000 for rent, Tk 400 for electricity, Tk 500 for internet, and Tk 8,000 for groceries – around 70 percent of their joint earnings.

In 2018, the government raised the minimum monthly wage for garment workers to Tk 8,000 from Tk 5,300.

This includes Tk 4,100 as basic wage, Tk 2,050 for house rent, Tk 600 medical allowance, Tk 350 for conveyance, and Tk 900 for food.

The Daily Star spoke to 29 RMG workers and found that 48 percent of their average monthly salary of Tk 9,296 is spent on rent (about Tk 4,507).

A 2023 report by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) highlighted that a working person's monthly "living wage" should be at least Tk 51,994.51 to be able to support a family.

Surveying families of 300 RMG workers from 63 factories, AFWA found one family's monthly income to be Tk 24,137 – less than half of what it would need for food and other expenditures.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue in 2022 calculated the average monthly cost for a family of four with a "regular diet" to be Tk 21,385. For a "compromised diet", eliminating animal proteins, the cost stands at Tk 8,016.

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Palestinian children hold up posters during a protest in the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near the southern Lebanese port city of Sidon yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

### STRIKE ON GAZA HOSPITAL

## Palestinians still counting the dead

Netanyahu denies it was an Israeli attack; Arab world continues condemnation; summit in Jordan cancelled

#### AGENCIES

Palestinians combed through the debris of the devastated Gaza hospital to collect the dead yesterday, the day after a strike killed hundreds in the facility.

Alongside rows of charred vehicles, volunteers recovered corpses and human limbs that were placed in body bags, while the remains of others were covered in white shrouds and blankets.

"This is a massacre," Ahmed Tafesh, who assisted in the recovery effort, told AFP, saying he had collected the eyes, arms, legs and heads of the deceased. "I have never seen anything like this in my life."

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden delivered unequivocal US backing for Israel in person, supporting his ally's claim that Palestinian militants were behind the deadly rocket strike on the Gaza hospital that has inflamed anger across the Middle East and beyond.

Arab countries blamed Israel, which has rained bombs on Gaza since the bloody October 7 attack by Hamas fighters, with protests in Muslim countries from Egypt to Pakistan.

But Biden, on a solidarity visit to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, voiced support for Israel's position that a misfired Islamic Jihad rocket caused the

deadly carnage at Gaza's Christian-run Ahli Arab Hospital.

"And, based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," said the US president, referring to the armed movements of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which Washington and other Western governments deem "terrorist" groups.

Asked later by reporters what made him sure Israel was not responsible for the strike, Biden replied: "The data I was shown by my defence department."

At a news conference later, Biden said: "Based on the information we have seen today it appears the

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### PALESTINE CRISIS

## Muslim Ummah's united efforts can solve it

PM tells envoys of 14 OIC member states; Dhaka urges UNSC to hold Israel accountable over war crimes



BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the solution to the Palestine crisis lies in the united efforts of the Muslim Ummah.

"If the Muslim Ummah works in a united way, it will be possible to solve the Palestine crisis," she said while the envoys of 14 OIC member states called on her at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

Ambassador of Palestine Yousef SY Ramadan led the delegation.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

Envoys of Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Qatar, Libya, Turkey, Iran, Brunei, the UAE, Iraq, Oman, Indonesia and Egypt were present at the meeting.

#### HASINA CONDEMNS ATTACK

Speaking at a programme at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Hasina yesterday denounced the attack on a hospital in Gaza that killed innocent people, including children.

She reiterated her call to global leaders to stop the war and arms race for the wellbeing of mankind.

"We saw the killing of people and children by bombing on a hospital [in Gaza ] and bloodstained faces of the children yesterday [Tuesday]. I'm urging the world leaders to stop the war and arms race," she said.

The programme was organised to mark Sheikh Russel Day-2023, distribution of Sheikh Russel Padak-2023 and Smart Bangladesh Padak-2023.

Hasina said war and arms race never brought welfare for mankind, and that women and children are the worst sufferers of such conflicts.

"We want peace as it gives prosperity while war brings destruction. So, we don't want war.... We always work for establishing peace."

She said people, including children, are being killed

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## Set on fire by rapist, 17-yr-old girl dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A 17-year-old girl who was raped and burnt by the accused in Bogura died at a hospital in the capital on Tuesday.

Marufa Khatun, who was an 11th grader at a madrasa in Shibganj upazila, died at 5:30pm at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said her father.

Abdur Rauf, officer-in-charge of Shibganj Police Station, told The Daily Star, "On September 7 [Friday] during the Juma prayers, the victim was alone at home. At that time, accused Saiful Islam, 26, entered the house."

"Saiful found the girl asleep. He raped her. Saiful then set her on fire and ran away."

"Neighbours heard the girl's screams, rescued and sent her to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital. As her condition worsened, she was taken to Dhaka..." said the OC.

Victim's father Masudur Rahman of Nandupara village filed a case against Saiful, Naem Islam, 22, and Ranju, 38, of the same village with Shibganj Police Station. Saiful was accused of rape and attempted murder, while two others were accused of aiding and abetting, said the OC.

The OC said Saiful was arrested and he made a confessional statement before a court. The two others are absconding.

## Rare compound found in 'Mona Lisa' reveals new secret



#### CNN ONLINE

Leonardo da Vinci was a painter, inventor, and anatomist, to name just a few of his talents – and now, you can add innovative chemist to the polymath's many gifts. It turns out the master artist was more experimental with his renowned "Mona Lisa" than previously thought – and was likely the creator of a technique seen in works created a century later, a new study suggests.

By using X-ray diffraction and infrared spectroscopy, a team of scientists in France and Britain has detected a rare mineral compound within the iconic piece. The finding provides fresh insight into how the work from the early 1500s was painted, according to the study recently published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

Plumbonacrite forms when lead oxides combine with oil. Mixing these two substances on a palette is a technique that later artists like Rembrandt used to help the paint dry, according to the study. Detecting the rare compound in the "Mona Lisa" suggested that Leonardo could have been the original precursor of this approach, said Gilles Wallez, an author of the latest study and a professor at Sorbonne University in Paris who also was a coauthor on the 2019 report.

"Everything which comes from Leonardo is very interesting, because he was an artist, of course, but he was also a chemist, a physicist – he had lots of ideas, and he was an experimenter ... attempting to improve the knowledge of his time," Wallez said.

"Each time you discover something on his processes, you discovered that he was clearly ahead of his time," he said.

### শ্রদ্ধাজলি

আজ ১৯শে অক্টোবর ২০২৩ ইং, (বৃহস্পতিবার) দেশের অন্যতম উদ্যোক্তা ও বিশিষ্ট ব্যবসায়ী এবং নাভানা লিমিটেড ও আফতাব অটোমোবাইলস্ লিমিটেড এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা, আমাদের পরম শ্রদ্ধেয় মরহুম আলহাজ্ব জহুরুল ইসলাম সাহেবের ২৮ তম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী।

তিনি ছিলেন আমাদের আদর্শ, পথ প্রদর্শক এবং সকল কর্ম প্রেরণার উৎস। আজকের এই দিনে আমরা তাঁকে শ্রদ্ধাচিতে স্মরণ করছি এবং তাঁর বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

সফিউল ইসলাম (কামাল)  
চেয়ারম্যান  
নাভানা লিমিটেড  
আফতাব অটোমোবাইলস্ লিমিটেড

## 28<sup>th</sup> DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF LATE AL-HAJJ JAHURUL ISLAM

**"I raise my head beyond this world and, high, ever erect and alone"**  
(Quote from Kazi Nazrul Islam)

The 28<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of the founder Chairman of Islam Group **Al-Hajj Jahurul Islam** is being observed today.

A Doa mahfil will be held at his birth place Bhagalpur, at 11 a.m. October 19, 2023 in the mosque of Jahurul Islam Medical College & Hospital. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for his eternal peace.

On behalf of Islam Group  
**Begum Suriya Islam**  
**Manzurul Islam**  
**Syeda Islam**  
**Mafida Islam**  
**Kaneta Islam**  
and Members of the Family