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# At least 150 RMG factories shut amid demos

## Unions to write to wage board for revision of salary structure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 150 garment factories were indefinitely shut yesterday in Gazipur and Ashulia industrial areas as the workers continue their protests against the new salary structure announced by the wage board.

In the salary structure declared on November 7, only the salary for entry-level workers was increased by 56.25 percent; the other grades saw a 20 to 28 percent increase.

This has been rejected by the workers.

The declared salary also needs to be revised as per the demand of the workers, said Montu Ghosh, president of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra. Nazma Akter, president of the Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, echoed the same.

The unions will submit a letter today to the minimum wage board and Monnujan Sufian, the state minister for labour and employment ministry, appealing for revision of the declared salary, Ghosh said.

The salary will not increase at the same rate for all grades as the senior workers got a pay rise earlier, said Faruque Hassan, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The salary always increases higher for the entry-level workers, he said.

"We have decided to shut down any factory affected by

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Workers of a garment factory in Ashulia's Jamgara area found the gates of the workplace locked with a closure notice stuck on it. The BGMEA authorities have announced an indefinite closure of over 100 garment factories in Ashulia and Gazipur, in the wake of workers' demonstrations for better wage.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# HOUSEBOAT FIRE 3 Bangladeshi tourists killed in Kashmir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Three tourists from Bangladesh were charred to death in a massive fire that tore through five houseboats on the Dal Lake in Srinagar yesterday, the Indian police said.

Burnt beyond recognition, the bodies were retrieved from the debris of the gutted houseboats near Ghat number 9 on the lake, a popular attraction for tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital, the officials said.

A press release issued by the Srinagar police identified the three dead as Anindya Kowshal, Das Gupta, and Mohammad Moinud -- who were staying in a houseboat named "Safena".

Eight people staying in the houseboats were rescued, it said.

Police officials said the identities of the deceased were established from the documents of India's Foreign Regional Registration Office and as per the records maintained by the houseboat operators.

The cause of the fire, which gutted the five houseboats, seven adjacent residential huts, and neighbouring houses in the vicinity, could not be ascertained.

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# EC to roll out mobile app for voters

## Info on polls to be made available

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission is set to introduce a mobile app today to ensure voters find polls-related information at their fingertips.

Named "Smart Election Management BD", the app, being launched just ahead of the 12th parliamentary polls, will help voters know the location of their polling centres by providing their NID number.

They will also get the names of candidates and an update on the votes cast every two hours on election day.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Ahsan Habib Khan said, "We will inaugurate the app on Sunday. It will be open to all after the announcement of the schedule for the 12th parliamentary polls.

"The election management system is being connected to 'Smart Bangladesh' through this modern step."

He added that candidates will also benefit from it as they can easily submit the nomination papers from home.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal and four other election commissioners will join the launch, to be held at EC office in Agargaon.

WHAT'S IN THE APP

Ahsan Habib said the app will help prevent violations of the electoral code of conduct as many candidates come to returning offices with processions to collect or submit nomination papers.

"It will prevent anyone from pressurising any candidate to submit or withdraw their nomination papers."

For the voters, the app will provide the names of their respective constituencies and locations of their designated polling centres.

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# Gaza hospital turned into war zone

## Two premature babies die; Arab leaders, Iran president slam Israel's actions in the enclave

AGENCIES

Two premature babies died due to power cuts at Gaza's largest hospital, Physicians for Human Rights Israel said yesterday, citing doctors there, as fighting rages around the Al-Shifa complex.

"As a result of the lack of electricity, we can report that the neonatal intensive care unit has stopped working. Two premature infants have died, and there is a real risk to the lives of 37 other premature infants" at Al-Shifa hospital, the Israeli doctors' group said in a statement, according to AFP.

"The hospital is besieged, with no option to bring in the corpses and injured people sprawled outside. There is no movement in or out of the hospital," Physicians for Human Rights Israel said.

"It's totally a war zone, it's a totally scary atmosphere here in the hospital," Ahmed al-Mokhallati, a senior plastic surgeon at Al Shifa hospital, told Reuters.

"It's continuous bombardment for more than 24 hours now, nothing stopped, you know, it's all from the tanks, from the street, from the airstrike."

Palestinian officials said dozens more patients were at risk from an Israeli siege around Gaza's largest hospital.

The Israeli military has denied there is a siege at the hospital, where thousands of residents have taken shelter.

Israel says doctors, patients and thousands of evacuees who have taken refuge at hospitals in northern Gaza must

leave so it can tackle Hamas gunmen who it says have placed command centres under and around them.

Hamas denies using hospitals in this way. Medical staff say patients could die if they were moved.

Ashraf Al-Qidra, who represents the health ministry in Hamas controlled Gaza, said Israeli army snipers commandeering rooftops of buildings near the hospital fired into the medical

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Gaza's biggest hospital out of service



Over 11,000 Palestinians killed so far



Arab leaders call for immediate end to Israeli military operations in Gaza

# Another spell of 48-hr blockade begins today

## 5 buses torched in city last night; BNP claims 315 more activists detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five buses were torched in the capital last night, hours before the BNP and like-minded parties enforce a fresh two-day blockade across the country from 6:00am today.

The opposition parties, who enforced nine days of blockade in the last two weeks, called the blockade of road, rail and waterways demanding resignation of the government and general election under a non-party administration.

The BNP said at least 315 party leaders and activists were detained in 24 hours preceding 5:00pm yesterday. At least 1,370 BNP men were accused in 12 cases filed during the same period, the party's senior joint secretary general, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, told a virtual press briefing.

At least 10,450 BNP leaders and activists have been arrested across the country over the last two weeks in 220 cases, he said.

According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police, 1,813 people were held in 131 cases filed with different police stations in the capital from October 28 to November 10.

During the same period, Rab picked up 350 people from across the country over violence and sabotage.

At least 153 vehicles were torched across the country between October 28 and November 9, according to police and firefighters.

Rizvi yesterday alleged that law enforcers turned arrests into a business.

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# PREVENTING ARSON No fuel in takeaway containers

## DMP asks petrol pumps in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday directed all petrol pumps not to sell any fuel in takeaway containers or bottles without taking permission from the OC of the local police station.

The directive was given to prevent arson attacks on vehicles during the ongoing blockade by BNP-Jamaat.

Petrol pump authorities were also instructed to write down the buyer's name in the registers.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman, said, "We directed the petrol pump owners to stop fuel sale in takeaway containers completely."

Fuel to run generators in homes, factories, institutions, or for construction work can be purchased, he said, adding, "But the [local] police will give the security clearance after visiting the homes or factories the fuel is being

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## BUSINESS

### 1.19cr faced acute food insecurity in May-Sep: FAO

About 1.19 crore people in Bangladesh experienced high levels of acute food insecurity from May to September this year despite record cereal harvests in 2022 and 2023, said the Food and Agriculture Organisation in a report on Friday. This was up 34 percent from 89 lakh in March-April, according to the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture Country Brief of the UN agency.

STORY ON BI



PHOTO: AFP

Children break down in tears during the funeral of the Faojo family, killed in Israeli bombing on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

# Attenborough echidna spotted after six decades

AFP, Bangkok

An elusive echidna feared extinct after disappearing for six decades has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia, on an expedition.



The Zaglossus attenboroughi, a kind of long-beaked echidna named for famed British naturalist David Attenborough, had last been seen in 1961.

Echidnas are nocturnal and shy, making them difficult to find at the best of times, and the Attenborough long-beaked echidna has never been recorded outside the extremely remote Cyclops Mountains of Indonesia's Papua region.

They are the last vestiges of an ancient animal line, explained James Kempton, a biologist from the University of Oxford who led the expedition.

"The reason it appears so unlike other mammals is because it is a member of the monotremes -- an egg-laying group that separated from the rest of the mammal tree-of-life about 200 million years ago."

It took a team of scientists and experts from Britain and Indonesia four weeks and 80 camera traps to find the echidna, and it was only on the last day, and the final memory card of the trip, that the creature made an appearance.