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## Women labour force in decline

Govt survey shows overall unemployment rose in last quarter of 2023

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of unemployed people in the country increased by about 40,000 year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 23.5 lakh as women stepped back from gainful employment.

Between October and December last year, the number of unemployed male workers decreased by 80,000 to 15.7 lakh while the unemployed female workers' count increased by 1.2 lakh to 7.8 lakh, according to the latest quarterly Labour Force Survey of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

During the period, the number of employed females was 2.46 crore, down from 2.53 crore a year earlier.

The total female population outside the labour force -- which are women who are not employed and are not interested in being employed such as housewives -- increased by 14.2 lakh to 3.55 crore.

The survey defined unemployed people as those who sought any types of work for pay or profit in the last 30 days, and did not work at least for an hour in the last seven days although they were ready to be employed.

One of the reasons for the drop in female labour force participation could be automation in the garment sector, a major employer of the female workforce, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

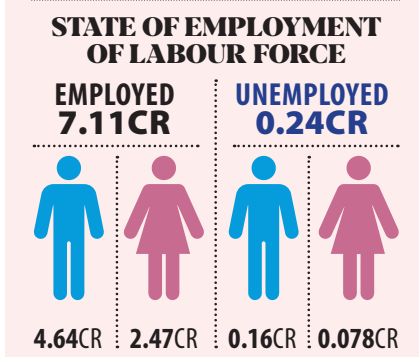
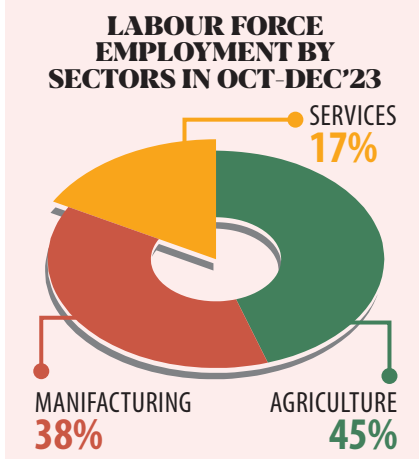
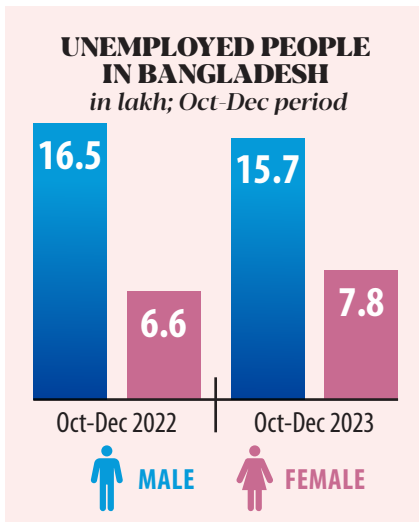
"Jobs that were done by female workers are now done by machines as many garment factories are undergoing automation at present. As a result, the demand for female workers in many factories is declining."

This process started to become visible in 2016 when many female workers from the garment sector started to leave their jobs, Hussain added.

Female workers now account for 57 percent of the garment sector's workforce, down from 80 percent previously, said an official of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"Now, many female workers are showing reluctance to continue with their jobs once they cross the age of 25 -- they tend to return to their village," he added.

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Thousands of BNP leaders and activists gathered in front of the party's central office in the capital's Nayapaltn on the concluding day of its two-day black flag march yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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## Countrywide black flag march on January 30

Announces BNP after yesterday's procession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday announced a nationwide black flag procession on January 30, demanding the dissolution of what they said was a "dummy parliament" and fresh election under a non-partisan neutral caretaker government.

The announcement was made at a rally in front of the party central office in the capital's Nayapaltn.

"On January 30th, you have to take to the streets to protest," BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy told the party activists.

After the rally, the party concluded its two-day black flag march that started from the central office and passed through Kakrail, Nightingale intersection, Fakirapool and Arambagh areas.

Thousands of BNP leaders and activists joined the procession chanting various

## 40pc crashes in Dhaka city happens at night: RSF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 40 percent of the crashes in Dhaka take place at night mainly due to reckless driving by goods-laden trucks and lorries, according to the Road Safety Foundation.

It said over 40 percent of the 243 people killed in crashes in the city last year were pedestrians.

Across the country, at least 6,524 people were killed and 11,407 injured in 6,911 crashes in 2023, the road safety campaigner told a press conference at its office in Dhanmondi yesterday.

Of the deceased, 1,128 (17.29 percent) were children and 974 (14.92 percent) women.

At least 2,487 (38.12 percent) were killed in 2,532 crashes involving motorcycles, said Prof Al Mahub Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the organisation.

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## Wheels in motion for new road safety act

Govt forms body to make draft

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Amid growing concerns over the large number of lives lost in crashes, the government has taken a step to enact a new law on road safety.

The move comes five and a half years after the enactment of Road Transport Act 2018 in the wake of a movement for safer roads in July and August 2018.

But still there was a sharp rise in road crashes.

According to an office order of the Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD), issued on January 22, a nine-member committee

has been formed to prepare a draft law likely to be titled "Road Safety Act".

The committee led by Saiful Islam, an additional secretary of the division, was asked to submit the draft to the RTHD secretary.

Representatives from the Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Buet, Brac, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Roads and Highways

Department (RHD) and the civil society are part of the committee.

"The issue of enacting a road safety act was in the election manifesto of the Awami League. That's why we have taken the initiative to frame the new law to ensure road safety," RTHD Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri told The Daily Star yesterday.

Road safety campaigners have been demanding a new law as they found the Road Transport Act 2018 inadequate in ensuring road safety.

At least 6,524 people were killed and 11,407 injured in 6,911 crashes last year. Of the deceased, 1,128 (17.29 percent) were children, the Road Safety Foundation said yesterday.

WHY THE NEW ACT?

The parliament in September 2018 passed the Road Transport Act just a few weeks after the country witnessed a major student-led movement for safer roads. The protests began after two college students were run over and killed in Dhaka in July that year.

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## Same case, 16 granted bail, Fakhru kept waiting

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Sixteen accused have secured bail in a case filed over vandalising the chief justice's residence on October 28 last year, but in the same case, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir is yet to get bail from lower courts or the High Court.

The 76-year-old politician will now seek bail from the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, on the grounds that he was not involved in the vandalism in any manner, his lawyer Md Sagir Hossain told The Daily Star on Friday.

"An appeal will be filed on behalf of my client [Mirza Fakhru] today [Sunday] or tomorrow [Monday] with the Appellate Division, challenging the High Court's [January 10] verdict that turned down his bail petition in the case," he added.

The HC said, "Whether the petitioner [Fakhru] is the mastermind or had any role in the catastrophic, unruly events, can only be decided after a fair investigation, but to ensure fairness in the investigation, we are

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Two elderly women wrapped themselves in with plastic sacks and old newspapers to shield themselves from the cold around 1:00am yesterday, when the temperature was 14 degrees Celsius. Like them, many living on the footpaths of the capital's Shantinagar wait all day under the open sky for donated food or warm clothes.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## FIGHTING IN MYANMAR Dozens of towns, bases fall to separatists

AGENCIES

The Arakan Army's late Wednesday claim that it "completely controlled" Pauktaw, a town of 20,000 people close to a crucial deep water port in the capital of western Rakhine state in Myanmar, is one of a series of wins for the Three Brotherhood Alliance.

The alliance also has the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army.

Their gain is further proof that, the recently China-brokered cease-fire, fighting has not stopped completely, reports AFP.

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## It'll impact Rohingya repatriation Says foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The escalation of conflicts in Myanmar will have negative impact on the Rohingya repatriation, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

Bangladesh is aware of the long-running tension in Myanmar, and that the Border Guard of Bangladesh has been put on alert along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, he told reporters after a meeting with a delegation of British

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Our deepest condolences on the passing of

**Alhaj Mir Ahmed Sawdagor,**

a renowned and respected industrialist, Founding Director & former

Chairman of Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC;

Founder of Khalil Mir High School and Khalil Mir Degree College;

Chairman of Mir Group.

May Allah grant him Jannat-UI-Ferdous. We also express our heartfelt sympathies to the members of the bereaved family.

on behalf of

**Alhaj Khalilur Rahman**

Chairman, KDS Group