



"We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate the Hamas battalions there with or without a [truce] deal."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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The invisible ones

85pc of all workers deprived of basic rights, legal protection

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Of the over 7 crore people employed in Bangladesh, 85 percent (nearly 6 crore) are vulnerable as they work in the informal sector, which lacks basic social and legal protection, and employment benefits.

Mostly rickshaw-pullers, tea vendors, labourers, salespersons and people employed in farming, catering, transport, and construction make up the informal sector workforce.

And 80 percent of these workers are in rural areas, according to the Labour Force Survey 2022 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

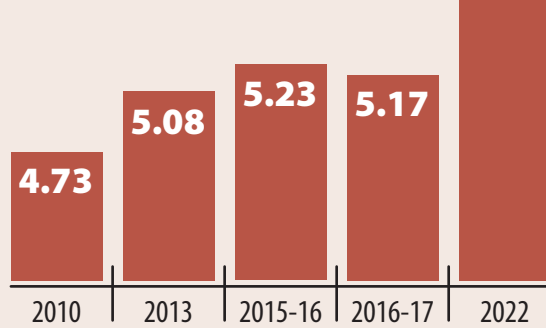
"The sad part is there is no law for their protection and rights. The labour law framed in 2006 covers mainly formal sector workers," said Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director at Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS).

The data showed that only 1.67 crore people are employed in the formal sectors.

Sultan said it's not like all the issues of formal sector

INFORMAL SECTOR WORKERS

In crore

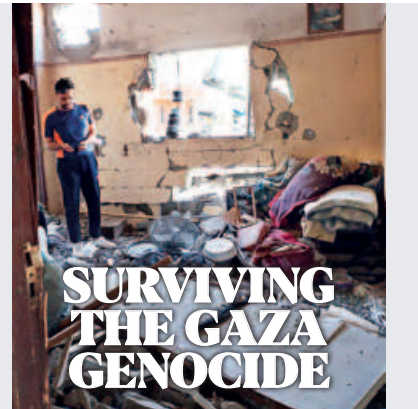


SOURCE: BANGLADESH BUREAU OF STATISTICS



Two female workers carry coal under the open sky, braving the ongoing heatwave. Come rain or shine, they toil away every day to provide for themselves and their families. On International Labour Day today, the world commemorates the struggles and gains of the workers. The photo was taken in the capital's Gabtoli recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



The Daily Star's "Geopolitical Insights" section is publishing an exclusive eye-witness account of the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza and the story of a survivor: Kamel Abu Amsha, a 24-year-old final year Palestinian medical student at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College, Faridpur. On September 29, 2023, before the war, Kamel returned home to North Gaza, to be reunited with his family for a month after almost five years. Then he got stuck, and lived through 170 days of carnage, which many United Nations' officials have described as the "worst humanitarian crisis" in recent history. This is the story of how he lived through hell in Gaza and escaped to Bangladesh.

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workers have been addressed. "They at least have some legal protections. But the issues of the informal sector rarely get to be in the spotlight," he said, adding that the number of employed people in the informal sector is growing fast.

"Many who used to work in the formal sector are now having to work in the informal sector. Employers do not issue appointment letters and hire workers through contractors," he said.

The BBS data, released late last year, showed that the ratio of the informal sector workers and the total employed decreased by over 2.5 percentage points in 12 years since 2010, but the number of people working in the informal sector grew 26 percent.

The number of people engaged in the informal sector was 4.73 crore in 2010.

Echoing Sultan, Rizwanul Islam, former special adviser, employment sector at the International Labour Office, Geneva, said labour rights for people in the informal sector are not even discussed.

"As we have seen, many in the formal sector do not enjoy basic workers' rights, although Bangladesh has ratified the relevant ILO Conventions. Many in the informal sector merely earn enough to survive..."

He said a lot of the workers in the informal sector are there for their sheer survival and a lack of better alternatives.

Razequzzaman Ratan, president of the Socialist Labour Front, said informal sector workers have no rights when it comes to job security; appointment letters; working hour

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HOLIDAY

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of May Day. Therefore, the newspaper will not come out tomorrow. We will serve our readers 24/7 through our website. Stay tuned to our web coverage in English and Bangla.

Eleven die of heatstroke in 9 days: DGHS

Actual number may be higher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven people died of heatstroke across Bangladesh in the last nine days, four of them in the 24 hours preceding 6:00pm yesterday, according to the health directorate.

The actual number of people dying of heat stress related illness could be higher because the Directorate General of Health Services started keeping records on April 22, 20 days after the heatwave started battering the country.

This is the first time the DGHS is releasing data on heatstroke.

Incidents of heatstrokes claiming lives were reported earlier last month, but the cause of the fatalities were not officially confirmed.

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Stressed loans in banks to stay high: Moody's

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The stressed loans in the banking sector of Bangladesh will remain elevated even after the central bank tightened the rules for classification of non-performing loans (NPLs), said Moody's Investors Service.

Last month, the Bangladesh Bank tightened its definition of overdue installments for fixed-term loans, reversing a relaxation of classification and provisioning rules since April 2019.

Fixed-term loans are currently classified as overdue six months after their expiry date and are subsequently classified as non-performing when overdue for a further three months, implying 270 days past due. Cottage, micro and small credits are classified as NPLs when past due/overdue for six months.

From September 30, a loan will be treated as overdue if an instalment on a term loan is not paid within three months of its due date, while from March 2025 an instalment payment late by even one day will be considered overdue.

The period for classifying past due/overdue loans as NPLs remains unchanged.



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No decision on closure of secondary edn institutions yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry is yet to decide on keeping the secondary educational institutions shut tomorrow, although the High Court has ordered closure of all primary and secondary schools and madrasas till that day amid the sweltering heat.

The ministry wanted to lodge an appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the order, but it could not do so till yesterday noon for not having the copy of the order, said officials.

The ministry may not be able to file the appeal today as it is a public holiday on the occasion of May Day. Tomorrow is a holiday for the court.

Education Minister Mohibul Chowdhury yesterday

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PROTESTING ISRAELI GENOCIDE PM blasts US crackdown on students

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday came down heavily on the USA for its action against university students and teachers for protesting Israeli genocide in Palestine.

"The students and teachers did not have something like torches or sticks in their hands. But police's behaviour with them raises the question how human rights are there," she said.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, was speaking at the meeting of the party's Central Working Committee, its highest decision-making body, at the Gono Bhaban, reports UNB.

"During demonstrations, a female professor was seriously assaulted by police. This raises the question: how much freedom of speech they enjoy [in America]. The question is, how much rights they enjoy to protest against any injustice," the premier said.

The US prepares human rights reports on Bangladesh

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US CAMPUSES RAGE AGAINST WAR - PAGE 12



15pc workers' consent will be enough to form unions Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Haq yesterday said the government is amending the labour law with a provision to form trade unions in factories if 15 percent of the workers give consent.

He said they are bringing down the threshold following advice of the International Labour Organisation.

"We earlier brought down this threshold from 20 percent to 15 percent. But it was supposed to apply only to factories with 3,000 or more workers. Now, this 15 percent threshold will be kept for all factories if the workers agree," the minister told reporters after a meeting with the ILO representatives at the secretariat.

Anisul said the factory owners may have to pay fines five times higher than the existing ones if they violate labour rights when the new law is passed.

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The mouth of the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road, at the Signboard area next to Dhaka-Chattogram highway, was completely blocked yesterday due to the illegal parking of three-wheelers. The road, now dubbed AKM Shamsuzzoha Sarak, is undergoing development work worth Tk 490 crore for widening. But even before the work is complete, smooth vehicular movement is already being hampered as the authorities concerned turn a blind eye.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

More exchange rate flexibility needed

IMF tells Bangladesh about rebuilding reserves, says macroeconomic performance improving

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

Bangladesh's macroeconomic performance has significantly improved since the country entered the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan programme in January last year, but the bleeding of foreign currency reserves continues, putting the taka under pressure, the global lender said yesterday.

"It is important that the next stage of the reform agenda is to allow greater flexibility in the exchange rate, which would help address the problem in external account," said Krishna Srinivasan, director of the Asia and Pacific department of the International Monetary Fund, in a virtual briefing from Singapore.

The external account involves all interactions of the domestic economy with the rest of the world. It can give insights on a country's economic strength.

He was speaking in response to a question at the briefing after releasing the regional economic outlook for Asia and the Pacific.

Bangladesh proactively approached the IMF for support for its home-grown programmes having two components - addressing the macroeconomic stability and addressing the longer structural issue related to climate change, he said.

He pointed out that there has been significant

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