

# Deeper crisis feared as 219 factories shut

REFAYET ULLAH MRIDHA

With 219 garment factories shut in Ashulia yesterday amid worker unrest along the industrial belts, Bangladesh's apparel sector is feared to get into a deeper crisis if production does not resume on Saturday after the weekend.

Officials see conspiracies behind the unrest and believe "real workers" are not involved in the vandalism of some factories, while labour leaders blame the influence of partisan politics and control over fabric scrap trade for the situation.

Meanwhile, the inaction of a demoralised industrial police force and the "unusual demands" of the workers have frustrated the owners, who are under pressure from international buyers ahead of the next holiday season in the West.

Of the factories closed yesterday, 86 were shut indefinitely under the Labour Act, which empowers the employer to shut any unit in case of a strike.

The remaining 133 factories were closed as they declared a general holiday, said Md Sarwar Alam, superintendent of Ashulia Industrial Police-1.

The closed factories included 107 members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, mainly in Ashulia and Zirabo, said Khandoker Rafiqul Islam, president of the association.

Although a few committees involving local politicians were formed

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## Want to build strong owner-worker relations

Yunus tells factory owners; businesses seek jt forces in industrial zones

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said he would pursue building a strong relationship between factory workers and owners.

"And a big hope of mine is that, as long as we are here [in government], we will build a nice relationship between the workers and the owners. As long as we are in power, we want to work as a team."

Yunus at the National Business Dialogue yesterday advocated for joining the International Labour Organisation Convention.

"Now that the labour force and owners are united, we will do it. If [joining the ILO Convention] is not done, it would be difficult to move forward. Wherever you go, you will be reminded: why are you not signing it? So, if we want to move forward, we have to do it in a transparent manner. Give us courage, come forward, and we will sign the ILO Convention together."

The international community is observing Bangladesh's current situation with curiosity, Yunus said.

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Following the chief adviser's announcement of the heads of six commissions tasked with reforming the judiciary, election system, administration, police, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the constitution, two of the commission chiefs -- Iftekharuzzaman and Badiul Alam Majumdar -- shared their plans and priorities with Star.



### 'ACC's allegiance to the bureaucracy, politicians must end'

The work plan to deliver the reform proposal for the Anti-Corruption Commission will be prepared after all members of the committee are appointed and terms of reference are agreed upon, said Iftekharuzzaman, the head of the commission for ACC.

The ACC, since its inception in 2004, could not create public trust in its activities, and in fact, contributed to the impunity enjoyed by those in positions of power and their coteries.

This impunity for abuse of power was a key factor that led to the capture of all other state institutions that in turn became the main power structure of authoritarianism.

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### 'Law for appointing polls commissioners has to be reformed'

Badiul Alam Majumdar, the head of the commission to reform the election system, said they will need to reform the law through which the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners are appointed.

Under the law, the government can appoint its desired people as CEC and election commissioners.

"There is weakness in the law -- this law is not befitting this era."

The commission will also need to work to reform the candidate nomination process, make a few changes in the Representation of the People Order (RPO) and voter list.

"We will have to see what our jobs will be. We will need to see many things deeply."

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## Carry out reforms fast, aim for polls

Fakhrul urges govt; JP terms Yunus' speech precise, clear

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir expressed optimism yesterday that the interim government would promptly implement the necessary reforms and proceed towards organising a national election.

"We hope they [interim government] will complete their jobs as early as possible and move towards holding the election," he said.

Speaking at a press conference at the BNP's Nayapaltan central office, Fakhrul said that Muhammad Yunus outlined the vision of his government.

"We have stressed the importance of the reforms, and we hope that these reforms will be implemented promptly."

"We believe the interim government is working, and we are committed to giving them the time and the chance to complete these tasks," he added.

The BNP leader said the country should be governed by the people's representatives elected to a parliament by the people. "We hope this will be done swiftly."

Fakhrul said his party wishes success to the interim government because it has been formed through a movement.

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