



Airport fire sends shockwave across supply chains

Raw materials for peak-season garment shipments, medicine ingredients, and telecom equipment gutted

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDDHA, MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and KEERO ADHNAN AHMED

A massive fire that burnt down the import section of the Dhaka airport cargo village has delivered a severe blow to Bangladesh's garment supply chain, threatening to derail peak shipments crucial for the upcoming Christmas sales season.

Exporters fear extensive delivery delays and work order cancellations as the fire gutted almost all imported samples and production accessories stored in the facility -- essential for current production cycles and future seasons.

Industry insiders estimate that the loss from the destruction of products at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) could exceed the initial estimate of \$1 billion.

The Dhaka airport fire was the third incident in a week that raised concerns among businesses, who are encountering a sharp increase in tariffs at the Chattogram port, increased interest rates on loans, high inflation and a slowdown in domestic demand, and a fresh 20 percent tariff on exports to the US, Bangladesh's single biggest market.

At this stage, the airport fire will dent the country's image and give competitors an upper hand.

Businesses said the losses should not be seen simply at the import value of the items that were gutted. The ripple effects of the fire would heavily fall on both export-oriented garment and pharmaceutical industries, as well as businesses focused on the domestic market.

The import cargo zone had everything from a tiny item like lace or other accessories, to spare parts and samples of products sent by buyers to place fresh orders.

Garment exporters' reliance on air freight to meet tight deadlines means the loss is compounded by existing logistical challenges.

Nurul Amin, former vice-president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), warned that air shipment pressure

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» Losses could exceed \$1b, industry insiders say
» Businesses face ripple effects beyond import value of goods
» Temperature-sensitive raw materials for major drugmakers lost



Smoke rising from the charred warehouses in the cargo village area of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday noon, as the fire that broke out there around 2:30pm on Saturday continued to burn 27 hours later. Firefighters managed to fully extinguish the blaze around 5:00pm yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Cargo village fire exposes weak safety systems at HSIA

12-member probe committee formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fire at the cargo village of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has raised serious concerns about the fire safety systems at one of the country's most crucial infrastructure hubs.

The fire, which broke out around 2:30pm on Saturday, raged for nearly 27 hours before it was fully extinguished at 4:55pm yesterday.

The blaze primarily affected the Customs House area in the cargo complex, exposing major lapses in the airport's fire protection systems.

Briefing reporters yesterday, Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (Operations and Maintenance) of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the lack of a fire detection and protection system hindered efforts to contain the flames.

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Gaza truce put to test, Israeli strikes kill 45

AGENCIES

Israel launched a series of deadly strikes in Gaza yesterday and said it was halting aid into the enclave in response to attacks on its forces that killed two soldiers, in the worst violence since the start of a US brokered ceasefire that halted two years of devastating onslaught less than two weeks ago.

Gaza's civil defence agency, which operates under Hamas authority, said at least 45 people had been killed across the territory.

On Sunday evening, the Israeli military said in a statement, "In response to the blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement earlier today [Sunday], the IDF [Israeli military] has begun a series of strikes against Hamas terror targets in the southern Gaza Strip."

Hamas denied the accusations, with one official accusing Israel of fabricating "pretexts" to resume the war.

- Israel and Hamas blame each other for truce violation
- Netanyahu orders 'strong action' against Hamas targets
- Israel suspends the entry of aid into Gaza

In a separate statement, the Israeli military said two of its soldiers "fell during combat in the southern Gaza Strip".

A security official said Israel was also suspending the entry of aid into Gaza, blaming Hamas's "blatant violations" of the ceasefire.

Israel repeatedly cut off aid to the territory during the war, exacerbating dire humanitarian

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

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Police obstruct protesting teachers near the High Court premises during a pre-scheduled "hunger march" towards the Shikkha Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HOUSE RENT HIKE Teachers reject govt's offer, continue protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of MPO-listed non-government schools, colleges and madrasas yesterday continued their protest for the eighth consecutive day, rejecting the government's decision to grant a five percent house rent allowance, or a minimum of Tk 2,000 per month.

They said the new allowance was "a mockery", and warned that they would intensify their movement if their demands were not met.

Earlier in the day, the finance ministry issued a circular approving the new house rent structure, which will take effect on November 1. It clarified that no arrears would be paid under the revised system.

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'We teach, but we can't feed our children'

RAFIUL ISLAM

Mohammad Ishak, who has been teaching at a madrasa in Sylhet for over 34 years, draws a monthly salary of only Tk 26,980 -- hardly enough to support his family and cover the educational expenses of his three children.

He joined fellow teachers at the Central Shaheed Minar on October 17 to press their three-point demand, which includes raising the house rent allowance to 20 percent of the basic salary.

"Even if the government meets the demand, my salary will increase by a mere Tk 3,000... We are being denied a decent life. Still, the government is not paying heed to our justified demands," Ishak told The Daily Star.

His words reflect the frustration of thousands of MPO-listed teachers who have been demonstrating in the capital, saying their salaries are too low to meet the basic needs of their families.

Their other demands include increasing medical allowance to Tk 1,500 from Tk 500, and festival allowance to 75 percent from 50 percent

of basic salary.

The Monthly Pay Order (MPO) is the government's share in the payroll of non-government educational institutions. Under the scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic salaries to teachers of non-government institutions. The teachers also get a small amount a

The agitating teachers said they had no other option but to take to the streets as their income has barely increased over the years, even though living costs have risen sharply.

month as allowances through the MPO.

As per the rules, an educational institution first comes under the MPO scheme and then the government includes the teachers of the institution in the payroll.

At the entry level, a teacher in an MPO-listed institution receives a

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