

Garment makers to form human chain Wednesday to demand security

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The apparel and textile businesses will form a human chain in Dhaka on Wednesday demanding security as the ongoing political violence is disrupting smooth operation of their business.

The decision was taken yesterday at an emergency meeting of the leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association at the BGMEA office in Dhaka.

"Buyers are continuously making queries about the political situation in the country," BGMEA President Atiqul Islam told The Daily Star after the meeting.

READ MORE ON B3

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FROM PAGE B1

A group of US-based garment retailers has threatened to shift work orders from Bangladesh to other destinations if political deadlock does not end soon, Islam had said earlier.

"The retailers said they are thinking of an alternative to Bangladesh as the ongoing blockade is hampering timely shipment of garments," the BGMEA president said, quoting an email he received from some retailers.

January and February are the most important time for garment makers as the entire year's orders are placed during these months, said Reaz-Bin-Mahmood, vice president of the BGMEA.

"So, a business-friendly environment is very important for us," said Mahmood, who was also present at the meeting.

Bangladesh's competitors such as Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka see their garment export growth rising at a faster rate, but Bangladesh's exports were not at the expected level in recent months, he said.

"If the political crisis lingers, we will lose our market share in some key destinations like the US and the EU," Mahmood said.

Meanwhile, eleven garment factories lost \$15.1 million between January 14 and January 24 due to the ongoing blockade, according to an assessment by the BGMEA. The losses include order cancellation, discount, air shipment charges, delayed shipment and excess transportation costs, the BGMEA said.

Tapan Chowdhury, BTMA president, AKM Salim Osman, BKMEA president, and AK Azad, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, also attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, who is also the convenor of Garments Sramik Samannoy Parishad, a trade union, called a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on January 30 to protest the blockade.