

The Daily Star

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 29, 2015

Businesses demand security

*Submit memos to PM,
BNP chief seeking
end to impasse*

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Protesting the ongoing political violence, business leaders and exporters have sought an immediate end to the political impasse to keep the country's economy growing.

The garment makers yesterday submitted memoranda to both the prime minister and the BNP chairperson in this regard.

Before submitting the memoranda, they formed a human chain in front of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Complex in the capital to press home their demands.

A team of businessmen led by BGMEA president Atiqul Islam submitted the memorandum, signed by 10 trade bodies, to the Prime Minister's Office. The trade bodies include Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association

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Businesses demand

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(BKMEA) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), among others.

The four-point memorandum demanded restoration of a business-friendly environment, keeping intact the supply chain of the garment industries, ensuring safety and security of the garment goods and business, and legal actions against those responsible for hurting the industry.

Later, the BGMEA boss, on behalf of the trade bodies, handed over another memorandum to BNP chairperson's adviser MA Qaiyum and her special assistant Shimul Biswas at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

In the memorandum, Atiqul urged the BNP chief to keep the RMG sector out of political programmes like hartal and blockade.

It also called on Khaleda Zia to keep the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and other roads and highways out of the hartal and blockade so that the supply chain is maintained properly.

"We are planning further programmes if the memoranda don't work. We will wait for the responses from the political leaders," Atiqul told The Daily Star.

The BGMEA chief said work orders marked a fall by 30 percent in law few days due to the political instability.

"The retailers have started sending messages to me to know about the orders they have placed. They are worried over the current political situation," Atiqul said.

Reading out messages from some foreign buyers, Atiqul Islam said, "Is there anything we can do to help stop

the violence in Bangladesh? It is really becoming a problem for us and our factories."

Quoting the emails, he said retailers also urged the government to take steps to stop the violence or it will have an impact on the cost and delivery of products. They might even consider placing future orders if the current situation persisted, he added.

"We are already cancelling number of trips for our US merchandisers. This will impact samples, thus impacting where we place products," according to an email.

Many factories will not be able to pay salaries to the workers, and only the bank interest rates will pile up if the situation does not improve as soon as possible, he said.

Expressing concerns over the prevailing political stalemate, Tapan Chowdhury, president of the BTMA, said, "More than five crore people are involved in the garment sector. We took to the streets to save the sector. Please do not give such programmes which will damage the industry."

Helal Uddin, vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), urged the political leaders to resolve the problems as soon as possible through discussions, not through hurting the economy.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, former BGMEA president and A H Aslam Sunny, acting president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, among others, spoke on the occasion.