

COVID-19 Crisis Management of the Readymade Garment Sector in Bangladesh

Sadiat Mannan¹

¹ University of Toronto

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: The research project was initiated along with Mirza M. Hassan. However, M. M. Hassan was unable to be involved substantially after the initiation of the research. Furthermore, there has been a failure in communication with M. M. Hassan after the research was drafted and completed in 2020.

Abstract

The first cases of the virus that has been codenamed coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 in short, were recorded in the city of Wuhan from the Hubei province in China in December, 2019. By March 26, 2020, international retailers cancelled orders worth US\$2.67 billion of garment exports of Bangladesh. Like other states imposing lockdown, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) followed suit by the final week of the month of March and announced a public holiday starting from March 26, 2020. As events transpired the country eventually went into a complete lockdown to curb the spread of the virus. The research paper follows a temporal narrative dividing it in three main sections: National Holidays and Initiating the Industrial Lockdown; Industrial Lockdown Period; and Post- Industrial Lockdown. Against the backdrop of the pandemic and global downturn in economic activity, this research looks into the effects of the contagion on the RMG sector of Bangladesh up and until the end of May, 2020, and assesses how well the GoB has been able to manage the crisis, and in the process provides insights into the demands, health and livelihood of 4.1 million workers that the sector employs.

Introduction

The first cases of the virus that has been codenamed coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 in short, were recorded in the city of Wuhan from the Hubei province in China in December, 2019 (World Health Organisation, 2020). The coronavirus outbreak led to Chinese authorities imposing a lockdown on the Hubei province on January 23, 2020 in a shock move. By the first week of March, China had already hit 80,000 cases, despite the strict lockdown, with majority of the cases coming from Hubei, and overseas shipments fell by 17.2 per cent in the January-February period compared to a year before in addition to recording a 4 per cent fall in imports from a year earlier (KYODO NEWS, 2020; Reuters, 2020).

As the virus outbreak began to spread and claim lives worldwide, in March, 2020 nation-wide or state-wide shutdowns began to emerge in nation-states, particularly in Europe and America. The lockdowns closed borders, and movement of goods as well as people had been greatly restricted not only between nations but also within nations. With the slowdown of economic activity, international buyers and clothing brands responded to the pandemic by cancelling and deferring orders. By March 26, 2020, the beginning of public holidays in Bangladesh to curb the spread of the virus, international retailers cancelled orders worth US\$2.67 billion of garment exports of the country. This amounts to approximately 8 per cent¹ of total garment exports in 2018-19, and affects roughly 1.95 million workers in the Bangladesh readymade garment (RMG) sector (The Daily Star, 2020d).

Like other states imposing lockdown, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) followed suit by the final week of the month of March and announced a public holiday starting from March 26, 2020. As events transpired the country eventually went into a complete lockdown to curb the spread of the virus. Against the backdrop of the pandemic and global downturn in economic activity, *this research looks into the effects of the contagion on the RMG sector of Bangladesh up and until the end of May, 2020, and assesses how well the GoB has been able to manage the crisis, and in the process provides insights into the demands, health and livelihood of 4.1 million workers that the sector employs.*

Structure of the paper

The research paper follows a temporal narrative dividing it in three main sections: National Holidays and Initiating the Industrial Lockdown; Industrial Lockdown Period; and Post- Industrial Lockdown. The first section on the pre- industrial lockdown period covers the events leading up to the industrial lockdown covering initial shutdowns of factories and the April 5 worker incident leading to the 'official' lockdown. The second section is on the period the RMG sector was inoperative covering mainly worker protests and demands, payment of March, 2020 salaries and the process and political economy of lifting the lockdown. The final section covers the major discourse after the lockdown in three separate segments on the Tk 50 billion government stimulus package, worker health and livelihood, and the major tussle between the international buyers and local manufacturers that mainly followed during that period.

Research Methodology

The research mainly utilizes political economy approaches and tools. The analysis is embedded in stakeholder analysis and political mapping to depict the interactions among, but not limited to, the actors: i) international buyers, ii) the central government of Bangladesh (agencies and institutions), iii) the business community (trade bodies and owners), and iv) worker and worker bodies/representatives. The stakeholder analysis helps map the interests, demands and influence of the major players and the political mapping helps identify the political environment and the focal points of decision-making among the actors. The research instruments used for this paper are fieldwork and desk review. During the planning and the drafting stages of the research, industry insiders have been interviewed, questioned and consulted to understand the technical aspects and the political economy relevant to the industry vis-à-vis crisis management. In addition to the consultations, interviews of trade union leaders during the early part of April, 2020 have also been used, originally taken for Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) COVID-19 Rapid Response Research. The research deals with 'current affairs' and was performed during April, 2020 – June, 2020. Thus, literature on the events is sparse. However, research reports and other secondary sources of information such as webinars (web/online seminars) have also been used. The research heavily uses media/newspaper reports in its analysis due to the nature of the research which thoroughly covers the events and the important timeline relevant to the industrial lockdown during the pandemic. Limited interviews / consultation with government officials due to availability, or lack thereof, is a major limitation of the research. The limitation also extends to other secondary sources that were unavailable due to the time period the research was performed and written.

National Holidays and Initiating the Industrial Lockdown

Preceding the National Holidays

Bangladesh reported the first COVID-19 case in March 7, 2020 and within ten days the GoB took the initiative to close all educational institutions for a fortnight (The Daily Star, 2020j, 2020t). However, within a couple of days of the decision Bangladesh recorded its first coronavirus related fatality on March 18 (The Daily Star, 2020i). On the same date, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)², a civil society organization of garment manufacturing owners, sat down with executives of nearly 50 international buyers over the concern of cancellation of orders and putting them on hold due to the reduced sales globally amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The value of cancelled orders stood at US\$93.06 million on that day and concerns regarding payment of salaries and the requirement of large sum of cash in order to pay festival bonuses in May, 2020 were also acknowledged in the meeting. Even though the country recorded its first death, the trade body urging the buyers to not cancel or defer orders shows that there had not been any intent to shut down the RMG sector in order to contain the contagion up and until March 18, 2020 (The Daily Star, 2020x).

Upon marking the first death, a lockdown was being considered as political, cultural and religious gatherings were suspended from March 19, 2020 (The Daily Star, 2020r). The central bank of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bank (BB), foresaw the economic vulnerabilities that the pandemic can bring nationally and opted to freeze the credit status of borrowers to the benefit of the businesses (UNB, 2020d). However, as early as March 20, a major trade union from the garment sector demanded an industrial lockdown to protect the health of the workers in the RMG sector (The Daily Star, 2020ah). The very next day, the state minister for labor and employment sat in a tripartite meeting with leaders of various trade bodies and trade unions, and decided to continue production in the industries after maintaining health safety standards (The Business Standard, 2020d; The Daily Star, 2020q). The state minister again sat with twenty-one labor organizations at the ministry on March 22, with divided response from the trade union leaders where nine of them demanded a lockdown amid the coronavirus crisis (Karmokar, 2020a). Finally, on March 23, 2020 the GoB announced a nation-wide public holiday, starting March 26, announcing closure of all public and private offices, where the armed forces are to be deployed in all 64 districts to maintain a strict lockdown and aid in civil power and contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Mamun, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020s).

Although there has been a demand from labor groups to enforce an industrial lockdown, the announcement to enforce the general holidays did not necessarily include industries, particularly the RMG sector. The prime minister's principal secretary in an announcement stated that the RMG owners will decide at their own discretion whether to keep their factories open or shut down (bdnews24.com, 2020). By March 23, 2020 the sector had already lost US\$1.98 billion in revenues affecting about 1.2 million workers. The president of BGMEA did not take any decisive position and announced on that day that the member factories will have to close on their own if they decide to, and that the trade body does not have any authority over the closure of the factories; only the government has the right (The Daily Star, 2020v).

National holidays and shutdown of factories

On March 26, 2020, the president of BGMEA requested all garment factories to follow the government holiday notice and shut down their factories. However, she retained her stance on the lack of authority the trade body possesses in imposing closure and further requested the open factories to maintain the highest of health standards (The Daily Star, 2020d, 2020h). The body's position created a confusion regarding the lockdown of industries in the media and among workers and trade unions as interviews suggest³, and this forced the state-run Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), concerned authority under the ministry of labor and employment, to come out with a statement on March 27 stating that all factories that are manufacturing protective equipment against coronavirus or working on previous international orders can remain open. The decision was taken in consultation with relevant trade bodies and trade union leaders, where worker representatives conveyed their dissatisfaction towards keeping the factories open (Munni, 2020h; Sultan et al., 2020; The Daily Star, 2020n).

The ground reality was that by the beginning of the holiday, thirty-eight factories had already closed their businesses and laid-off their workers according to the labor law. In fact, the BGMEA recommended closure of factories using the labor law to lay-off workers if there are insufficient work orders from the international buyers. Under such provisions (12 and 16) when workers are laid off, only permanent workers (who have worked for a year and above) receive partial payment when the factories are shut down, and there had been protests where workers have demanded full salary and closure (GoB, 2006; New Age, 2020b). By March 28 workers in most of the factories from the major industrial belts walked out of factories with health and virus outbreak concerns forcing factories to shut down and suspend production (The Daily Star, 2020u). The government decision to keep factories open is highlighted by the prime minister's statement on March 31 where she extended the general holidays beyond April 4 but stated that industries are to remain open during the general holidays (The Daily Star, 2020ai). This was later substantiated by the commerce minister on April 1, 2020 when he specified that factories can remain open if health protocols are maintained (Ahsan & Ovi, 2020; Karmokar, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020ac).

April 5 worker fiasco and initiating the industrial lockdown

Although a significant number of factories had closed during the general holiday period the industrial sector, particularly the RMG, never officially went into lockdown. To restate, the minister for commerce on April 1, 2020 (after the extension of the general holiday beyond April 4) said in a meeting that the RMG sector can reopen from April 5, 2020. The BGMEA withdrew its previous notice on recommending the factories to close after the announcement (Karmokar, 2020a). On the afternoon of April 4, 2020, relevant trade bodies and DIFE decided in a meeting that the factories can open if proper health and safety protocols are maintained (Samad, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020ac). However, despite the BGMEA president reissuing the notice recommending closure of factories, again on the night of April 4, BGMEA member factories in two major regions near the capital decided to reopen and call upon the workers. They claim that they took the decision in line with DIFE instructions (Munni, 2020m; The Business Standard, 2020d).

Following the confusion and lack of definitive directives, on the eve of April 5, 2020 workers from all over the country travelled to the city risking their health amidst restricted public transport (The Daily Star, 2020aj). When the inspector general of DIFE was reached for comments by the media regarding the mass movement of workers and opening of factories he stated that DIFE never had any objections with running the factories as long as health protocols are maintained. The official went on to blame the owners as they could not come to a unified front citing the afternoon meeting held on April 4 (The Daily Star, 2020ac). Even though there is a responsibility on the owners to inform their workers of a shutdown or a resumption in activities, there indeed is some responsibility on DIFE to come out with a definitive statement as they are the concerned authority. However, the BGMEA have indeed been indecisive or, at least, hesitant to come out with a straightforward decision on the industrial lockdown / shutdown of its member factories. The vice president of the other concerned trade body relevant to the sector, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA)⁴, commented on the divisions within the trade bodies and claim that owners, particularly of large enterprises who had work orders, wanted to resume production (ibid.). This lack of unity and dispute between the owners and the trade bodies is further corroborated by insider sources in the industry (Ahsan & Ovi, 2020).

On April 5, 2020, worker representatives from the major trade unions in the industry voiced their concerns and demanded that all factories remain shut. The leaders confirmed the reasons for the workers to come back to work to be to claim their salary for the month of March and in fear of being terminated from work if they do not report (Munni, 2020c, 2020k; New Age, 2020a). Reports from other sources (e.g. Ahsan & Ovi, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020ac) corroborate that the workers have indeed been called upon to join by the owners and that they will be terminated from work if they do

not join. The top leadership from one of the major trade bodies, BKMEA, also verified the claim regarding the payment of the previous month's salary (Ahsan & Ovi, 2020). Additionally, there have been several demonstrations, protests and even vandalism across factories regarding termination of jobs, and demanding payment of salaries and immediate closure for health and safety reasons (e.g. Rita, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020k). Thus, following the serious demands from both the labor leaders and the workers themselves to close the factories, the BGMEA and BKMEA members held a meeting and decided on closure on April 5. The BGMEA came out with a statement to enforce immediate closure of its member factories, and only factories who are producing protective equipment for the virus and have *urgent* orders can remain open but by informing their respective associations, along with the industrial police and DIFE (Munni, 2020f, 2020k; The Daily Star, 2020k).

The April 5 incident led to the trade bodies, particularly BGMEA, to come out in a unified front for the first time since the outbreak and decide to enforce closures. This is the first evidence that factories needed to inform the authorities in addition to their respective trade bodies if they wanted to continue production. DIFE, the relevant authority, did not come out with any new statements or announcements regarding closures and stuck to their initial statement even after the industrial lockdown was initiated starting April 6, 2020. The lockdown has been successful as only 54 units registered with BGMEA and 10 units registered with BKMEA were open after the decision, and shows the authority of the trade body over the relevant government body, DIFE, who continued its announcement well into April, 2020 that factories can remain open if they are producing protective equipment or have international orders bearing little to no effect on the shutdown of the industry (Munni, 2020f). The April 5 'worker fiasco' showed the lack of initiative of the state in enforcing an industrial lockdown to protect the health of the workers and also the vulnerability of BGMEA that otherwise works in a unified front.

Industrial Lockdown Period

Lockdown and worker demands

Munni (2020f) of the national newspaper Financial Express, citing insiders, reports on April 8, 2020 that after the decision to enforce lockdown by the trade bodies "a total of 546 industrial units, including 98 textile and apparel were open out of the 7,602 factories located in six industrial zones" (ibid.). Previously a quarter of the factories in the zones were open, with majority of RMG factories still operating in the important manufacturing belts (see Munni, 2020m). On that day, the trade groups requested their members to pay the salary for the month of March by April 16. In addition to echoing the trade bodies' request with a press release, the commerce minister further requested the factory owners to not terminate any jobs (Munni, 2020f; The Daily Star, 2020m). Furthermore, BGMEA came out with a statement on April 10 stating that the industrial lockdown is extended till April 25, 2020 in line with the extended public holidays to curb the spread of the virus. However, if factories want to open to disburse wages or make other payments they will have to inform the associations and the government authorities (Financial Express, 2020h). This shows the associations' initiative that had been lacking prior to the April 5 worker incident.

By April 12, 2020 there have been reports from insiders in the industry that factories have been laying-off workers and terminating jobs. There has been a 'plea' from the government to not terminate any jobs, but businesses have been found to reduce their expenses amidst a halt in economic activity and cancellation of orders by international buyers. A trade union leader claim that about 3,000 workers have been retrenched in one factory alone. He further notes that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of garment workers are not employed on a permanent basis and laying off workers legally means that they will not be paid during the period. Union leaders brought up the issue of wages and mentioned that with the bi-annual Muslim festival, Eid, coming up, such mass termination and lay-off will destabilize the workers and can lead to demonstrations and protests. The industrial police and DIFE claim that they are putting pressure on owners to not terminate jobs. However, it should be noted that the president of BGMEA who had previously recommended lay-offs, now under pressure from the stakeholders including rights groups requested the members against such actions, albeit terming the lay-offs lawful (Munni, 2020b).

Starting from April 13, 2020, thousands of workers demonstrated, took to the streets and protested job terminations and non-payment of March wages and arrears (e.g. The Daily Star, 2020ag, 2020al). On that day the state minister for labor and employment, issued a notice stating that legal actions will be taken if businesses failed to pay the March salaries by April 16 (Prothom Alo, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020aa). Nevertheless, the worker movements raged on for four consecutive days with similar demands (Munni, 2020i; Prothom Alo, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020z, 2020ad, 2020ag, 2020ak, 2020al). There are reports of forceful terminations and increasing legal lay-offs, which invariably contributes to destabilizing the workforce. It is important to note that factories operate without cash and buyers pay after goods are sold, and a shutdown dries up the cashflow of the labor-intensive sector where wages take up a large proportion of the working capital (BIGD, 2020a). Under such difficult conditions, Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) alone reported that five to ten factories were applying for lay-offs to the authorities during that period (Haque, 2020; Sayem, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020ak).⁵ On April 16, 2020 a worker rights group protested mass terminations, non-payment of wages and factory lay-offs during the holidays, and claim that approximately 30,000 workers had been terminated/suspended or forced to resign from factories (Munni, 2020i).

March, 2020 wages and further movements

As of April 16, 2020, the industrial police reported that about a quarter of the RMG factories failed to meet the deadline for the payment of March, 2020 salaries and wages (Munni, 2020i). On April 14, resonating the state minister's notice the day before, DIFE issued another notice that alongside litigation, licenses of factories who have not paid the wages by April 16 will be suspended and not renewed for the upcoming fiscal year. Additionally, DIFE chose to use its own manpower using its inspectors from its 23 zonal offices to make the list of the defaulters. DIFE, on April 18, 2020, sent a list of 370 units, including RMG units, who have not paid within the deadline to the labor and employment ministry. This is in stark contrast to the total of 2,036 factories reported by the industrial police (Munni, 2020a; Prothom Alo, 2020a). This shows a lack of coordination between the institutions, and an industry insider suggests that the industrial police data is not exaggerated and valid. The result that follows is that an overly underestimated number of businesses are held accountable as the labor ministry is going to take legal actions following the DIFE list.⁶

There have been continued protests reported on the day of the deadline, demanding against delayed wages and termination of workers, validating that a significant number of businesses had not paid the salary of workers on time (Munni, 2020i; Prothom Alo, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020ad). Up and until the end of the lockdown (April 25, 2020), there have been repeated demands and even demonstration from union leaders and worker organizations to stop mass termination of workers, paying wages in full and on time, and stopping lay-offs (Financial Express, 2020d; Munni, 2020e; Prothom Alo, 2020c). Overall, such demands have been on the forefront of worker and worker leader demands, taking protests up and until the latter stages of the lockdown (e.g. Financial Express, 2020c). In time of crisis, the workers need complete job security and full payment of their wages that is denied by forceful terminations and lay-offs, brought about by lack of and cancellation of international orders due to the pandemic. Mass gatherings, protests and demonstrations invariably puts the lives of workers at risk; the workers who have previously demanded shutdowns upon health concerns during the April 5 worker fiasco. However, as the narrative suggest, the very same workers are willing to put their lives on the line and take to the streets in order to secure their livelihood.

The political economy of lifting the industrial lockdown

In mid-April when there had been talks of lifting the lockdown in Europe and America (e.g. BBC, 2020; FRANCE24, 2020; Godin, 2020), the BGMEA announced on April 15, 2020 that the sector will resume operations starting April 25, 2020, in order to “save the sector from being doomed” (Rahaman, 2020). The president of BGMEA told the press that work orders worth over US\$3 billion have already been lost and competitors like Cambodia and Vietnam having their factories open has put pressure on Bangladesh to remain competitive (ibid.). There was clear intent from the trade body to reopen as they also sent a petition to the state-owned transport corporation, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC), chairperson on that day to arrange for adequate number of buses so that the RMG workers can travel (Mirdha, 2020f). However, the next day the director general of the health directorate issued a circular rendering the country to be at risk of the pandemic and stating that containing the virus will not be possible (Financial Express, 2020b).⁷ Following the statement, the trade body withdrew their statement and their plans to reopen, stating that the sector will be reopened in agreement with all relevant stakeholders when the situation improves (Financial Express, 2020b; Mirdha, 2020f).

In the meantime, the inspector general of DIFE informed the national newspaper The Daily Star (reported by Mirdha, 2020d) over the phone on April 21, 2020 that DIFE was working on guidelines to reopen the factories, but stated that they will only reopen after the government announces the return of normalcy. The same report (ibid.) provides views of worker representatives on the matter of reopening and their views remained divided with comments by a politically left leaning union leader opting for closure and a mainstream union leader acknowledging the issue of cancelled and deferred orders and the pressure to open. On April 23, the government extended the general holidays until May 5 in a gazette notification but with the one of the exceptions being export-oriented industries, bar maintaining health and safety protocols (UNB, 2020b). It is clearly evident that the relevant and important stakeholders have been preparing to open up shop despite state agencies and institutions marking the country ‘risky’.⁸

Finally, on April 25, 2020, the day after the highest infection was recorded in a day till date (503 infections on April 24, 2020) the BGMEA announced in favor of opening the sector in a zone-wise and staggered approach (in limited capacity) only with workers within the vicinity of the factories to prevent mass migration in order to contain the spread of the coronavirus (Financial Express, 2020i; IEDCR, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020f). There was a meeting held on the same date by the apex trade body Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FBCCI)⁹, attended by business leaders, media editors, economists and policymakers where the prime minister’s private sector advisor argued for opening up the sector for the sake of the economy citing examples of states and regions that have done so in the face of high infections and outbreak (The Daily Star, 2020o; UNB, 2020c). It should be noted that no worker representatives or organizations attended the meeting, who are pivotal to safeguarding the health and livelihood of the workers. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that the economy have played the most important role in lifting the industrial lockdown, where even workers’ (economic) livelihood did not come into consideration. However, it was proposed that the lockdown is to be lifted gradually and with health protocols developed by the government agencies and relevant trade bodies with adequate training of key executives and workers to protect lives.

The gradual lifting of lockdown and workers’ response

The important takeaways from the lifting of industrial lockdown schedule are that it needs to be zone-wise to open in a systematic manner to avoid spread; staggered i.e. different sections of the factories are to reopen at different times to avoid risk of transmission; at a limited (30 per cent) capacity to enable social distancing; and only with workers from the surrounding vicinity to avoid mass migration like that of the April 5, 2020 incident (Financial Express, 2020i; Munni, 2020j; The Daily Star, 2020f; UNB, 2020a). However, on April 26 workers from all over the country were found travelling to the major industrial belts (e.g. Munni, 2020g; The Daily Star, 2020f; UNB, 2020f).

The government and relevant organizations and institutions failed in its responsibility to come out with effective statements and measures to prohibit such migration and should have been better equipped considering a similar event have occurred risking the health and lives of workers in the beginning of the month. According to trade union leaders, factory owners called upon their workers from different regions, against instructions from the trade bodies and the government, and workers were threatened with termination if they had not reported (Munni, 2020g). These are similar accusations to the events during the reopening of factories in April 5, 2020. However, during research, it is also corroborated by industry insiders that it is a common practice for factories to penalize workers in such fashions if they do not show up for work during reopening after any breaks or holidays.

Since the resumption of operations on April 26, 2020, there have been worker protests with the usual mandates of termination of jobs, in addition to demanding arrears. However, what is interesting to note is that some workers demanded reopening factories and some demanded closure. There have been a division in demands, but the nature of the demand depends on the health conditions, and lay-offs and terminations. Reports suggest that when workers found that their jobs were at risk due to lay-offs and shutdowns they opted to secure their livelihood by calling for reopening and when workers felt there were health risks but their livelihoods are secure they called for closure of operations (see Prothom Alo, 2020e; The Daily Star, 2020f, 2020o, 2020w). The health standards and protocols were clearly not maintained as BGMEA had issued a notice mentioning an account of vandalism by 4,000 workers in a factory for the lack of health safety and the trade body requested all factories to abide by the directives of the trade body and the GoB (Munni, 2020j). Besides, there have been demonstrations, protests and vandalism up and until May 3, 2020 demanding better safety protocols and closure of factories (e.g. J. Uddin, 2020b).

In addition to the evidence of disregard for health protocols provided by the BGMEA notice, newspaper reports (e.g. Karmokar, 2020b) provide further indications of factories running at a higher capacity than the one set by the government and the trade bodies. As of May 7, 2020, a CED (2020) report, in a survey of three major industrial districts surrounding and including the capital district, finds that about 55 per cent¹⁰ of all industries surveyed are operating between 40 per cent and full capacity. The factories are to operate at 30 per cent capacity up and until May 2 and at 50 per cent later on in the second phase provided gradual reopening is successful in the first phase (Karmokar, 2020b). The national newspaper Prothom Alo (ibid.) further reports that health conditions and social distancing are far from optimal at factories running at even 50 per cent capacity. Clearly, there have been violation of rules and that the schedule to protect the workers from COVID-19 transmission have not been followed.¹¹

Furthermore, there has been a clear failure in reopening taking a zone-wise approach as data suggests that at least 238 RMG units opened in the first day on April 26 in regions that were planned to resume production in the second phase in early May (Munni, 2020g). Additionally, coronavirus hotspot regions also lifted the lockdown and resumed production starting from the opening day (The Daily Star, 2020a, 2020o). BGMEA insiders claim that factories that operated beyond the allocated zones informed their trade bodies and the relevant government authority, DIFE, at the initial stages, but the state minister for home affairs stated on April 28, 2020 that the government is taking actions to prevent workers from travelling to the city from their villages (Munni, 2020g; The Daily Star, 2020ab).

Soon after, a top BGMEA leader, seeking anonymity, stated that there have been failures in implementing both the zone-wise and staggered approaches to lifting the lockdown. The inspector general of DIFE added that there are discrepancies with complete compliance by factory owners in lifting the industrial lockdown (Mirdha, 2020g). Within a couple of days on May 2, 2020 DIFE seemed to have abandoned its plans to enforce the guidelines as workers were permitted to enter the city using their identification cards at ferry terminals and entry points, despite the state minister’s comments (UNB, 2020h). In sum, the gradual and systematic lifting of the industrial lockdown, or lack thereof, is well elucidated by an economist¹², who had been involved in stakeholder meetings during the

planning stages of lifting the industrial lockdown, dubbing the process a failure and stating, "We have messed it up" (Mirdha, 2020e).

Post- Industrial Lockdown

Stimulus Package

The day the general holidays was announced, on March 23, 2020 the finance minister stated that a rescue package is on the way (Byron & Rahman, 2020). The very next day the prime minister in her national address announced a Tk 50 billion stimulus package for the export-oriented industries "to fight the adverse impact of coronavirus on the country's economy" (UNB, 2020g). The money will be used to pay the salaries and wages of workers and employees (ibid.). On April 2, 2020 the central bank issued a circular with details of the stimulus package stipulating that the employers will receive an interest-free loan with the sole objective to pay salaries and wages for up to three months. The responsibility will be with scheduled banks to requisition the loan from BB and disburse the amounts directly to the workers through bank transfers or through mobile financial service (MFS) accounts. The deadline to submit loan applications was set on April 20 (BB, 2020a). The BB issued another circular on April 8 clarifying that only workers (excluding officers) defined under the Bangladesh labor law (i.e. except at managerial or administrative capacity) will be eligible for the payment (BB, 2020b; GoB, 2006).

The initial reaction to the package has been positive from the business community as the BGMEA president went on the record and thanked the premier of the state for the economic incentive on March 25, 2020 (Ovi, 2020). However, this is before the first BB circular was issued and clarified officially that the stimulus package is a loan. This is important to note because the president showed her discontent while talking to the media on April 15 regarding reopening the industrial economy and said that the body cannot afford to pay salaries using the package as they are loans and the employers will have to pay the money back (Rahaman, 2020). The announcement of the package was made when the crisis started and the reaction of the trade union leaders and workers were also positive. Interviews with union leaders (during first and second week of April, 2020) revealed their relief as this guaranteed payment of salaries and wages of the workers (see BIGD, 2020b). However, considering the president of the trade body on March 25 revealed that the salary of 4.1 million workers for a month is Tk 40 billion and the package extends to export-oriented industries, the adequacy and coverage of the stimulus package for the workers becomes questionable (Ovi, 2020).

The Daily Star (reported by Byron & Uddin, 2020) published on April 22, 2020 that a minimum of ten industry bodies applied for loans under the package to the finance ministry and the central bank. Industry insiders reveal, corroborated by Financial Express (2020e) report, that the government decided that the package only applies to the members of the BGMEA and BKMEA. However, later additional industries (e.g. Type C) were added to the list for eligibility of receiving funds from the stimulus package (Byron & Uddin, 2020). It was initially decided in a meeting on April 22 presided over by the cabinet secretary in addition to the prime minister's principal secretary and former and serving presidents of trade bodies that workers will receive only 60 per cent of their salaries during the shutdown period. The decision was finalized on meetings held on April 28 and 29 with representation from trade union leaders, where majority of the council-affiliated unions boycotted the meeting on April 29 protesting the wage-cut. However, it was decided on the second week of May that the percentage is to be increased to 65 per cent (the additional 5 per cent of April to be paid with May wages) after demands by union leaders (Mirdha, 2020b; Munni, 2020). Even with a reduction in wages and limited coverage the total amount claimed by 38 lending institutions is over half of the total package clearly depicting the inadequacy of the financial stimulus that is to bear three months' wages of the 'export-oriented industries' (A. Z. Uddin, 2020).¹³

Trade union leaders, during interviews and also echoed by labor group participants during a webinar held by BIGD (2020a), conveyed their skepticism towards owners as they fear that the funds disbursed by the package are liable to be misused. They predict that businesses will apply for the loans at no interest for salary payment (except for a 2 per cent service charge to the banks) and invest the capital for themselves / in their own enterprises. However, as the wages are paid directly from the banks to the workers' MFS or bank accounts with cross-checking and verification using national identification, there is very little opportunity for misappropriation of the funds (see BIGD, 2020a, 2020b). Nevertheless, complete transparency and dissemination of the lists can enforce some degree of accountability, and when a government representative from the concerned authority was asked in the webinar if it will be possible to make the list available publicly, he stated that it should be possible provided the central government gives permission (BIGD, 2020a). No measure has been taken to ensure the transparency till the writing of this research.

Trade union leaders also opined that there can be problems in opening MFS accounts of a vast number of workers within the given time period, and a BGMEA survey reveals that only 9 per cent of the RMG workers are paid through MFS and only 4 per cent through banks (BIGD, 2020b; Mirdha, 2020h). To account for any delays, the central bank decided to extend the deadline by six days on the account that workers are still in villages, do not have proper identification or cannot be reached. By then, nearly 2 million MFS accounts had already been opened and no issues were found in disbursing the salaries to the workers of the eligible businesses on deadline day (Mirdha, 2020c).¹⁴ Trade union leaders also mentioned that workers who are on a probationary period or work on a contractual basis will not be listed, in addition to the concerns that there are a large number of workers who work at smaller businesses that renders them ineligible and has negative repercussions on their livelihoods (BIGD, 2020b). Concerns of scattered inclusion of workers in the package have also been brought up in a CPD (2020) webinar.

It has been evident so far that when it comes to matters of personal safety and livelihood workers raise their voice, and in this particular case through demonstrations, protests and even vandalism. Workers and their representatives have shown their dissatisfaction against lay-offs and demanded some form of accountability as it affects their livelihood. The central government through the finance division of the finance ministry issued a notice around the third week of April among protests and demands from union leaders to make the laid-off export factories ineligible for the Tk 50 billion stimulus package (Munni, 2020d). However, protests still persisted amidst mass terminations and lay-offs, with questionable health protocols during the post- industrial lockdown period. It is worth mentioning that after salary of April, 2020, which was partially due to the shutdown, was disbursed through the package, newspaper scanning shows no protests to shut down factories any longer, where workers have protested and voiced such demands for lack of health and safety measures. This may be due to the fact that workers are not willing to sacrifice economic security and livelihood over the risk of the contagion. The following section looks at the workers' welfare and livelihood in the form of demands and maintenance of health protocols by mapping the events following the end of the industrial lockdown of the RMG sector.

Workers' welfare and livelihood: demands, health and social distancing

When the general holidays were first announced, BGMEA insiders reported that, although factories are to maintain health safety protocols when they want to continue production, there have been little compliance between the owners and the workers (Byron & Mirdha, 2020). In mid-April when workers were being paid their March wages the additional superintendent of police at the industrial police headquarters stated that it is not possible to make the factory workers practice social distancing, even when the police try (Mirdha, 2020i). Trade union leaders interviewed during the lockdown month have all revealed their reluctance to resume operations and fear for workers as it is a daunting task to maintain social distancing in factories (Sultan et al., 2020). Thus, it is abundantly clear that the decision to, at the very least, train the executives and workers that was decided on April 25, 2020 meeting is absolutely necessary, but (as seen in the section on lifting the lockdown) factories opened against the schedule and with invariably no time to implement the rule. The intention and effort to pursue with training is also questionable as there has been no reports regarding

such activities till the time of writing this research.

Industry insider information additionally reveals that social distancing in the RMG sector is not feasible and practical in factories running at high capacity¹⁵ Some factories have dense seating arrangements and for some it is not possible to change the worker arrangements due to limitations in space and ones set by production-lines (Mirdha, 2020i). As decided, running at a lower capacity is a solution to the problem but the research has already revealed that haphazard and unsystematic opening has prevented such measures. In addition to the evidence already provided, Financial Express (2020g) reports that even at the initial stages, when workers rushed in, whether contracting the virus or not, the factories were running at 60 to 70 per cent of their capacity making the factories highly susceptible to the infection. Within two days of detecting the first coronavirus infections in the RMG sector, the health minister after a decision taken by an inter-ministerial meeting held on May 3, 2020 states that factories are to be shut down if a large number of coronavirus cases are detected (The Daily Star, 2020p). On May 11 industrial police data shows fifty-eight workers are infected and by the Eid festival holidays at least 142 workers tested positive for the COVID-19 virus,¹⁶ with no signs or indications from the government or the business community to close the factories and the sector (Mirdha, 2020e; The Business Standard, 2020a). Such high infection rates clearly show the vulnerability of the sector and breach of health and hygiene measures and protocols.

After the industrial lockdown, the BGMEA and DIFE claim that they are active in maintaining health protocols to prevent the spread of the virus and both institutions have arranged for teams to audit the factories. The BGMEA team, comprising of BGMEA personnel, that has audited a total of 508 factories up and until May 11, out of which 492 have been found satisfactory (there is no update on factories audited as of the second week of June, 2020). The audit report needs to be exhaustive especially during such a dire crisis, but it is far from it considering it only contains yes or no responses to six parameters/questions relating to wearing masks, hand washing/sanitizing, cleaning feet while entering, presence of a thermal meter, social distancing and cleanliness (BGMEA, 2020a). Additionally, Financial Express (2020g) could not confirm the identities of the BGMEA auditors with the trade body for questions. On May 2, 2020 DIFE formed fifty committees to inspect two industrial regions including the capital city, but with discussion with the inspector general of the institution he admitted that it is difficult to run factories at lower capacities as workers demand work (J. Uddin, 2020b). On May 7, a DIFE official verified the inspection of factories in two regions at a webinar, despite industries operating in various zones all over the country (BIGD, 2020a). On May 21, 2020 the health ministry directed formation of committees (that include bureaucrats, people representatives and trade body members) at the regions that include all RMG factories to inspect if health safety guidelines are maintained (The Business Standard, 2020e); perhaps acknowledging the failures of the other groups/teams in the wake of infections and spreading of the virus.

The industrial police record shows a total of 444 incidents of worker demonstrations in the month of April, including the RMG sector, mainly demanding payments but as the narrative suggests also protesting retrenchments and demanding closure of factories for lack of health standards (Munni, 2020n). The lockdown politics leading to reactions from workers in the form of mass movement, protests and acts of vandalism clearly puts the health of the workers and lives of others at risk. It has been already covered that workers stopped demanding closures after the announcement of partial payment of April wages on May 3, 2020 that threaten their economic livelihood is this time of crisis. However, workers further protested, putting health and lives at risk, the government decision of wage-cut for the month of April, 2020 in addition to 50 per cent festival bonus to be paid after the Eid holidays, and in large numbers: 10,000 workers protested on May 9 demanding full payment of gross salaries for April (The Daily Star, 2020ae); 4,000 workers protested for a second day demanding full pay on May 10; 3,000 workers demonstrated demanding reduction in house-rent against wage-cut on May 10 (The Daily Star, 2020af); 10,000 workers protested and vandalized demanding full payment of April wages and festival allowances on May 13 (The Daily Star, 2020b); and 25,000 workers protested demanding full festival bonus, reopening of factories and partial salaries for the month of May on May 21. In addition to these claims that clearly shows that workers need economic security and livelihood guarantee, there have also been protests against retrenchment, job terminations, demanding arrears (e.g. The Business Standard, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020af; UNB, 2020e). Workers livelihood has indeed been at high risk as a research finds that workers have been found to take personal loans and had severe troubles in paying for house-rent, utilities and schooling of children (CPD, 2020). Finally, on May 20, 2020 BGMEA came out with a notice on the account of mass uprising and vandalism in factories demanding salaries and festival allowances. The trade body threatened that the factories will shut down if the behavior persists without payment of wages during the inactive period (Prothom Alo, 2020d). Insider information reports that a large-scale factory with thousands of workers has indeed enforced a legal shutdown under provision 13 of the labor law terming the strike illegal and under the provision the owner need not pay wages to the workers (see GoB, 2006). The notice further states that owners are unable to pay the salaries due to cancellation of orders (Prothom Alo, 2020d). International orders, or lack thereof, has indeed affected the sector with buyers cancelling and backing off from orders over the period of the pandemic.

Global dimension: tussle between the international buyers and local RMG

As of April 29, 2020, BGMEA (2020b) official data shows a cancellation/suspension of orders worth US\$3.18 billion affecting 2.18 million workers. After the industrial lockdown, although affecting about half of export-oriented factories, Financial Express (2020g) reports that a quarter of them could not reopen due to lack of orders with either temporary or permanent shutdowns. The problem of payment with orders affects the RMG industries bearing effects on the working capital and perpetually salaries of workers in three-folds: payments delayed for up to a year for orders that are already in stores, discounts of up to 50 per cent on agreed prices for orders that are lying at ports and prices of future orders slashed by up to 30 per cent on future orders (Haque, 2020). Upon cancellation of orders, on April 27 the commerce minister called upon the UK government to support the manufacturing industry (Nazir, 2020). However, upon requests from both the state and the trade bodies and manufacturers, retailers generally respond by stating that they are in contact with suppliers and are in the process of working out matters when approached by the media (e.g. Cline, 2020; The Daily Star, 2020c).¹⁷ On April 22, 2020 CNN (reported by Wright & Saeed, 2020) reports that retailers like H&M, Walmart and Primark have agreed to pay their suppliers in part or in full amid the crisis.

The issue of orders being cancelled and/or deferred came to the forefront in May after the industrial lockdown was lifted as the business community took to the media. International rights groups also became active as an anti-fast fashion rights group, Remake, through its social media campaign (#PayUp) targeted retailers for not paying up to the suppliers and demanding discounts. Walmart (Asda) and Primark, who have previously committed to their suppliers, along with others were targeted by the rights group. Remake enjoyed some success as the group has been able to make retailers like Tesco and Marks & Spencer agree to pay their suppliers in full (Cline, 2020; Hawthorne, 2020). At the same time, H&M, who has assured manufacturers from as early as March that they will stick to their commitment to pay, has also been found to make a U-turn as reported by Financial Express (2020a) on May 24, 2020 (The Daily Star, 2020x). Around the same time, BGMEA (reported after the move by Remake) has also been found to engage international rights groups to pressure international buyers to pay the manufacturers in full and also regarding severe discounts (Mirdha, 2020a). However, the national newspaper Dhaka Tribune (2020) reports on May 25, 2020, BGMEA through a letter sent on May 21, 2020 also acted directly against a buyer, Edinburgh Woollen Mill (EWM) group, by threatening an embargo if the group does not pay its outstanding dues (worth £6.76 million) by May 29. The EWM group retorted on May 25, 2020 claiming that BGMEA only sent the letter after publishing the news in the Bangladesh media and stated that it has left with a "very bitter taste in their mouth" (ibid.), albeit claiming that they are working with their suppliers to pay the remainder of the dues. The BGMEA extended the deadline to June 5, 2020 towards the end of the month, perhaps showing that there is room for negotiations even after the ultimatum (J. Uddin, 2020a).

The pandemic has put the global economy under severe pressure, with Bangladesh apparel exports fetching a mere US\$378.40 million in April down from an already hurt US\$2.26 billion in March,

2020 (The Daily Star, 2020e). Although demand for goods have gone up, with the garment industry being heavily reliant on payments after shipments, there is some degree of responsibility of the international buyers to adhere to their contracts, and at the very least look beyond their business and acknowledge that the suppliers require the payments, not only for the sake of sustenance of business relations and operations for decades but also for the workers they employ. There is a degree of responsibility on the global businesses and actors to support the millions of workers that are finding their livelihood challenged and difficult to make ends meet during one of the worst global health crises ever witnessed. However, till date the European Union (EU) have proposed that they may sanction a €90 million grant supporting one million Bangladeshi RMG workers for three months. The relevant parties are in talks and there is a possibility that the grant may be further increased to €500 million (J. Uddin, 2020c).

Concluding remarks

There is no doubt that the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting global lockdown has significantly reduced the profits of retailers and businesses with buying capacity contracting in all parts of the world. However, the burden needs to be shared and the most vulnerable, particularly the workers in this case, are needed to be taken care of, first and foremost. The international buyers have not only been found to cancel orders due to a dip in demand during the pandemic but also demand unreasonable discounts that have put the local manufacturers at risk of sustenance and paying the hefty salaries of the workers. There is a responsibility on all parties to reallocate funds from elsewhere to pay for the destitute, and it is not a far-fetched idea as Remake reports that Walmart (Asda) despite reporting profits from food sales during the pandemic have decided on non-payments and unreasonable discounts from their suppliers (The Business Standard, 2020c).

The international buyers remain the most influential among the actors who have found to have acted collectively to demand a cut in prices of the products that barely covers the manufacturing cost and payment of salaries, forcing businesses in Bangladesh beyond sustenance. Foreign nations, particularly the EU, have been found to act responsibly with the promise of some form of assistance to the workers in Bangladesh, having already distributed grants to Myanmar, but there is no evidence of nation-states to enforce the retailers to pay up and share their profits with their suppliers (J. Uddin, 2020c). Additionally, international rights groups, particularly Remake, have been found to hold the retailers accountable, but there needs to be further involvement of other such groups, particularly international worker unions, to hold the buyers accountable and provide for an equitable income distribution to the workers.

At the national front, the business community remains the most influential with their capacity going to the extent of pivotal decision-making relating to the industrial lockdown: enforcing and lifting of it. The government authorities are found to support the RMG sector and aide in its operations. The initial stimulus package of Tk 50 billion, although directed towards workers, have been to support the businesses and contribute greatly to their working capital, particularly big businesses with strong relations to the banking institutions and sector (see BIGD, 2020b; CPD, 2020). There has been some degree of influence and autonomy by the workers as evident from the April 5, 2020 worker fiasco, which led to enforcing an industrial lockdown vis-à-vis a severe health crisis. Although trade unions and worker groups demanded a lockdown and shutdown of factories it is not until the workers protested that the industrial lockdown actually went into action. However, despite protests the business community, with evidence of influencing the government, lifted the lockdown and pushed the workers in a corner where livelihood concerns take the forefront over severe health concerns. The economy has taken priority over health and safety, and workers have been marginalized even with partial payments that have bearing effects on their livelihood.

The general holidays have been called off starting May 31, 2020, and after the Eid holidays when the economy resumed job terminations have been found in the RMG sector. The union leaders sought legal actions in a petition to the ministry of labor, but the BGMEA came out with a statement in the media that, with work orders expected to take a hit of up to US\$5 billion, job-cuts and terminations are inevitable (Prothom Alo, 2020b; The Business Standard, 2020b, 2020f). Protests and blockades have been evident as the state-run DIFE came out with a statement requesting owners to not terminate workers or it will lead to further movements and uprisings (The Daily Star, 2020l). It is the responsibility of the state to acknowledge that "business" is dependent on profit and any excess will always be dealt with by cutting costs. Upon the pandemic and the worst global recession expected to hit us all, businesses are bound to become apprehensive and let go of workers leading to surging unemployment. People will be inevitably losing their jobs and the government needs to provide incentives to businesses for workers to retain their jobs and direct benefits, arguably cash, needs to be given to the unemployed in order to provide some form of security to the most affected and provide overall stability to the workforce and the people.

Additionally, lifting of the lockdown has been premature at the very least with national COVID-19 infection cases soaring in Bangladesh. As Osmani (2020) discusses in a BIGD-IGC-GED webinar, in order for a sector or the economy to open the state needs to make sure that there are no infections in the workforce. In order to ensure that the testing regime needs to be strong, he calculates the number of tests to be insufficient by an overwhelming margin in Bangladesh. Additionally, there needs to be contact tracing and measures for quarantine to ensure that no worker is within the vicinity or in contact with the infection; on top of testing being done on the same sample every two weeks to keep the workforce safe. Undoubtedly, the contagion needs to be contained until and even after the peak infection rates are witnessed or until a more permanent solution, like a vaccine, surfaces. All-in-all a sector or the economy cannot open with workers that are infected, or it will put the lives of others at risk. With the risk of repetition, the responsibility is not upon one stakeholder but government bodies, rights and worker groups, and the business community, both local and international, need to work together for minimizing risks and provide for the vulnerable. Otherwise, the pandemic will not only bear upon the workers but the whole society, including the economy, in the short- and the long- run.

Statements and Declarations

COI: The research project was initiated along with Mirza M. Hassan. However, M. M. Hassan was unable to be involved substantially after the initiation of the research. Furthermore, there has been a failure in communication with M. M. Hassan after the research was drafted and completed in 2020.

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

The research was performed and written between April 2020 and June 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown period (in Bangladesh). Thus, material and policy implications/recommendations may be subject to time sensitivity.

Acknowledgments

The author, Sadiat Mannan, thanks Mirza M. Hassan for being involved during the brainstorming period of the research and exchanging some newspaper reports over the period of the research (up to and including May, 2020). Additionally, the author, S.M., thanks members and/or personnel of Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) for providing the author with BIGD COVID-19 Rapid Response Research interviews and research reports. Finally, the author also acknowledges BIGD researchers for sharing and exchanging newspaper reports regarding worker protests mined

during April, 2020.

Footnotes

- ¹ Calculation based on BGMEA (2020c) data.
- ² Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) is one of the largest trade associations in Bangladesh and represents the readymade garment industry.
- ³ In fact, the view that the industrial lockdown officially began on March 26, 2020 is widely believed.
- ⁴ Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association or BKMEA is the trade association or the civil society association of owners of the knitwear sector of Bangladesh.
- ⁵ A BIGD research done between April 5 and April 13 finds that "half of the respondents did not know whether they still have their jobs since they were on forced leave without pay" (The Daily Star, 2020g) illustrating their uncertainty with respect to job security and economic livelihood.
- ⁶ According to Financial Express (2020f), as of April 22, 2020, the industrial police reported that a total of 770 units had not paid the salary for the month of March, 2020. This number is significantly higher than the one sent by DIFE to the labor and employment ministry well before the date.
- ⁷ It should be noted that after the statement DIFE also marked the country as 'risky'.
- ⁸ See IEDCR (2020) for high infection rates during that period (roughly third week of April).
- ⁹ Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FBCCI) is the apex trade body representing the private sector of Bangladesh.
- ¹⁰ Calculation from CED (2020) report.
- ¹¹ See the section on post- industrial lockdown for more on workers' health and social distancing.
- ¹² The economist is formerly from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and currently the executive director of a Bangladesh-based think-tank Policy Research Institute (PRI).
- ¹³ Additionally, it should be noted that only select export-oriented businesses with existing strong relationships with the banking institution are selected for the loan package and not the whole industry (CPD, 2020).
- ¹⁴ CPD (2020) research finds 3 million MFS accounts opened by May 2, 2020 in the RMG sector.
- ¹⁵ This is one of the reasons of a staggered approach opening sections with greater distance between workers and then opening other sections when it is verified that no worker has contracted the virus.
- ¹⁶ There may be an underestimation of reported cases as a trade union compiled data on infected cases in the RMG sector totaling 96 workers on May 7 in the sector, versus a count of 58 by the industrial police on May 11, 2020 (Mirdha, 2020e; The Daily Star, 2020y).
- ¹⁷ At times, some international buyers have also been found to not be able to be reached for comments.

References

- Ahsan, N., & Ovi, I. H. (2020, April 5, 2020). RMG workers' rush to Dhaka: Ill-considered directives of ministries blamed *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/04/05/rmg-workers-rush-to-dhaka-ill-considered-directives-of-ministries-blamed>
- BB. (2020a). *BRPD Circular No. 07*: [REDACTED] (COVID-19). [REDACTED]. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bank Retrieved from <https://www.bb.org.bd/mediaroom/circulars/brpd/apr022020brpd07.pdf>
- BB. (2020b). *BRPD Circular No. 14*: [REDACTED] (COVID-19). [REDACTED]. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bank Retrieved from <https://www.bb.org.bd/mediaroom/circulars/brpd/apr082020brpd14.pdf>
- BBC. (2020, April 14, 2020). Coronavirus: Trump feuds with governors over authority. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52274969>
- bdnews24.com. (2020). Bangladesh to shut all offices from Mar 26 to Apr 4. *bdnews24.com*. Retrieved from <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2020/03/23/bangladesh-to-shut-all-offices-from-mar-26-to-apr-4>
- BGMEA. (2020a). BGMEA audits factories to ensure health and safety protocol. Retrieved from https://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/media/BGMEA_audits_factories_to_ensure_health_and_safety_protocol
- BGMEA. (2020b, April 29, 2020). Impact of COVID-19 on Bangladesh RMG Industry. Retrieved from <https://www.bgmea.com.bd/>
- BGMEA. (2020c). Trade Information. Retrieved from <https://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/TradeInformation>
- BIGD. (2020a, May 7, 2020). *COVID-19 Impact on RMG Sector and the Financial Stimulus Package: Trade Union Responses*. Paper presented at the Rapid Research Response to COVID-19 BIGD Webinar, Online.
- BIGD. (2020b). *RMG Trade Union Perspectives on the Taka 5000 Crore Novel Corona Financial Stimulus Package for Export Oriented Industries*. Draft/Unpublished.
- Byron, R. K., & Mirdha, R. U. (2020, March 31, 2020). Soft loans, wages to come from stimulus package. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/soft-loans-wages-come-stimulus-package-1887877>
- Byron, R. K., & Rahman, M. F. (2020, March 24, 2020). Taming coronavirus rampage: Unprecedented bailout package on the way. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/unprecedented-bailout-package-the-way-1885042>

- Byron, R. K., & Uddin, A. Z. (2020, April 22, 2020). Now 10 more industries are seeking help. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/now-10-more-industries-are-seeking-help-1895521>
- CED. (2020). *Operational Status of Export-oriented RMG Factories during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Rapid Survey Conducted by the 'Mapped in Bangladesh' Project*. Retrieved from Dhaka: (private circulation)
- Cline, E. L. (2020, May 9, 2020). Bangladesh Suppliers Barely Afloat As Clothing Brands Find New Ways To Squeeze Them. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethcline/2020/05/05/bangladesh-factories-struggle-to-survive-discounts-delayed-payments/#3539816273a5>
- CPD. (2020, June 9, 2020). *A Rapid Assessment of Stimulus Packages and Relief Measures*. Paper presented at the Responding to COVID-19 Webinar, Online.
- Dhaka Tribune. (2020, May 25, 2020). EWM Group counters blacklist threat from Bangladesh. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2020/05/25/ewm-group-counters-over-blacklist-threat-from-bangladesh>
- Financial Express. (2020a, May 24, 2020). Buyers tend to undo existing contracts with RMG producers. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/buyers-tend-to-undo-existing-contracts-with-rmg-producers-1590303853>
- Financial Express. (2020b, April 18, 2020). Factory reopening depends on virus situation: Rubana. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/first-page/factory-reopening-depends-on-virus-situation-rubana-1587144529>
- Financial Express. (2020c, April 23, 2020). Garment workers protest 'layoff'. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/politics-policies/garment-workers-protest-layoff-1587573755>
- Financial Express. (2020d, April 22, 2020). Garments Sramik and Shilpa Rakkha Jatiya Mancha formed a human chain. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/politics-policies/garments-sramik-and-shilpa-rakkha-jatiya-mancha-formed-a-human-chain-1587484824>
- Financial Express. (2020e, April 22, 2020). Include member factories in stimulus package: BTMA. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/trade-market/include-member-factories-in-stimulus-package-btma-1587482029>
- Financial Express. (2020f, April 23, 2020). Many industrial units yet to pay Mar wages. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/first-page/many-industrial-units-yet-to-pay-mar-wages-1587576782>
- Financial Express. (2020g, May 13, 2020). Most RMG factories fall short of reopening criteria as virus lockdown unwinds. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/most-rmg-factories-fall-short-of-reopening-criteria-as-virus-lockdown-unwinds-1589379753>
- Financial Express. (2020h, April 10, 2020). RMG factories to remain closed until April 25. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/rmg-factories-to-remain-closed-until-april-25-1586518829>
- Financial Express. (2020i, April 26, 2020). RMG units to reopen partially from today. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/first-page/rmg-units-to-reopen-partially-from-today-1587834829>
- FRANCE24. (2020, April 17, 2020). Trump unveils three-phase plan to lift US lockdown, leaves timeline up to governors. *FRANCE24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/20200416-usa-donald-trump-coronavirus-covid-19-lockdown-reopen-economy-social-distancing>
- [Bangladesh Labour Act-2006]. (2006).
- Godin, M. (2020, April 16, 2020). These European Countries Are Slowly Lifting Coronavirus Lockdowns. Here's What That Looks Like. *TIME*.
- Haque, S. A. (2020, May 3, 2020). You die, we live! *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/you-die-we-live-1898869>
- Hawthorne, E. (2020, May 23, 2020). Asda named and shamed in #PayUp Bangladeshi factory worker crisis. *The Grocer*. Retrieved from <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/asda/asda-named-and-shamed-in-payup-bangladeshi-factory-worker-crisis/605150.article>
- IEDCR. (2020). Bangladesh Covid-19 Update. Retrieved from <https://www.iedcr.gov.bd/index.php/component/content/article/73-ncov-2019>
- Karmokar, S. (2020a, April 6, 2020). None intended to shut down garment factories. *Prothom Alo*. Retrieved from <https://en.prothomalo.com/business/local/none-intended-to-shut-down-the-garment-factories>
- Karmokar, S. (2020b, May 1, 2020). [Bangladesh Labour Act-2006]. *Prothom Alo*. Retrieved from <https://www.prothomalo.com/economy/article/1654039/%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B%E0%A6%9A%E0%A7%87%E0%A7%9F%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%9B%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%A8-%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF-%E0%A6%B6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%95>
- KYODO NEWS. (2020, March 2, 2020). China's coronavirus cases top 80,000, deaths surpass 2,900. *KYODO NEWS*. Retrieved from <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/03/810b30fc8d30-chinas-coronavirus-cases-top-80000-deaths-surpass-2900.html>
- Mamun, S. (2020, March 23, 2020). Coronavirus: Bangladesh declares public holiday from March 26 to April 4. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/03/23/govt-offices-to-remain-closed-till-april-4>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020a, May 24, 2020). BGMEA engaging rights groups to ensure buyers pay local suppliers. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/export/news/bgmea-engaging-rights-groups-ensure-buyers-pay-local-suppliers-1905541>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020b, April 30, 2020). Closed Factories: Pay workers 60pc of gross salary for April. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/closed-factories-pay-workers-60pc-gross-salary-april-1898152>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020c, April 21, 2020). Garment factories now have until Apr 26 to open workers' MFS accounts. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/garment-factories-now-have-until-apr-26-open-workers-mfs-accounts-1895113>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020d, April 23, 2020). Guideline on the way for garment factory reopening. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/guideline-the-way-garment-factory-reopening-1895842>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020e, May 12, 2020). Infections creep up in RMG belts. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/infections-creep-rmg-belts-1901815>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020f, April 18, 2020). RMG factories not opening on April 26. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rmg-factories-not-opening-april-26-1894078>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020g, May 1, 2020). RMG units reopening haphazardly. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rmg-units-reopening-haphazardly-1898434>
- Mirdha, R. U. (2020h, April 12, 2020). Roadblock in going for full digital salary payment overnight. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/roadblock-going-full-digital-salary-payment-overnight-1892119>

- 10/13

- Rahaman, M. M. (2020, April 16, 2020). BGMEA to reopen its factories from Apr 26. *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/last-page/bgmea-to-reopen-its-factories-from-apr-26-1586972573>
- Reuters. (2020, March 7, 2020). China January-February exports tumble, imports down as coronavirus batters trade and business. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-trade/china-january-february-exports-tumble-imports-slow-as-coronavirus-batters-trade-and-business-idUSKBN20U05R>
- Rita, S. (2020, April 7, 2020). Narayanganj RMG workers protest, demand arrears. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2020/04/07/narayanganj-rmg-workers-protest-demand-arrears>
- Samad, B. G. Q. A. (2020, April 19, 2020). A tide against the garment industry. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2020/04/19/a-tide-against-the-garment-industry>
- Sayem, A. (2020, April 16, 2020). 31 CEPZ factories lay off workers amid shutdown. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/31-cepz-factories-lay-workers-amid-shutdown-69853>
- Sultan, M., Chowdhury, K., Naim, S. J., Hossain, D. M. S., Islam, M. S., & Huq, F. (2020, April, 2020). *COVID-19 Crisis Implications for the RMG Sector: Trade Union Responses* Rapid Study. Draft.
- The Business Standard. (2020a, May 23, 2020). 142 RMG workers infected with Covid-19 till date. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/covid-19-bangladesh/170-workers-have-tested-positive-covid-19-84913>
- The Business Standard. (2020b, June 4, 2020). Apparel sector to see massive job cut this month, BGMEA warns. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/apparel-sector-see-massive-job-cut-month-bgmea-warns-88906>
- The Business Standard. (2020c, May 24, 2020). Asda criticised for Bangladesh RMG sector crisis. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/asda-criticized-bangladesh-rmg-sector-crisis-84958>
- The Business Standard. (2020d, April 5, 2020). BGMEA cannot order for factory closure. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/bgmea-can-not-order-factory-closure-65200>
- The Business Standard. (2020e, May 21, 2020). Committees formed to enforce health protocol in RMG factories. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/committees-formed-enforce-health-protocol-rmg-factories-84268>
- The Business Standard. (2020f, June 3, 2020). 'Many RMG workers faced termination after Eid'. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/many-rmg-workers-faced-termination-after-eid-88423>
- The Daily Star. (2020a, April 27, 2020). 103 RMG factories reopen in Narayanganj. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/coronavirus-upate-news-103-rmg-factories-reopen-in-narayanganj-1897300>
- The Daily Star. (2020b, May 14, 2020). Attack by Goons: 10 garment workers hurt during protest. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/attack-goons-10-garment-workers-hurt-during-protest-1902391>
- The Daily Star. (2020c, May 10, 2020). Bangladeshi garments suppliers held hostage by international clothing brands, retailers. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/bangladeshi-garments-suppliers-held-hostage-international-clothing-brands-retailers-1901218>
- The Daily Star. (2020d, March 27, 2020). BGMEA asks members to consider shutdown of factories. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/bgmea-asks-members-consider-shutdown-factories-1886416>
- The Daily Star. (2020e, June 7, 2020). BGMEA dispels confusion over job cut comment. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/bgmea-dispels-confusion-over-job-cut-comment-1910357>
- The Daily Star. (2020f, April 26, 2020). BGMEA issues reopen timetable. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/bgmea-issues-reopen-timetable-1896880>
- The Daily Star. (2020g, April 19, 2020). Brac Rapid Survey: 47pc garment workers yet to be paid. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/brac-rapid-survey-47pc-garment-workers-yet-be-paid-1894444>
- The Daily Star. (2020h, March 27, 2020). Consider closure of factories till April 4. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/consider-closure-factories-till-april-4-1886512>
- The Daily Star. (2020i, March 19, 2020). Coronavirus in Bangladesh: First death amid sloppy response. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/coronavirus-bangladesh-first-death-amid-sloppy-response-1882642>
- The Daily Star. (2020j, March 20, 2020). Coronavirus outbreak: Informal sector takes a big hit as Dhaka residents attempt to flatten the curve. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/informal-sector-anguish-dhaka-city-residents-attempt-flatten-the-curve-coronavirus-1883260>
- The Daily Star. (2020k, April 7, 2020). Demo for Pay: 25 hurt as RMG workers, police clash in M'singh. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/demo-pay-25-hurt-rmg-workers-police-clash-msingh-1890403>
- The Daily Star. (2020l, June 8, 2020). Don't terminate any RMG workers, suggests DIFE. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/dont-terminate-any-rmg-workers-suggests-dife-1910877>
- The Daily Star. (2020m, April 8, 2020). Don't terminate employees during this pandemic: Commerce minister. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/dont-terminate-employees-during-coronavirus-pandemic-1890886>
- The Daily Star. (2020n). Factories can run but must ensure safety of workers. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/factories-can-run-must-ensure-safety-workers-1886866>
- The Daily Star. (2020o, April 28, 2020). Factories keep reopening amid virus fear. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/factories-keep-reopening-amid-virus-fear-1897501>
- The Daily Star. (2020p, May 4, 2020). Factories to be shut if many get infected. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/factories-be-shut-if-many-get-infected-1899232>
- The Daily Star. (2020q, March 22, 2020). Factories to remain open. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/factories-remain-open-1883989>
- The Daily Star. (2020r, March 20, 2020). Fighting Coronavirus Outbreak: Govt mulls lockdown of vulnerable areas. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/fighting-coronavirus-outbreak-govt-mulls-lockdown-vulnerable-areas-1883077>
- The Daily Star. (2020s). Fighting Coronavirus: Govt shuts down offices from Mar 26. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/fighting-coronavirus-govt-shuts>

[down-offices-10-days-1884928](#)

- The Daily Star. (2020t, March 9, 2020). First coronavirus cases confirmed. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/first-coronavirus-cases-confirmed-1878160>
- The Daily Star. (2020u, March 29, 2020). Garment factories start PPE distribution. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/garment-factories-start-ppe-distribution-1887127>
- The Daily Star. (2020v, March 24, 2020). Garment order cancellations coming thick and fast. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/garment-order-cancellations-coming-thick-and-fast-1885021>
- The Daily Star. (2020w, May 4, 2020). Hundreds of RMG workers stage sit in for arrears. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/hundreds-rmg-workers-stage-sit-arrears-1899211>
- The Daily Star. (2020x, March 19, 2020). Impact of coronavirus: Garment exporters voice concerns. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/garment-exporters-voice-concerns-1882741>
- The Daily Star. (2020y, May 8, 2020). Infected RMG Workers: 'Half tested positive after factories reopened'. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/infected-rmg-workers-half-tested-positive-after-factories-reopened-1900540>
- The Daily Star. (2020z, April 16, 2020). Last month's pay still due. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/last-months-pay-still-due-1893289>
- The Daily Star. (2020aa, April 13, 2020). Pay salary of industrial workers by April 16: state minister. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/pay-salary-industrial-workers-april-16-state-minister-1892536>
- The Daily Star. (2020ab, April 28, 2020). RMG factories can be operated with workers currently in Dhaka: home minister. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh-rmg-factories-can-be-operated-workers-staying-in-dhaka-1897606>
- The Daily Star. (2020ac, April 6, 2020). RMG owners divided when lives at risk. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rmg-owners-divided-when-lives-risk-1890001>
- The Daily Star. (2020ad, April 17, 2020). RMG protest rages on. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rmg-protest-rages-1893745>
- The Daily Star. (2020ae, May 10, 2020). RMG workers agitate for full April salary. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rmg-workers-demonstrate-demanding-full-wages-1901209>
- The Daily Star. (2020af, May 11, 2020). RMG workers stage demo for 2nd day for full pay. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/rmg-workers-stage-demo-2nd-day-full-pay-1901461>
- The Daily Star. (2020ag, April 13, 2020). RMG workers take to streets demanding pay. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/rmg-workers-take-streets-demanding-pay-1892320>
- The Daily Star. (2020ah, March 21, 2020). Shut down RMG factories right away. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/shut-down-rmg-factories-right-away-1883737>
- The Daily Star. (2020ai, April 1, 2020). Shutdown to be stretched to Apr 9. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/shutdown-be-stretched-apr-9-1888321>
- The Daily Star. (2020aj, April 5, 2020). Sudden Influx. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/sudden-influx-1889740>
- The Daily Star. (2020ak, April 14, 2020). Unpaid Wages, Arrears: RMG workers still out on streets. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/unpaid-wages-arrears-rmg-workers-still-out-streets-1892737>
- The Daily Star. (2020al, April 13, 2020). Waiting for dues. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/waiting-due-pay-1892410>
- Uddin, A. Z. (2020, May 3, 2020). Garment workers' salary disbursement from stimulus package starts from today. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/garment-workers-salary-disbursement-stimulus-package-starts-today-1898938>
- Uddin, J. (2020a, June 2, 2020). BGMEA deadline for blacklisting EWM extended. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/bgmea-deadline-blacklisting-ewm-extended-88006>
- Uddin, J. (2020b, May 4, 2020). DIFE launches special safety inspection of RMG factories amid pandemic. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/dife-launches-special-safety-inspection-rmg-factories-amid-pandemic-77221>
- Uddin, J. (2020c, June 2, 2020). EU plans to pay 1m RMG workers for 6 months. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved from <https://tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/eu-plans-pay-1m-rmg-workers-6-months-87607>
- UNB. (2020a, April 26, 2020). BGMEA prepares draft for running factories. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/bgmea-prepares-draft-for-running-factories/50530>
- UNB. (2020b, April 23, 2020). Coronavirus: Govt extends holiday until May 5. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/coronavirus-govt-extends-holiday-until-may-5/50330>
- UNB. (2020c, April 26, 2020). Factories must be reopened gradually to save economy: Salman. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/factories-must-be-reopened-gradually-to-save-economy-salman/50527>
- UNB. (2020d, March 20, 2020). FBCCI President thanks PM for relaxing BB measures to counter virus impact. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/fbcci-president-thanks-pm-for-relaxing-bb-measures-to-counter-virus-impact/47536>
- UNB. (2020e, May 7, 2020). RMG workers stage demo in Gazipur protesting job cut. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/rmg-workers-stage-demo-in-gazipur-protesting-job-cut/51232>
- UNB. (2020f, April 26, 2020). Rush of RMG workers from Sirajganj. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/rush-of-rmg-workers-from-sirajganj/50588>
- UNB. (2020g, March 26, 2020). Tk 5,000cr for workers' pay. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/tk-5000cr-workers-pay-1885891>
- UNB. (2020h, May 2, 2020). Workers must show identity cards when entering Dhaka: DIFE. *UNB News*. Retrieved from <https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/workers-must-show-identity-cards-when-entering-dhaka-dife/50972>
- World Health Organisation. (2020). Pneumonia of unknown cause – China. *Disease Outbreak News*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unknown-cause-china/en/>
- Wright, R., & Saeed, S. (2020, April 22, 2020). Bangladeshi garment workers face ruin as global brands ditch clothing contracts amid coronavirus pandemic. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/22/business/bangladesh-garment-factories/index.html>

