

Thousands protest Bangladesh deaths

28th April, 2013



Anger is high in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka following the collapse of the Rana Plaza, in which at least 304 clothing factory workers

died. The tragedy is the latest and the deadliest in a long line of preventable accidents that has plagued the country's garment industry. The government is questioning the building's owners as to why more than 3,000 workers were allowed to enter the building after large cracks appeared in its walls the day before it collapsed. The government also wants to know why building safety standards were ignored in its construction. Bangladesh's Information Minister Hasanul Haque Inu told Bangladeshi reporters: "I wouldn't call it an accident; I would say it's murder."

Thousands of furious garment workers rampaged through industrial areas of the capital on Friday. They set fire to over 150 cars and at least two factories. They are protesting at the shocking disregard for safety in buildings, child labour, and pay rates as low as 14 cents an hour. Questions are also being asked of Western clothing brands that depend on cheap clothing from Bangladesh to keep their prices low. Garments were found inside the building with labels for some of Britain and America's top clothing stores. Western brands have a history of ignoring safety standards and working conditions in Bangladesh and other countries. Labour activists have asked the brands to help pay for safer factories.

Sources: NY Times / The Guardian

Writing

Companies need to research the working conditions of their suppliers before they sign contracts to buy goods from them. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

anger / tragedy / preventable accidents / garment industry / safety standards / murder / furious / protesting / child labour / 14 cents an hour pay / Western brands / activists

True / False

- a) The tragedy at the collapsed building could have been avoided. T / F
- b) The government has yet to get involved in finding out what happened. T / F
- c) The builders followed all the correct construction standards. T / F
- d) A government minister said the incident constituted murder. T / F
- e) Protestors destroyed other factories and 150 cars on Friday. T / F
- f) The lowest-paid factory workers receive as little as 40 cents an hour. T / F
- g) Western brands are asking Bangladesh's government questions. T / F
- h) Campaigners want Western companies to help pay to improve things. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. collapse | a. took no notice of |
| 2. tragedy | b. clothing |
| 3. plagued | c. catastrophe |
| 4. appeared | d. rioted |
| 5. ignored | e. cave-in |
| 6. furious | f. benchmarks |
| 7. rampaged | g. irate |
| 8. garments | h. troubled |
| 9. standards | i. campaigners |
| 10. activists | j. materialised |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What did you think when you heard the news of the building's collapse?
- b) Who do you think is to blame?
- c) What punishment should people get for ignoring safety standards?
- d) Why do business owners put profits before people's lives?
- e) Do you think anyone will be prosecuted over this tragedy?
- f) Why are low-paid workers treated so badly?
- g) What will it take to improve working conditions in Bangladesh?
- h) Is the information minister right when he said it was murder?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Anger is | a. the country's garment industry |
| 2. a long | b. depend on cheap clothing |
| 3. that has plagued | c. standards were ignored |
| 4. large | d. workers rampaged... |
| 5. safety | e. disregard for safety |
| 6. furious garment | f. high in the Bangladeshi capital |
| 7. the shocking | g. of ignoring safety standards |
| 8. clothing brands that | h. line of preventable accidents |
| 9. a history | i. have asked the brands to help |
| 10. Labour activists | j. cracks appeared in its walls |

Discussion – Student B

- Previous tragedies have changed little. Will this one change anything?
- What should the world do to ensure factories follow safety standards?
- Do things like this happen in your country?
- How is it possible that factories pay workers 14 cents an hour?
- Should consumers boycott the stores whose garments were in the factories?
- What responsibility do Western brands have in such tragedies?
- How should the Western brands help the workers?
- What questions would you like to ask Bangladesh's prime minister?

Spelling

- following the olaplecs
- the taryged is the latest
- nlpteebarev accidents
- udlepag the country's garment industry
- large cracks pareadep in its walls
- safety standards were rgniedo
- isouruf garment workers
- shocking dsardgrei
- Inghtioc brands
- working nsoioctind
- labour isaitsectv
- safer toefrcais

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. c	3. h	4. j	5. a
6. g	7. d	8. b	9. f	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Garment factory worker

You are angry with your industry. Tell the others three reasons why. The very rich factory owners pay you as little as possible and ignore safety. They care more about money than the lives of workers. The Western brands are even worse. Demand much better salaries and conditions.

Role B – Garment factory owner

You are angry with the government and the builders. Tell the others three reasons why. You paid good money for a safe building. You feel very sorry for your workers. They are like family. Your profits aren't so high because the Western brands pay so little.

Role C – Western brand CEO

You are angry with the garment factory owner. Tell the others three reasons why. The owner told you working conditions at the factory were very good. You also thought workers' pay was good. You found out they get just 14 cents an hour. You will change country if things do not improve.

Role D – Consumer

You are angry with the brand CEO. Tell the others three reasons why. You believe the CEO has no regard for the lives of factory workers in Bangladesh. You know profits are more important than treating the workers with dignity. You want the world to boycott the brand's products.

Speaking – Job

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| • salary | • productivity bonus |
| • nice boss | • chances for promotion |
| • uniform | • challenging work |
| • long holidays | • famous company |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.