

Owners are free to close their garment factories until vandalism ends: BGMEA

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Online Desk: BGMEA President Faruque Hassan on Sunday said the owners of the RMG units can keep their factories closed under the law to protect industry and property until the vandalism is stopped and law enforcement agencies are able to ensure adequate security.

“Every entrepreneur has a constitutional right to protect his own industry and properties from outsiders,” he told a media briefing at BGMEA office at Uttara.

The BGMEA chief repeated that for the sake of the country and the industry, to protect the employment of the worker siblings, if the working brothers and sisters do not work in any factory, leave the factory without working, vandalize the factory, then the factory authorities can keep the factory closed under section 13 (1) of the Labor Act.

Faruque said as there is currently less work in many factories in the garment sector, buyers have stopped placing new orders; they have asked to stop new recruitment.

“New appointments will be made when the situation improves,” said the BGMEA president.

Faruque urged the government to identify those who are plotting against this industry and take action.

“Also give us adequate security to run industries. Politics and economics complement each other. Remittance earning from the expatriates is experiencing a slowdown at the moment. In this situation, the garment industry, one of the main sectors of export earnings, deserves special attention,” he said.

The government on Tuesday announced Tk 12,500 as minimum wage for entry level RMG workers, raising it by 56.25% from the existing one.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnujan Sufian announced the new wage structure for RMG workers which will be effective from December 1.

RMG workers unions have rejected the offer and instead asked for an increase of nearly Tk 23,000 a month. Many workers resorted to street protests clashing with police and vandalizing factories.

Owners have announced indefinite shutdown of over 130 factories mainly in Gazipur and Ashulia areas.

The unrest for higher wage has left one female worker dead in police firing, dozens injured and arrested.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Industrial Police Md Zakir Hossain Khan on Saturday said they smell a rat behind the unrest in the readymade garment (RMG) industry in Gazipur.

“The government has already announced wages and our notion is that a group is instigating them [RMG workers] to do movement. We are identifying those who are provoking them [demonstrating workers],” he said.