

Gazipur garment owner stands tall in Covid crisis

Staff Reporter

ABM Shamsuddin, the chairman and owner of Hannan Group, has perhaps fought the biggest battle against Covid-19 in Bangladesh. And he came out victorious in flying colours. When the factories reopened in April 26 after a month of lockdown, Shamsuddin, 65, rented nine buildings in Gazipur to make sure all of his 12,000 workers were well taken care of and are quar-

antined if they were suspected to have been infected with the Covid-19. In May and June, he quarantined some 1,357 workers or roughly 11 percent of his workforce.

Unlike all the factories, who sent their infected or suspected Covid-19 workers back home to their villages, Shamsuddin made sure that these suspected workers don't spread the disease in their homes and communities. Each of the suspected workers were screened with the help of a medical team of six doctors and same numbers of nurses. His company paid for their food, medicine and every tiny thing they needed when they were quarantined. He bought flux for each of them so that they can drink hot water and ginger, cardamom laced tea. All the workers were paid 100 percent of their wages including Eid bonuses. He organised Covid tests for each of 1,357 suspected workers at his cost and found that 143



were infected with the virus. The suspects spent a mandatory 14 days in the quarantine centres and the infected stayed there as long as it took them to recover.

Two months later all the workers have recovered and they resumed work. It cost him 20 million taka and a military like operation to run a barrack of ailing soldiers during a war time. "It was like a war of independence," said

Shamsuddin, who as a 15 year old boy went to Major Haider in 1971 to join our liberation struggle.

When, almost all the garment factories cut the salaries of their workers by 40 percent in line with a government directive to ride out Covid-19 economic meltdown, Shamsuddin paid his 12,000 workers full wages. And by the time, his factories resumed full fledged operations, he even hired 1,595 new workers to cope with new orders. "It was an experience of lifetime. When all my friends confined themselves at home, I was in the middle of a war. And by the grace of Almighty Allah, none of our workers have died or lost jobs," he said.

No other factory was known to have quarantined their workers in a separate facility or even looked after them during their illness in the last six months of the battle against Covid-19.

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See news in back page