

Material 1

Bangladeshi children forced to work in factories making party balloons

- For children around the world, brightly-coloured balloons signify celebration. Unless, that is, they are among the Bangladeshi children covered in dust who spend their lives working in the balloon factories. The children, some as young as 10, should be at school. Instead, they are in the dirty factory, sorting the balloons into colours and carrying loads too heavy for their young arms.
- 10 Their day starts at 6am, and continues for 11 hours, finally being released at 5pm.
- And for their trouble and hard work, they are rewarded with as little as £6.50 a month. At best, they can expect £16.
- 15 That is significantly less than the £41.80 minimum wage for entry level garment workers set by the government in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster, in which more than 1,100 people died.
- 20 But many Bangladeshi families have little choice but to send their children out to work. The practice is so common the money is handed straight to the child's family.
- Twelve-year-old Apu, a labourer in a balloon 25 factories, is one such child.
- "My father left me and my mum when I was five," he explained. "My mother takes care of me since then. Now I am working to help my mother."
- 30 Fellow balloon factory worker Ruma, 11, told a similar story of woe – although he was glad to no longer be in school. "I don't like to study," he said. "My father is a daily wage labourer but his earnings are not enough for us. I am helping them financially by working in here." 35
- Across Bangladesh, it is thought there are about a million children aged 10 to 14 working as child labourers, according to UNICEF [...].
- "In Bangladesh there are nearly five million children between the age of 5 and 14 working 40 in hazardous conditions in factories, garages and homes, in railway stations and markets [...] – many for little or no pay at all," said photographer Zakir Chowdhury. "Many boys and girls who work do not have access to 45 education and become trapped in low-skilled, low-pay work that further binds them into the cycle of poverty."
- Others, however, appear not to think of it as a problem, including balloon factory owner 50 Zakir Hossain, who set his business up with the help of his wife and eldest son. He freely admits to employing children to work for him, but says they are treated well.
- Mr Hossain said: "In my factory all children 55 labour like my son does, I give the same opportunity to all of them. They work here to help their families' lives, but in my mind I think they are children of other parents like me. I wish they will be educated in future and 60 become self-dependent." Wife Beauty added; "If we didn't give the opportunity for children to work here, they would be thieving or snatching – here it is better and the children's families feel safe." 65
- (Source: Flora Drury, The Daily Mail, 8 September 2015; 493 words)*

Material 2

Why you need to use your "environmentally friendly" cotton carrier bag 131 times to be green

Cotton bags offered by many supermarkets may be less "green" than plastic carriers – and may cause more global warming, according to scientists. As a greater amount of energy goes