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## Probe on to spot price hike culprits

### JS body rejects commerce ministry report on essentials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday rejected a commerce ministry report on essentials price hike and formed a sub-committee to identify the persons who let the situation spin out of control.

The three-member sub-committee of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry will also probe the reasons for the price spiral.

The ruling BNP lawmakers at the meeting said they want to find out the persons responsible for the hike that 'destroyed the image of the government'.

The lawmakers observed that essentials prices had never been so high during any rule.

Lawmaker Monirul Hoque

Chowdhury heads the probe committee that has a week to submit its report.

Chairman of the committee Redwan Ahmed told newsmen after the meeting that essentials prices are now coming down. He said high transport cost is one of the reasons for the price upswing.

The committee recommended relocation of Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market to lower transport cost.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury also echoed Redwan and said a central kitchen market is being planned.

He said in a free economy the government does not control the market. "But if the government wants, we can intervene."

In its report, the ministry said the government could curb essentials prices by reducing duty rate. The

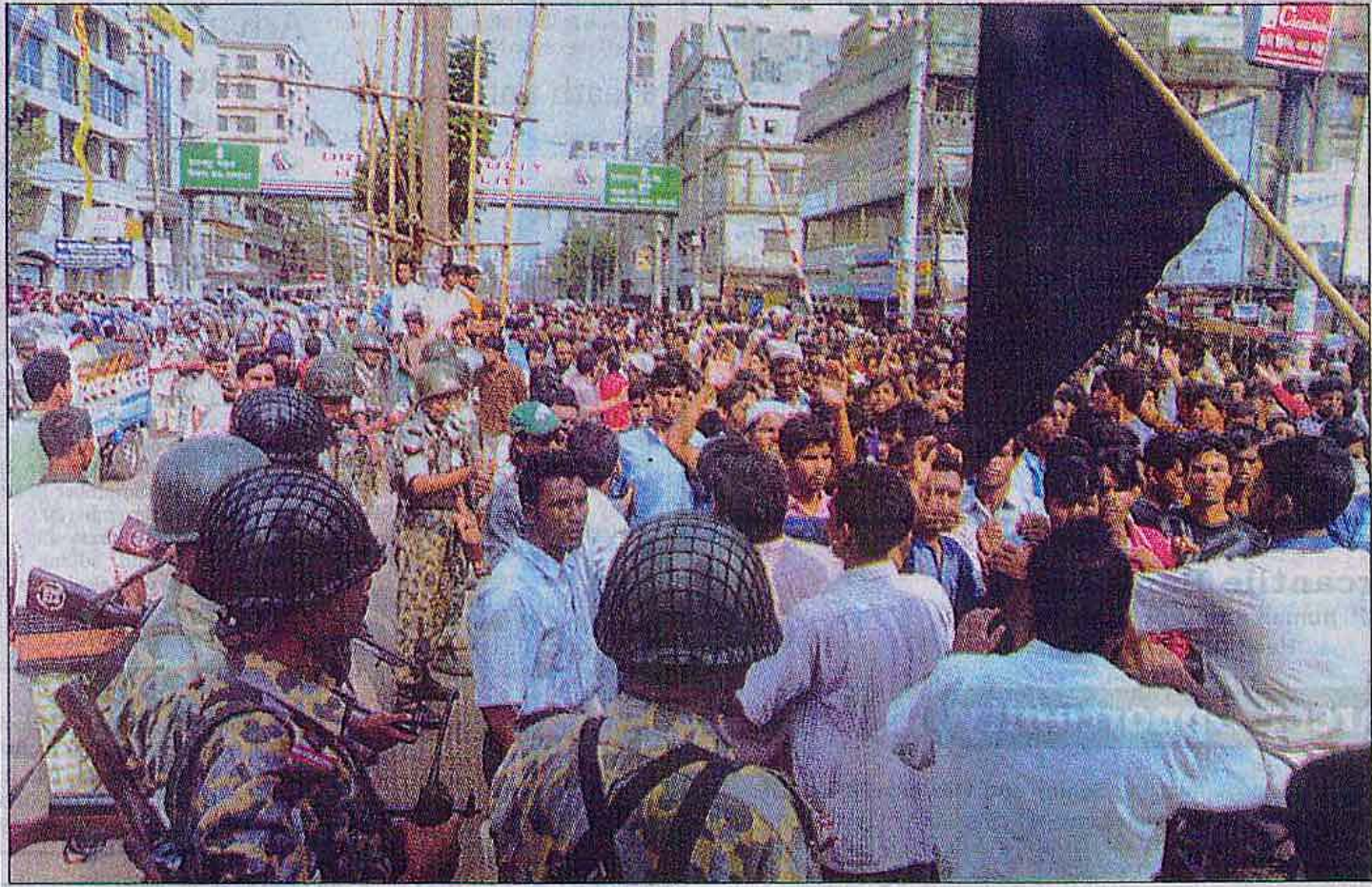
government should think whether it wants to earn a few crore in revenue by imposing duty on onion, rice and oil or consider the buying capacity of the people and image of the government.

"The government and its agencies should not blame each other. It is also not desirable that any agency should try to avoid responsibility. It hampers the government's image," said the report.

The report said this year onion was imported 32 percent less than the previous year.

Meeting sources said Monirul Hoque told the meeting that 'he did not believe 70 percent of the report'. He said people have become hostage to a syndicate of unscrupulous traders.

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BDR men mount guard, as garment workers rally in protest at the death of a co-worker in Monday's police fire, an incident that led the 11-party left alliance to enforce a half-day hartal in Narayanganj yesterday.

## Knit factory attacked in N'ganj hartal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A knitwear factory came under attack during yesterday's half-day hartal called by the 11-party left alliance in Narayanganj.

The 6:00am-2:00pm hartal was called to protest Monday's attack on garment workers and demand release of the arrestees, eight-hour work schedule and Eid bonus.

Activities in the industrial district remained stopped for the third consecutive day yesterday. Factories, shopping centres and other businesses kept their shutters down. No buses plied to and from Narayanganj. All educational institutions were closed during the hartal hours.

A group in 'the guise of workers' yesterday attacked Paragon Knitwear Ltd. at Jamtola in the town. The miscreants also tried to loot garment waste from the factory, but police and BDR personnel foiled their attempt.

Situation is still tense in and around the district where a garment worker was killed and 200 others injured Monday in police fire. Seven platoons of the BDR and armed

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## Emergency declared in Sri Lanka

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga has declared a state of emergency, giving herself more powers in a bare-knuckled political fight with the prime minister that is threatening the peace with Tamil rebels.

The state of emergency, a draconian law that allows detention for up to one year without charges, comes a day after the president sacked three of the country's most powerful ministers and suspended parliament.

Despite the political paralysis, a presidential adviser said Kumaratunga would not end a 20-month truce with the Tamil Tigers,

who seek a separate homeland for minority Tamils.

Kumaratunga has openly disagreed with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe over the peace process, saying the government was making too many concessions to the rebels.

"I am authorised by the president to tell you that the ceasefire agreement stands and will stand. There is no question about that," Lakshman Kadirgamar told reporters.

"The president has no intention of resuming or provoking the resumption of hostilities."

Kumaratunga, who was elected separately from Wickremesinghe, sacked the defence, interior and media ministers on Tuesday and

suspended parliament, raising questions about the future of the prime minister and the direction of the peace bid.

That shock move was followed yesterday by the imposition of the state of emergency, which widens the powers of the president and military and includes bans on public assembly.

Although a small number of troops were deployed at key installations in Colombo, the capital was otherwise calm.

All the actions were taken in Wickremesinghe's absence -- he is in the United States to meet President George W. Bush. He said Kumaratunga was desperate and

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## Hasina admits AL had godfathers when in govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday acknowledged presence of a few 'godfathers' in her party while the Awami League ruled the country under her premiership in 1996-2001.

But she claimed to have taken measures against those godfathers, whose number, according to her, would not be over four to five. The former prime minister also claimed that at times there was exaggeration in allegations against her party godfathers.

Hasina made the acknowledgement at an iftar party hosted by the AL for newsmen at its

Dhanmondi office yesterday.

When a journalist wanted to know what action she was taking against her party godfathers as her party was publicly releasing the list of the ruling alliance's godfathers, Hasina said, "The magnitude of the activities of the godfathers now overruns what happened earlier. Look everywhere in the country and see what the godfathers and 'godsons' are doing now."

She said four or five godfathers were like black spots in her otherwise 'white' (clean) rule and 'we took measures against the godfathers whenever we found the proof of charges against them.'

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## 'No company of Transcom Group has any default loan'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Not a single company of Transcom Group has any default with any bank or financial institution, Transcom Limited said yesterday.

"We would like to clarify and put on record that not a single company under Transcom Group has any default whatsoever with any bank or financial institution," a press release says.

It, referring to recent misleading reports in a section of the press on Transcom Group Chairman Latifur Rahman, also said W. Rahman Jute Mills Limited is not part of Transcom Group.

The jute mill was set up in 1962 by Latifur Rahman's paternal family comprising five brothers and three sisters, none of whom are alive.

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## Govt to publish list of smugglers, their patrons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to prepare a list of smugglers and their patrons and make their names public once it is finalised.

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday asked different law-enforcement agencies to make a preliminary list of the operatives across the country.

"We have asked the police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), National Board of Revenue (NBR), coastguard and other agencies to make a preliminary list," Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury told newsmen, coming out of the 32nd meeting of the National

Smuggling Prevention Committee.

The list will be finalised after a careful scrutiny, he said.

"We have also asked the departments concerned to be careful in preparing the list so that it does not exclude any smuggler or include any innocent," the minister said.

The previous meeting of the same committee also promised to publish the list of smugglers but failed.

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar, Home Secretary Omar Farooq, Textiles Secretary Tanveer Hossain, NBR Chairman M. Khairuzzaman Chowdhury, Inspector General of

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