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## Tight security reins back workers' rage

### Demonstrators still damage 5 Gazipur units; tripartite meeting decides to form Wage Commission

STAR REPORT

Situation in the capital and its outskirts yesterday mainly remained calm, with exceptions of incidents of ransacking at five factories in Gazipur amid deployment of a large number of law enforcers after two-day of vandalism by protesters.

Most of the garment and other factories in the city yesterday remained closed for the third consecutive day while factories in Gazipur have been closed since Saturday. No untoward incident occurred in the city yesterday.

Meanwhile, the government decided to form a "wage commission" for the garment sector to fix minimum wages for the workers soon, an Information Department press release said.

The decision was taken at a meeting of leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and

Exporters Association (BGMEA), leaders of garment workers and government high-ups with State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman in the chair.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman and senior leaders of different labour organisations were present at the meeting held in the labour ministry's conference room.

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## AL demands people's probe body, BDB for judicial inquiry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded immediate formation of a 'people's probe body' to find out the culprits who are 'conspiring' to destroy the country's Readymade Garments (RMG) sector.

"Some vested quarters want to snatch peoples' rights by creating anarchy and deceiving the people in the wake of the severe crisis in the garment industry," Abdul Jalil MP, general secretary of the AL, told reporters at a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office in the capital.

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## EC yet to stop voter list work despite court verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is yet to issue any order to stop the ongoing work for preparing the fresh voter list after Tuesday's Supreme Court verdict that upheld the High Court (HC) directives for revising the existing electoral rolls prepared in 2000.

The revising authorities appointed to dispose of the claims and objections on the draft voter list are confused about the next course of action, as the EC did not issue any order on whether to continue the task.

"We have not yet received any order from the Election Commission about the next course of action," a revising authority told The Daily Star wishing anonymity. "But we are not continuing the task as the court verdict went against our work."

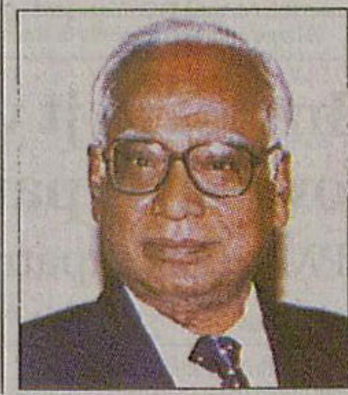
Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz, election commissioners Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria yesterday kept mum about the issue.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said they did not receive the certified copy of the judgement that continue the task.

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## Ailing Iajuddin flown to S'pore

### Speaker to act as president



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed was flown to Singapore yesterday for cardiac treatment on advice of doctors following his admission to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka on Tuesday.

In his absence, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar now acts as the president as per constitution.

"His condition was bad on Tuesday, but today [yesterday] he is feeling better," said a source at the CMH. "His blood pressure is under

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## Govt had early info on attack

### Admits Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar admitted yesterday to having prior intelligence information on Tuesday's violence at garment factories but the vandalism could not be checked due to shortage of law enforcers and lack of coordination among them.

Terming the attacks "sabotage",

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## 11 trade bodies appeal to govt, opposition to save industries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven top trade bodies yesterday urged the government and the leader of the opposition to take urgent steps to save the readymade garment and other industries from violence.

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The remnants of burned fabrics litter the premises of a garment factory in Savar yesterday where unruly workers went on a rampage and set fire to it on Tuesday.

## Commentary

# CEC, 2 commissioners should resign

### Dignity of office and self respect dictate so

MAHFUZ ANAM

The best service the Chief Election Commissioner and his two commissioners, or should we say partners in 'the crime' of damaging public trust and eroding the image of the Election Commission, can now render the Nation, the exalted offices they hold and to the dignity of their persons is to immediately resign. An apology to the Nation for making the Election Commission a personal fiefdom would be welcome but that is definitely too much to expect from people who are still refusing to act according to the Supreme Court verdict by feigning that they haven't yet received a copy of the judgement and are oblivious of it. The

Supreme Court's rejection of their leave to appeal is an unambiguous negation of these three individuals' understanding of the electoral laws and as such a virtual no-confidence on their ability to run the Election Commission.

When a person makes any specific issue as his or her central issue and when this is challenged in the court of law, and when the highest court of the country -- the Supreme Court -- pronounces against it, then that person (the CEC is also a sitting judge of the Supreme Court) ceases to command the moral right to hold on to that office. That is precisely what has happened to CEC Justice MA Aziz and two newly appointed Election Commissioners and self

respect dictates that they must go. Not only have they made a wrong decision as is shown by the Supreme Court. Under their wrong/illegal decision, Tk 60 crore has already been spent. If we count the unpaid bills, it is likely to cross Tk 100 crore. Will Justice Aziz and his two Commissioners be held accountable for this illegal expenditure?

From the very beginning of his assumption of office as CEC in May 2005, Justice Aziz made it known that he intended to go for a new voter list. When the two sitting Election Commissioners -- M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammed Ali -- objected, saying that the existing

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## A wake-up call for RMG sector

SYED ASHFAQUL HAQUE

With two days of unprecedented rioting at garment industries in and around Dhaka, a number of complex issues leaped to the fore that, experts believe, may cripple the most export-revenue generating sector well beyond repair if we let our hair down.

Investors, economists and labour lobbyists were found grappling alike with a number of possi-

ble reasons behind the sudden outburst of mostly docile garment workers for higher wages, an incident that made headlines across the globe.

Leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) were

quick to find foreign conspiracy of their rival countries, who, they believe, are out to push Bangladesh out of global apparel trade by

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## Govt failed to ensure adequate security

### BGMEA demands proper protection when factories open today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) blamed the government yesterday for not taking adequate measures in the wake of unrest in the country's readymade garment (RMG) sector.

"The government could deploy army also along with other law

enforcement agencies. We want proper security for our factories when we open them on Thursday," said Salam Murshedi, acting BGMEA president, at a press meet.

At a different programme, the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) also blamed the government for its negligence.

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## Workers talk of their grievances

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and EMRAN HOSSAIN EMON

Non-payment of wages, poor wages, uncertainty of job, excess workload and indecent behaviour compelled workers of Universe Knitting Garments Ltd (UKGT) in Savar to come out on the street to protest this.

The protesters, joined by hundreds of aggrieved workers of other garment factories, resorted to violence only when musclemen hired by factory authorities swung

into action on them on Monday, many of the demonstrators said.

A vast majority of garment workers are however opposed to violence and they favour peaceful demonstration to realise their demands.

Many garment workers apprehend the ongoing chaos might lead to closure of some garment units, worsening their sufferings.

"I used to get Tk 700 a month for working 14 hours a day -- 8:00am to 10:00pm -- without any day off,"

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## BB pins Jubok down

### Asks it to explain why its deposit-borrowing activities not illegal

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday in a show cause notice asked Jubok, a non-governmental organisation, to explain within the next seven days why its activities, such as collection of money deposits and borrowing from the common people in exchange of interests, should not be declared illegal.

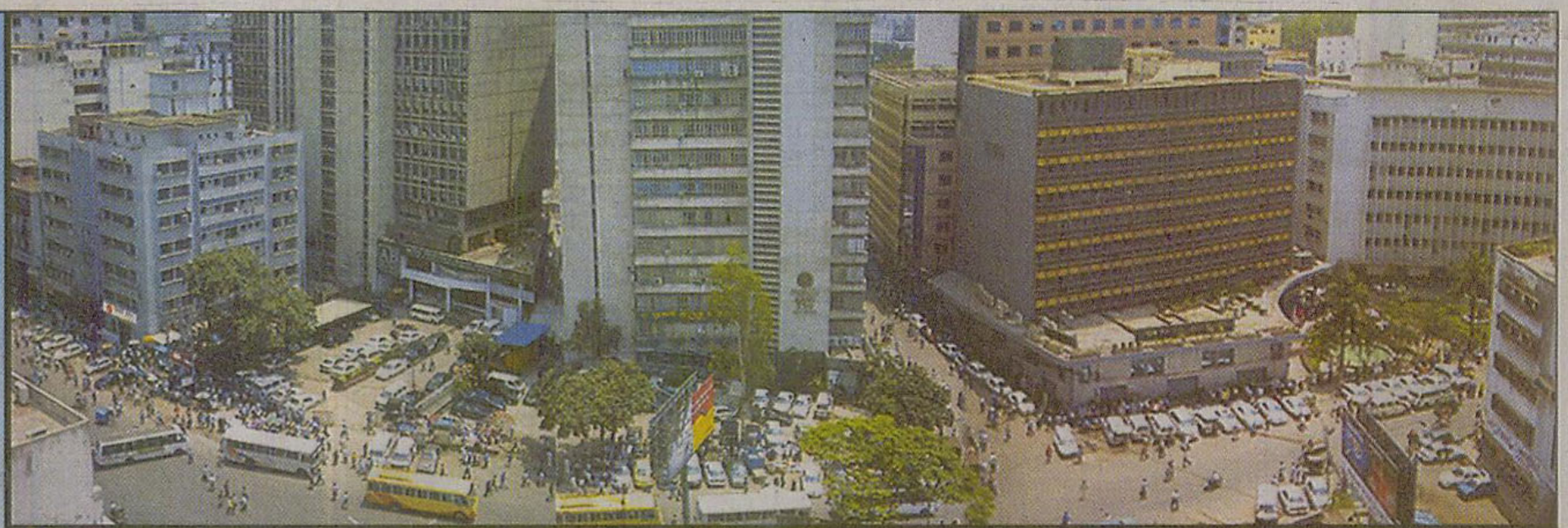
The central bank issued the notice in accordance with the sections 51 and 52 of Bank

Company Act, 1991. As per the rule, if Jubok is found guilty of wrongdoing the organisation might be declared bankrupt.

Last week, the Register of Joint Stock Companies also issued a similar show cause notice to Jubok following a direction from the commerce ministry to this effect, sources said.

The central bank might also publish a notice in daily newspapers tomorrow warning people not

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