

## RMG workers

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Otherwise a 24-hour strike will be observed in all garment factories on the day, he said.

Leaders of Bangladesh Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra urged the government to revise the proposed minimum wage and fix it at Tk 3,000 a month. Heavily criticising the four-party alliance government for not protecting the interest of the RMG sector, they said repeated load shedding, port congestion, high transportation cost, high bank charges and corruption by customs officials have increased the cost of business sharply and weakened the competitiveness of the industry but the government did not take any measure to address the problems.

The workers are paying for the high business cost as the owners compensate for all extra expenses by exploiting their employees, they said while addressing a rally at Purana Paltan crossing in Dhaka yesterday.

National Protection Alliance for Garments Workers & Industries, a federation of 16 workers organisations, said the workers will not accept the proposed pay structure, warning that it would create further labour unrest in the country.

Protesting the delay by the owners in implementing the tripartite agreement, they blamed the government for its inactive role in this regard.

The alliance will hold rallies in Dhaka, Chittagong, Narayanganj, Narsinghdi, Gazipur, and Savar industrial areas from September 16 to October 15 and it will also organise a roundtable discussion where garment factory owners, workers, political leaders, economists, lawyers and civil society members will participate. Finally, the alliance will observe a 24-hour strike in all garment units to protest poor wages of the workers and the delay in implementing the tripartite deal.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Workers Party Saiful Haque said the right wage of the workers will not lead to a shut down of garment factories rather it will increase production.

At a rally at Bijoy Nagar in the capital organised by Revolutionary Garments Workers Solidarity he demanded

announcement of Tk 3,000 as the minimum wage and implementation of the tripartite agreement immediately.

Leaders of National Garment Workers Federation at a token hunger strike at Muktangan in the city threatened to go for tougher movement if the minimum wage is not set within a week.

President of Bangladesh Garments Workers Alliance Shirin Akhter said if the government and the owners think of their self-interest only then the garment industry will be threatened.

Dismissing the proposed minimum wage of Tk 1604, she demanded that the government takes necessary actions to raise it to Tk 3,000 for the sake of the garment workers and the industry as well.

Bangladesh Garments Mojdur Union also rejected the wage board proposed pay structure and at a protest meeting in its office the leaders said the proposed pay structure is contradictory to the agreement signed among the government, workers and the owners' association on June 12.

Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad also organised a meeting presided over by its President Mesbah Uddin Ahmad and demanded that the minimum wage be reset at Tk 3,000.

### Non-govt primary

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bring out a procession from Muktangan at 1:00pm that will march city streets before starting their 48-hour sit-in programme at 3:00pm today.

After the sit-in programme, they will go for 48-hour hunger strike if the government does not meet their one-point demand for job nationalisation, Bachchu, secretary general of the association, said.

Another faction of Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association led by Samsul Haque will start indefinite sit-in at Muktangan from tomorrow to press their demand for realising the same demand.

They will hold a teachers' rally before starting the sit-in tomorrow, Samsul Haque, president of the association, said.

## Kailashtila oil

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Kailashtila field is oil rich. The fact that this field produced 522 barrels a day on test run tells us that the potential is quite good," said one source.

The source pointed out that three months back, the SGFL assigned Bapex to drill the well at a cost of Tk 25 crore. The drilling is almost complete now with a solid drilling case in place. The drilling rig and all drilling equipment funded by it are still at the site and it is still not too late to undertake the additional task.

"If we miss this chance now, we will have to spend more than Tk 25 crore in future to tap this valuable oil resource. If we go for additional drilling now, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain," he added.

Kailashtila field was discovered in 1962 in Golapganj upazila on the south of Sylhet town. It is estimated that this field has a total recoverable gas reserve of 1.931 trillion cubic feet (TCF). The actual reserve can be assessed only when the recoverable is exhausted.

Kailashtila gas is wet in nature since it is rich with condensate, one kind of liquid petroleum. The level of production from this field was doubled in 1988 by drilling two wells together to resolve an on-

going gas crisis. During that drilling, oil was found and tested but the ADB's intervention ultimately stopped the bid to tap oil.

"At that time, increasing gas supplies were more important than tapping an oil field. Oil was internationally being sold at \$10 a barrel while the country's power plants and fertiliser factories were all dependent on increasing the gas supplies," said a senior official.

He went on, "Right now, we don't have any gas crisis. We have some major gas field development schemes in the pipeline. In contrast, oil price in the global market is \$70 per barrel. This is a good time to tap oil resources."

About 50 percent of the estimated recoverable reserve of Kailashtila field has been exhausted. Of the four existing wells, three now produce gas from the upper level sand as the lower and mid-level gas sands have been exhausted. The fourth well is producing gas from its mid-level gas sand.

The official further said Petrobangla will soon begin drilling of another development well in Habiganj gas field, which also produces wet gas and promises oil.

"We hope that when they do it, they opt for tapping the maximum potential," he added.

## Owners question

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Ahmed, and permanent representative of the workers Zafrul Hasan signed the proposal. Zafrul Hasan is also general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the workers wing of Fruling BNP.

There are allegations that the board chairman, the neutral member and Zafrul were in a hurry to send the proposal to the government under pressure from it.

Anisul Haq and Nazma Akhter, did not sign the proposal, and permanent member of the employers on the board Kazi Saifuddin Ahmed was absent from the meeting.

Anisul Haq in his letter said the meeting on September 12 had four different proposals on the platter, the first of which was submitted by the neutral member and endorsed for discussion by the representative of workers Nazma Akhter. But the first proposal was not finally discussed as the second one already cropped up.

The board at the meeting failed to reach a consensus on minimum wages for garment workers despite a hectic seven-hour long negotiation and finally sent a proposal to the government based on a majority support.

The board sent to the government, for its consideration, a three-

### Bridge unused

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without a plan for any approach road.

Local people appealed to the authorities several times for building the approach roads but their demand could not be implemented due to fund constraints, said Anisur Rahman.

Shafiqul Islam, senior officer of the local Sonali Bank, had lodged with the Bogra Pourasabha chairman a written complaint on behalf of the locals for solving the problem long ago, but to no effect.

Locals alleged that at least 50,000 people on both sides of the bridge face inconvenience for want of the approach road.

They said people of Malatinagar and Natipara areas are dependent on the footbridge for communication.

### 5,000 flee homes

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waiting for bus and other vehicles to move to safer places, he said.

Second-in-command of Sylhet BDR Major Sirajul Haque said the Indian border guards started firing at the BDR outpost on the Uttarkul borders at about 8:55pm on Thursday.

The BDR replied the shots, he said, adding that around 600-700 gunshots were traded until 10:20pm.

A tense situation had been prevailing along the Zakiganj borders for the last three months after the BSF tried to prevent some Bangladeshi farmers from cultivating farmlands attached to the BDR outposts on Uttarkul and Amolshid borders.

Both the border guards traded about 2000 gunshots on July 26 and 27.

The BDR was also able to prevent the BSF men from erecting barbed-wire fences within 150 yards from the border at Jahaighat point.

### Hindus

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Muslim leaders particularly from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), its ally in the ruling coalition Jamaat-e-Islami and the main opposition Awami League (AL).

The delegates met a Jamaat team led by Abdul Gafur at Kazi Alauddin College ground at Zafarpur.

BNP leaders led by Prof Khoda Box met the EU team at Mahatpur.

In line with what the BNP-Jamaat top brass say, they informed the visiting delegation that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and former chief justice KM Hasan (who is due to head caretaker govt) are neutral persons. And a free and fair election is possible under them.

AL leaders led by Prof Dr AFM Ruhul Haque told the EU team that a fair election is impossible under the present CEC and KM Hasan as "both are BNP men".

They alleged that the coalition government has politicised the Election Commission, administration and police by appointing persons politically affiliated with the ruling parties. These persons should be kept off the election process, they said.

The EU delegation included Ana Beatriz Martins, Pascaline Krone, Jenny Cristensen and EU Ambassador in Bangladesh Stefan Frowein.

They will visit Tala Mobarakpur area today to exchange views with district level leaders of the parties.

### Amnesty

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personnel to use excessive force or subject demonstrators to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," the release added.

Police attacked at least five opposition leaders during street demonstrations in the past few days, and beat them severely leaving them injured, some seriously, said the human rights watchdog.

The injured are Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to opposition chief Sheikh Hasina, Mohammad Nasim, a former home minister, Asaduzzaman Noor, a lawmaker, Motia Chowdhury, a former agriculture minister, and Advocate Shaira Khatun, a leading member of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

"None of these individuals were acting violently and they posed no threat to the police," said Amnesty International quoting from news reports.

"They are believed to have been specifically targeted because of their leading role in the Awami League party," the release said.

According to news reports, police attacked these individuals in a specific and targeted manner, Amnesty International said adding, "They were surrounded by police officers and were not able or allowed to disperse. They were then subjected to severe beatings."

In Amnesty International's view, these attacks on persons under police control when they were not resisting the police in any way amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, the release read.

## Opposition plans

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Abdul Jalil, coordinator of the 14-party alliance told The Daily Star yesterday, "We will opt for more vigorous programmes and do everything we can to force the government to accept the demand for electoral reforms. We will bring the entire country to a standstill after the grand rally."

As part of the last round demonstrations, the opposition will seek to cut off Dhaka from the other parts of the country through hartal, siege and obstacle programmes, said Jalil, also general secretary of AL.

"We have no alternative but to win this one last fight. It will be a fight for our existence and we just cannot afford to lose it," he observed.

In the last couple of days, the opposition combine has held a series of meetings preparatory to the grand rally. They will issue some instructions today for the grassroots level leaders of Dhaka division.

The opposition parties are looking to turn the capital into a human sea by mobilising around 10 lakh people in the September 18 rally. They have already directed the district level leaders to work to that end.

The grassroots level leaders have urged the high-ups to declare programmes aiming to keep downtown Dhaka halted for several days.

The leaders of the Chittagong and Sylhet regions where the AL leaders hold the mayoral posts have hinted that they are ready to shut off all modes of communication if needed.

The government, on the other hand, will be tough on the opposition programme and has already instructed the law enforcers accordingly.

The police and other law enforcement agencies have been asked to stay alert until the opposition declares the next programmes.

In return for anonymity, a senior police official told The Daily Star that they have been ordered to go for blanket arrests in the run-up to the grand rally at Paltan Maidan.

Meanwhile, the opposition

leaders and workers have been asked to resist the law enforcers if they try to bar them from joining the rally.

"If the government resorts to violence, we will reply with stiff resistance," AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star.

### PREPARATORY MEETINGS

The city unit of the 14-party yesterday held a meeting at Gono Forum's office in the capital. At the meeting, the opposition leaders observed that at long last the prime minister has acknowledged the need for proposed reforms but that too when they are preparing for the final agitation.

Now she is talking about a secretary-level dialogue over the issue, they added.

Questioning her sincerity, they said they will have to see whether it is a new conspiracy of the BNP chairperson.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed called on Khaleda to come up with a formal written proposal in this regard.

At the meeting, Abdul Jalil said, "We must think twice before reaching a decision on the prime minister's proposal for dialogue. We have to be sure if she really means what she said."

Presided over by Dhaka City Gono Forum President Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, the meeting was addressed among others by Rashed Khan Menon, Obaidul Quader, Abdul Mannan, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Dilip Barua, Nurul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharya, and Abdus Samad.

The opposition combine sits today to exchange views with city, thana, and ward unit leaders.

The left leaning 11-party, a major component of the 14-party alliance, held a meeting at the Workers Party office with Rashed Khan Menon in the chair.

Attended by 11-party coordinator Nurul Islam, Bimal Biswas, Dilip Barua, among others, the meeting observed that the government should act to create an environment congenial to holding a dialogue on the reforms issue.

## Artist Nitun Kundu

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teachers and students, friends, artists, Qayyum Chowdhury and Murtaza Basheer and Maj Gen CR Dutta thronged the hospital to pay homage to the legendary sculptor.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep shock at the death of Nitun Kundu.

A celebrated painter and founder of international standard furniture maker Otobi Limited, Nitun Kundu (original name Nitya Gopal Kundu) will remain alive in the mind of countrymen for his artistic works.

According to a press release issued by the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts yesterday, Nitun Kundu first felt chest pain at the Malaysia Airport on Monday on his way back home from a trip to Malaysia and China. He went to office on Tuesday where he suffered the heart attack and fell unconscious.

The body of Nitun Kundu has been preserved at BIRDEM mortuary.

Nitun Kundu worked with artist Qamrul Hasan at the public relations department of the exiled Bangladesh government during the Liberation War in 1971. He designed a good number of posters published by the Information and Publicity Department of the government in exile. Of them, "Banglar Hindu, Banglar Boudha, Banglar Khristan, Banglar Musliman--amra shobai Bangalee" (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslims of Bangla--we all are Bangalee) and "Sada Jagrata Banglar Muktibahini" (ever awake freedom fighters) are remarkable.

Sculptor Nitun Kundu added a new dimension to the fine arts movement in the 1960s, showing his skills in both abstract and realistic art.

Apart from the Shabash Bangladesh, his other important works include the Saarc Fountain at Karwan Bazar, the fountain in front of the High Court, and the Sampan at Chittagong Airport.

A pioneer in using metal with wood in making furniture, Nitun Kundu served the USIS in the pre-Liberation period. The artist-cum-industrialist also worked for a while at the Bitopi Advertising Company before launching the Otobi in 1975.

His multidimensional artistic sense and work skill has made the Otobi an ever-growing organisation.

Awarded both as an artist and an entrepreneur, Nitun Kundu earned the Ekushey Padak and The Daily Star-DHL best entrepreneur award.

Nitun Kundu also crafted several national trophies, including those of the national film award, President Gold Cup, Notun Kuri Award of Bangladesh Television, Asia Cricket Cup, and the Ekushey Padak.

Fine Arts) in 1959 with first position in the first class.

He was survived by his wife Fulgini Kundu, daughter Amit and son Animesh.

### CONDOLENCES

The president and general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad expressed profound shock at the death of Nitun Kundu.

In a statement, they said his death has caused an irreparable loss to the nation.

They expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation in a statement mourned the death of Nitun Kundu and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju and Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam in a press release expressed deep shock at the news of Nitun Kundu's death.

### State honour

**FROM PAGE 1**  
From there his body will be taken to the Central Shaheed Minar at 11:00am and kept for people to pay their last tribute to the artist.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said all preparations have been made for the artist's funeral in state honour as he was a valiant freedom fighter.

Before cremating at the Postagala cremation centre, Nitun Kundu's body will be taken to Otobi's Shyampur factory where he fell unconscious following a heart attack on Tuesday.

### Saber

**FROM PAGE 1**  
started having double vision since a police attack on him on February 12, 2004. The problem deteriorated further after the September 6 attack.

The urinary infection caused by trauma in his lower abdomen due to the police beating however has been cured and his gall bladder is functioning at 70 percent.

Following the September 6 attack, Saber was first admitted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital and later shifted to Apollo Hospital in the capital. He was flown to Singapore on September 9 as his condition deteriorated.

Meanwhile, Sammlito Nagorik Andolon (SNA), a civil society body, yesterday condemned Tuesday's police attacks on AL leader Mohammad Nasim and Asaduzzaman Noor, terming the attacks 'barbaric'.

It urged the government to sit for a negotiation 'discarding the path of torture and the plan to rig the election'.

Signatories to the SNA statement included Air Vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khondoker, Dr Kazi Faruq Ahmed, Prof Asim Arefin Siddiq, Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, Nasir Uddin Yusuf, Shahriar Kabir, Shirin Akhter and Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul.

## Yemen foils suicide attacks on oil plants 4 bombers killed

REUTERS, Sana'a

Yemen foiled two suicide attacks on its oil and gas facilities yesterday, days after al-Qaeda urged Muslims to target Western interests, especially oil installations.

The Interior Ministry said four bombers were killed when security forces blew up four rigged cars at dawn before they reached their targets. A guard was also killed.

There was no damage to the state-owned facilities, the ministry added. Yemen, a minor oil producer, is the ancestral home of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and has been battling militants for years.

"The Interior Ministry foiled early this morning two terrorist attacks involving four cars that targeted an oil exporting terminal in Hadramout and an oil refinery and gas production unit in Marib," a statement carried on state media said.

The attempted attacks occurred east of the capital Sana'a.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Yemen said it had launched an investigation.

## BSF returns 13 fishermen freed from jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned 13 Bangladeshi fishermen, who had been detained in an Indian jail for almost 10 months, on Thursday night.

The fishermen with a trawler were caught in a storm while fishing in the Bay of Bengal last December. They lost their way and entered the Indian territory when BSF picked them up. They were later sent to jail for intrusion into Indian territory.

The fishermen were released following mediation by an Indian human rights organisation.

The returnees are Nazrul Islam, 38, Shaiful Islam, 31, Rahim Badsha, 42, Islam, 40, Abdus Salam, 45, Jafar Alam, 38, Ullah Miah, 40, Forkan, 32, Shamsul Alam, 29, Jafar, 32, Ullah Mian, 42, Shaiful Alam, 40 and Abdul Quader, 30.

The fishermen hail from Moheshkhali and Ukiya upazilas of Cox's Bazar.

## Road accidents kill 6, injure 30 in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Six people were killed and 30 others injured in three separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

Four persons were killed and 30 injured when a Tekerhat bound passenger bus from Faridpur fell into a roadside ditch at Bhabukdia point on the Faridpur-Barisal highway under Nagarkanda upazila at around 12noon, police said.

The dead were identified as Kamrul 6, Parvez 4, Moyna, 12, and Alam, 20. The injured passengers, many of them with serious injuries, were admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

A motorbike rider was killed when a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction hit his vehicle at Chadipur on the Faridpur-Khulna highway at around 2:00pm yesterday. The victim was identified as Abdul Jalil, 35.

Another person was run over by a bus when he was crossing the road at Shibrampur on the Dhaka-Khulna highway at around 2:00pm yesterday. The dead was identified as engineer Nazrul, 29.

### WB chief

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meeting. The Development Committee will be addressing the bank's strategy on governance and anti-corruption.

"First of all, the purpose is not to find a reason to cut back on lending; to the contrary, it's to make the quality of our lending better and to make sure that the lending and grant-making that we do go where it is supposed to go, which is to help the poorest of the world," he added.

### 51 more bodies

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Sadr will have to disarm, saying situation was "very, very serious challenge for Iraq and for the Iraqi government".

After a meeting with US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Saleh, a Kurd, said "there are discussions with Moqtada al-Sadr and other political leaders in the country that they all have to make a choice."

"Either they are part of the political process and renounce arms and integrate into the country's political system and governing institutions, or that present situation will not be acceptable," he said.

Saleh however accepted that it was politically problematic for Shia Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to "take on the militias" which come from his own community.

The United Nations also warned this week that if urgent steps were not taken, Iraq was heading into all-out civil war.

## Hope rekindles

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the opposition will respond to her call."

Sources said the donors as well as the international community have already made it clear to the BNP and AL leaders that they must hold a dialogue on the reforms.

Now both the parties are working on their strategy in this regard. They want formal proposals from their counterpart, said sources.

Referring to the pressure from the donor and international community on the political parties, Hafiz Uddin Khan, former adviser to the caretaker government, yesterday told The Daily Star, "Now we can see a ray of hope that there might be a dialogue and the groups concerned should not squander this chance to ensure peace and stability."

Earlier, in response to an initiative of the business community for talks, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the reporters, "We have no objection to sitting across the table but the proposal must come from the opposition."

Now it is almost sure that a one-to-one dialogue on reform proposals will take place before the handover of power to the caretaker government. But the question remains who will take the initiative," a ruling party leader seeking anonymity told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sources said the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) assessment of the existing political situation has helped to change the prime minister's stance on dialogue. On the other hand, the international community has kept the opposition under pressure so that they do not reject her proposal.

A delegation of the Washington-based NDI arrived here on September 8 on a visit to assess the environment leading up to the next election. Before leaving the country, leader of the delegation Tom Daschle said there's still enough time for the political parties to sit and solve the problems.

The visiting European Union (EU) exploratory mission too implicitly favoured negotiations between the government and opposition to resolve the crisis.

Then on Thursday, US Ambassador in Dhaka Patricia A Butenis requested AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil to sit down with the government and settle the issue of electoral reforms immediately.

The US is ready to mediate the talks, if required, Jalil quoted Butenis as saying.

AL President Sheikh Hasina placed the reform proposals in

### Tk 46 lakh looted

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Police also arrested the bank's night guard Motiur Rahman Chowdhury who had gone home on Thursday night.

Police claimed the security guards, during interrogation, told them a gang of six to seven armed robbers held them behind the building. The robbers went into the bank leaving one of their gang members to guard the security personnel.

Meanwhile, Officer-in-charge (OC) of Moulvibazar Police Station Amal Kirshna Dhar said Motiur claimed that he had left for home on Thursday after the manager of the