

## 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, Narsingdi, 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

## 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-

## 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 ruling 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.

Annisul Huq 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.

Annisul Huq 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 major support.

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

## Bridge unused

FROM PAGE 16  
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 a complaint with the Bogra Pousarabha 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

FROM PAGE 1  
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 Zakirganj 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 Jafajhat point.

Another faction of Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association led by Samsul Haque will start indefinite sit-in at Muktangon 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.

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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 Mahatpar.

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 Hoque 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, Pascaleine 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.

The board proposed Tk 1,604 as gross minimum wage for entry-level garment workers for the first year up to June 30, 2007, which would be Tk 1,890 in the second year during July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, and Tk 2,117.50 in the third year starting from July 1, 2008.

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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 to 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 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 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 communications 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 Palta Maidan.

Meanwhile, the opposition

is holding a secret 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 President Md. Tofail Ahmed called on Khaleda to come to Dhaka to come up with a formal written proposal in this regard.

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