

Uttara garment workers ransack vehicles over salary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment workers ransacked vehicles and blockaded Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Uttara in the capital yesterday for due salaries.

Sources said employees of a sweater factory got furious as the owner started disbursing salaries below the actual rates. The factory reopened 15 days back after a closure for two and a half months.

Over six hundred workers came out on the street at 2:30pm, ransacked around ten vehicles and blockaded the highway for 15 minutes creating a huge traffic jam, locals said.

Later, police dispersed the workers and arrested six of them.

2 cops killed in wave of Afghan blasts

AFP, Kandahar

Four suicide bombings struck Afghanistan yesterday, killing two policemen, as military officials announced more than 10 Taliban commanders were killed in major battles a week ago.

One of the commanders killed was believed to have been among five Taliban freed from Afghan jails last month in exchange for an Italian hostage, the US-led coalition said, citing intelligence reports.

"Two other senior Taliban commanders, believed to have been killed in the battles, were known enemies of the Afghan government for the past three years," it said.

A senior Afghan defence ministry official agreed with the statement about the April 27 and 29 fighting in the western province of Herat.

"A big number of senior Taliban commanders were among those killed," he said on condition of anonymity. "A Taliban commander swapped for the Italian journalist was also killed."

The late-March swap was widely condemned with critics saying it could result in copy-cat kidnappings. Less than a week later an Afghan medical team was snatched; two French aid workers and three Afghans were captured April 3.

In both cases, the Taliban said it wanted some of its prisoners to be freed in exchange for the hostages. It has also demanded the withdrawal of French troops in Afghanistan for the release of the French group.

The militants released one of the French hostages a week ago; on Saturday it said it would decide on the fate of the Frenchman and his colleagues after France's May 6 presidential election.

The Herat battles involved US Special Forces, other coalition soldiers and Afghan troops.



A worker without any protective gear lowers himself into a manhole to clear the sewer in the city's Shahbagh area, risking his life. Such practice is still going on even after several workers died in the manhole in previous years. The picture was taken on Thursday.

Bangladesh to benefit from OIC's \$10b poverty alleviation programme

BSS, Dhaka

Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Dr Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has said his organisation has drawn up an ambitious programme of ten billion dollars for poverty alleviation in the relatively less fortunate member nations.

"Bangladesh is certainly among the countries that stand to benefit from the programme," he said in an exclusive interview with BSS Chief Editor Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury recently in Azerbaijan's capital Baku on the sidelines of a conference.

He said Bangladesh's commitment to the OIC from the "Day One" of its entry in the OIC has been unflinching regardless of the fact which the government is in power in that country. "With unwavering commitment and a sizeable population, Bangladesh is making contribution to the causes of OIC in every possible way," said the Turkish scholar, now serving as the chief executive of the Jeddah-based 53-nation body.

The three-day just-concluded conference in the lovely Caspian sea city drew participants from both Muslim and non-Islamic nations

with politicians, scholars, media figures and diplomats deliberating for three days on various aspects of media-related issues with particular reference to Islam and the Muslim community.

The OIC sponsored the conference in cooperation with the government of Azerbaijan.

Dr Ekmeleddin said the OIC is now very much in the focus as the organisation is striving hard to make itself more relevant to the causes of its members as well as promoting peace and understanding across the world in a larger perspective. He said the organisation is sparing no efforts to accomplish the twin objectives of Islamic cohesion on one hand and global peace and harmony on the other.

The OIC secretary general particularly referred to the position taken by the OIC on the cartoon issue on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the newspaper of a European country and said the matter brought the Muslims and sensible non-Muslims under the same umbrella as great care is being stressed in dealing with sensitive matters.

He said the Baku conference discussed all these matters with a view to promoting understanding

and laid importance on the role of media in this regard.

Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Dr Elmar Mammadyarov, former Romanian president Ion Llescu, Terry Devis, Secretary General, Council of Europe and Saudi Assistant Minister for Culture and Information Abdul Aziz A Bin Salamah attended the conference.

More than 150 participants included Lord Nazir Ahmed, British MP, media editors from Arab nations, the United States, Canada, Japan and other countries.

Chief Editor and Managing Director of the national news agency BSS was the participant from Bangladesh.

The deliberations during the business sessions generated heated debates and discussions on several issues pertaining to the portrayal of Islam and its alleged linkages with "terrorism" mainly in a section of the western press as well as "bigots" seeking to characterise the entire western press as biased and anti-Muslim in approach.

The conference was near-unanimous that the media needs to be more careful in dealing with a sensitive religious matter like the cartoon published in some

European countries on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that hurt the sentiments of most people across the world. Many non-Muslim participants severely criticised such acts and said freedom of media must not be abused. At the same time, several Muslim discussants opined that religious groups need to refrain from inciting people on religious lines.

The conference adopted resolutions calling for tolerance and application of a finer mind in promoting understanding among the people cutting across religious divides.

The OIC secretary general, in his interview, praised the outcome of the conference, saying it would help remove many misconceptions about Islam, which is a religion of peace and tranquillity while maintaining its own distinct characteristics.

He lauded the Islamic values of Bangladesh and said people of the country have an example of religious harmony and tolerance as much as the overwhelmingly majority are proud of being Muslims. Islam spread the message of love and fraternity with all, the OIC secretary general stressed and hoped that the true message of Islam must not be misinterpreted.

China firm to build Myanmar hydro-power plants

AFP, Yangon

A Chinese firm will help military-run Myanmar build seven hydro-electric plants with combined power capacity likely to be the biggest in the Southeast Asian country, state media said yesterday.

The junta will team up with China Power Investment Corporation (CPI), one of China's biggest power producers, to construct the plants in northern Kachin state on the border with China, the state-run daily New Light of Myanmar said.

"Upon completion, all projects are expected to generate 13,360 megawatts in total," the paper said without giving further details.

It would surpass power capacity of 7,100 megawatts from Myanmar's biggest hydro-power project between the junta and Thai energy firm MDX Group.

The MDX project, worth six billion dollars, is expected to be ready in 2012, with 85 percent of the electricity from the plant going to Thailand, with the rest for Myanmar.

Myanmar, one of the world's poorest nations, is under a series of US and European economic sanctions imposed over the junta's rights abuses and the house arrest of 61-year-old democracy icon and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

150m-yr-old dinosaur unearthed in Argentina

AFP, Buenos Aires

Palaeontologists unearthed a flesh-eating dinosaur some 150 million years old in southern Argentina with all its joints in place, the first time such a beast has been dug up so intact, one of the finders told AFP on Friday.

The seven-metre (23-foot) tall, two-legged dinosaur, dubbed the Condorraptor, was found fossilised with parts of its jaw and head showing in rock near the village of Cerro Condor in Patagonia, at a site where palaeontologists had been working for five years.

"It is an unprecedented discovery. It is the first time in the world that a carnivorous dinosaur of the Middle Jurassic period has been found fully jointed," said Pablo Puerta, a palaeontologist at the Egidio Feruglio museum in the town of Trelew.

Working in the southern province of Chubut, the team led by the German dinosaur specialist Oliver Rauhut uncovered the fossil using a giant crane to shift rock.

Puerta said it will take about a year to fully uncover the dinosaur. It could then go on display at the Trelew museum.

Better management of migrants' remittance stressed

A daylong training workshop titled 'Better Management of Migrants Remittance' was organised for the local level bank officials by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University (DU) with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Prof Tasneem Siddiqui of political science department of DU, presented the keynote paper on the overall migration scenario in Bangladesh and the contribution of remittance to the economy of Bangladesh.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, attended the workshop as special guest.

The programme was presided over by Prof C R Abrar of international relations department of DU.

The workshop highlighted the remittance experiences of the migrants through banks at both sending and receiving ends.

A number of researches, conducted by RMMRU and presented in the workshop, stressed upon the problems that have constrained the remittances transaction.

Md Abdul Mannan, deputy executive president and head of

International Banking Wing of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, suggested measures in reducing these problems.

He strongly recommended on appointing bank representatives at the sending countries and to provide more customer-friendly services to the remittance receiving families.

Andrew Hook, from the Remittance Payments Partnership (RPP) of Bangladesh Bank, discussed the services provided by different exchange houses and other agencies.

He also spoke about other methods that will have impact on future remittances flow such as Instant Cash, Door-to-door Services, Mobile-to-Mobile Services, etc.

The participants of the workshop included bank officials from Dhaka, Tangail, Comilla and Chittagong.

Md Nazir Hossain, principal officer of Training Institute of Janata Bank, A K M Mosharraf Hossain, AGM of the International Department of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, and Md Nazrul Islam, AGM of F/C Management Division of Agrani Bank were among the other resource persons to conduct the training sessions.



Participants at a workshop on "Job Interview and Assessment Centre" at Victoria University seminar hall at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Prof G M Chowdhury, president, U & I Alliance, Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, vice chancellor of IUB and Dr Tanvir A Khan, registrar & director, Career Guidance & Placement, IUB.

Workshop on job interview held in city

A workshop on Job Interview and Assessment Centre was held at Victoria University seminar hall at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday, says a press release.

It was jointly organised by Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Victoria University, Melbourne and University and Industry Alliance, University of Dhaka.

Over 90 final semester students and recent graduates from Dhaka University, IUB, BRAC University and Victoria University participated in the workshop.

IUB Vice Chancellor Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury in his address as special guest of the ceremony urged the participants to tune themselves with the time to cope up with the fast-changing global scenario.

Prof GM Chowdhury, president of U & I Alliance, and Dr Tanvir A Khan, registrar and director, Career Guidance and Placement of IUB, also spoke on the occasion.

Shamsia I Mutasim, head of HR, Arab Bangladesh Bank Limited made her presentation of Assessment Centre while Fatema Rizwana, director, HR, Reckitt Benckiser Bangladesh Limited spoke on preparation for successful interviews.

Strike in Kashmir over arrests, mosque

AFP, Srinagar

Demonstrators shut down Indian Kashmir's main city yesterday to protest against the jailing of hard-line separatists and alleged damage to a mosque, witnesses said.

Protesters shouted "set free the separatists" and "God is great." Some pelted stones at police, who retaliated with batons, but no injuries were reported.

There have been demonstrations for nearly two weeks against the arrest late last month of four separatists being held in Kashmir's second largest city Jammu, which serves as the winter capital.

The four were arrested for holding an unauthorised rally to welcome back Syed Ali Geelani, leader of the hardline wing of the region's separatist alliance, who had undergone cancer treatment in Mumbai.

The strike shut all educational institutions and businesses in the summer capital Srinagar.

Although Saturday is a normal working day in Muslim-majority Kashmir, traffic was light and attendance at government offices was thin.

"I urge people to observe a total

shutdown to express their resentment against the arrests," said Geelani, who sponsored the call.

Police complained that "anti-national" slogans -- a euphemism used for anti-India and pro-separatist slogans -- had been chanted at the rally.

Use of such slogans is nothing new in Kashmir, where anti-India sentiments have been running high since Muslim rebels launched an insurgency against New Delhi's rule in 1989.

Geelani said the strike was also a response to damage to a 199-year-old mosque housed in a fort controlled by Indian troops.

Muslim visitors have said a Hindu and a Sikh temple inside the recently reopened fort overlooking Srinagar remained intact. But they said the mosque had been damaged and blamed paramilitary forces in charge of the fort.

Authorities denied the allegations, saying the mosque had been in a "dilapidated" state for a long time.

The Hari Parbat Fort, built in 1808 when Kashmir was under Afghan rule, was thrown open to the public last month, 17 years after the revolt forced it to close.