



A garment factory vandalised yesterday by agitated workers (left) and an army van guards the entrance to the DEPZ. Most of the units remained shut following fierce clash between police and workers leaving around 100 people injured.

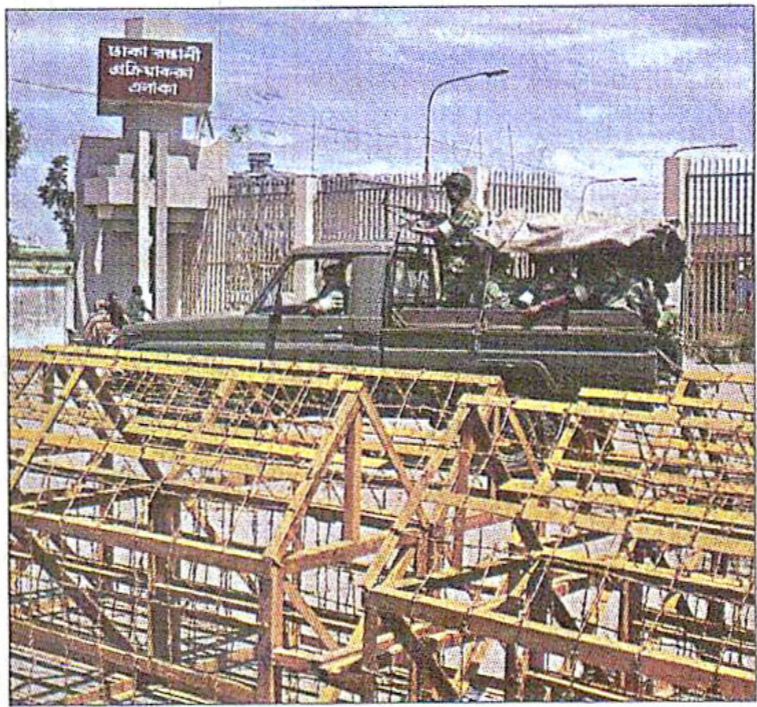


PHOTO STAR

100 hurt as RMG workers, police clash at DEPZ

Most factories remain shut as several units vandalised over rumoured killing of a co-worker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Production in most parts of the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) in Savar remained suspended throughout the day yesterday as clashes between garment workers and police left at least 100 people injured.

The fighting broke out as police charged baton on hundreds of workers fuming over unconfirmed reports that one of them was killed Thursday over theft of a cellphoneset.

Several hundred workers of Featherlite Ltd, a garment factory,

massed at the entrance to the DEPZ extension at around 7:00am, clamouring for recovery of the co-worker's body.

As the law enforcers prevented them from entering, they marched towards the DEPZ (Old) area. On the way, they were joined by a huge number of fellows from the other factories.

At DEPZ (Old), police clubbed them, leaving several workers injured.

In response, the demonstrators went on the rampage, damaging a number of garment factories in

and outside the DEPZ. Besides, they barricaded the Nabinagar-Kaliakoir Road and vandalised seven to eight vehicles.

A-One, Hoplun, Lenny Fashions and Actor Ltd are among the factories damaged inside the DEPZ area.

Chase and counter-chase went on for hours. Police used baton again injuring 40 more workers. More than 10 law enforcers were also injured during the clashes.

Police had to shoot around 35 teargas shells to drive off the marauding crowd and bring the situation under control.

Due to blockade on the road and the fight, most of the garment workers could not join work, leading to suspension of production in most of the factories.

Only 17 out of 88 factories were operative during the time when RMG plants in the nearby areas too remained closed fearing backlash, said DEPZ sources.

Locals said the workers at the Featherlite Ltd erupted in protests Thursday afternoon after rumours spread that the factory authorities had killed Helal, a worker, for

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Ramadan starts with Juma day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muslims yesterday observed the first day of Ramadan, the month of fasting in Hijri calendar, amid extra fervour as it was also the day of Juma prayers.

Extraordinary numbers of devotees said their Juma prayers yesterday at different city mosques and long rows were seen at many places as the mosques could not accommodate them all.

The kitchen markets in the capital also saw a huge rush of people who came to purchase sehri and iftar items. Prices of a few iftar items meanwhile shot up further yesterday.

Law enforcement agencies took special measures to control the prices of essentials at different city markets. Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) patrolled different kitchen markets.

Law enforcers were seen

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Country not under dual rule and army has no political role, says CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Fakhruddin Ahmed dismissed the notion that the country is placed under a dual rule and said he does not perceive any political role of the armed forces.

"I do not feel existence of dual rule... the army is assisting the civil government and playing an important role in curbing corruption, improving law and order, distributing flood relief, I do not see the reflection of their political role through these activities," he said in an interview with BBC Bangla Service yesterday.

Replying to a question, the chief adviser said the reasons that had



called for the promulgation of the state of emergency have not all disappeared, but assured that an emergency would be lifted at an appropriate time.

On the formation of National

Security Council, he said the government is pondering over the matter, as such institutions exist in neighbouring countries, but no final decision has yet been arrived at.

Asked if the government or its agencies are engaged in changing leadership of major political parties or splitting the parties through reform process, Fakhruddin refuted the allegation saying that it is the internal affairs of the parties to decide about their leadership and running their parties.

He said lifting of the ban on indoor politics has created an atmosphere for political parties to sit with the Election Commission

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PHOTO FOCUS BANGLA

Devotees crowd the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque as Ramadan began with Juma day this year.

Show of strength by pro-Bhuiyan men

Meeting of NEC members and former lawmakers today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP faction led by expelled secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan holds a meeting in the city today to assert its sway over the party councillors.

Insiders said the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) members and former lawmakers would meet in preparation for a council as soon as possible to settle the leadership issue.

To be followed by iftar, the meeting will be held at a convention centre in Gulshan at 2:00pm.

The number of NEC members in the BNP stands at 251 while 196 lawmakers represented the party in the last parliament. Some of the former lawmakers are members of the NEC at the same time as they are either president or general secretary of different district units.

"It will be an informal meeting

where the leaders will be able to speak their mind," said Ashraf Hossain, expelled joint secretary general. He told The Daily Star yesterday that some 300 leaders might attend the meeting.

Leaders said Bhuiyan would brief the partymen about the latest developments and explain the initiatives that he has taken in response to those.

He would also collect signatures of the councillors calling for a "demand meeting of the BNP". Signatures of at least one-third of 251 executive committee members are required to convene the meeting in the event of the chairperson's not consenting.

Bhuiyan, also a former LGRD and Cooperative minister, recently told reporters that the party council would decide who to lead the party and run the headquarters at

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Hairline crack in AL widening

Leaders fear over Wednesday's manhandling of four

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER

The incident of four Awami League leaders being manhandled by some rank and file activists on Wednesday is being looked at as a wake-up call by almost all the leaders of the party as they feel the unity of the organisation is clearly on the rocks.

Following Wednesday's incident outside the party office in Dhanmondi in the capital, most of the senior leaders including the acting president expressed their concerns about keeping the party united. Most of the senior leaders already talked the matter over among themselves in the last couple of days.

"The party must remain united at any cost," AL Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna told The Daily Star yesterday. He said recurrence of such

incidents must be prevented.

AL Acting President Zillur Rahman urged all in the party to remain united under any circumstance. He also assured party leaders that he will take measures to prevent recurrence of Wednesday's incident.

Factional rivalry in AL resurfaced again as Zillur and Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu had taken opposing positions regarding sitting for a dialogue on electoral reforms with the Election Commission (EC).

Leaders loyal to Zillur earlier said they will not sit for any dialogue with the EC until their detained president, Sheikh Hasina, is freed and the ban on indoor politics is lifted. But Amu said AL should participate in the EC initiated reform talks despite Hasina's incarceration and the ban on politics.

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Gastright due Tuesday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs John Anthony Gastright, Jr will arrive in Dhaka Tuesday on a three-day official visit apparently to observe the political situation in Bangladesh.

This will be the first visit by an important US state department official since the present caretaker government launched its massive anti-graft drive and started arresting corruption suspect political leaders, including former prime ministers Khaleida Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

Diplomatic circles in Dhaka are considering the visit of Gastright very important, as he will be meeting the government, civil society and high military officials to know about the latest situation in the country and progress towards implementation of the election roadmap announced by the caretaker government.

The US embassy in Dhaka could not confirm Gastright's meeting schedules, but foreign ministry

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BTRC-Bangla Phone discord over optical fibre network

SHARIER KHAN

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has warned private telephone company Bangla Phone Ltd of cancelling its licence for installing 2000 kilometres of optical fibre network 'outside' its licensed area.

Bangla Phone, which practically operates as a phone company for other phone companies, however argues that the optical fibre network was installed as per provisions laid down in its 2004 licence issued by the BTRC.

The company says the optical fibre network is an essential infrastructure that had to be built in the eastern part of the country-- from Sylhet to Chittagong-- to serve its customers in its licensed area in North-East Zone of Bangladesh. And the whole installation was done following approval of the BTRC, it adds.

Sources said the BTRC took a conflicting stance on Bangla Phone after the change of government

and appointment of its new chairman. The BTRC issued its first warning letter on May 31.

"Since then it has served Bangla Phone with several warning letters irrespective of replies, and stopped approving any network expansion work of the company," said one source.

Bangla Phone sources said till May the company was providing interconnection services using the optical fibre line to a dozen licensed phone and ISP companies including AKTEL, Teletalk, Warid, BDCOM, Asia Tel and BOL.

Bangla Phone has almost no

direct subscriber in its leased area and its business has entirely concentrated on developing telephone interconnection facility.

After May, 28 new customers remain waiting to take Bangla Phone's services. "We need to install 200 multiplexor (a transmitter and receiver device required to connect the microwave linking the optical fibre line). But the BTRC is not approving this scheme arguing this will be used for illegal VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) operation, which is absurd," claimed a Bangla Phone official.

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PHOTO FOCUS BANGLA

Water from the upstream coupled with rainwater sends Darpanagar of Jakiganj upazila in Sylhet under waist-deep floodwater.

Dhaka braces for fresh flooding

STAR REPORT

Dhaka is bracing for a second spell of floods this season with water level of the Buriganga, Turag, Sitalakha and Balu rivers rising for the last one week.

Fresh areas in Manikganj and Munshiganj districts adjoining Dhaka went under floodwater yesterday.

The flood forecasting and warning centre (FFWC) yesterday said flood situation is deteriorating in the south and central parts of the country and is likely to worsen further in the next 24 hours. The situation is improving in most of the northern districts.

The districts where floodwater is receding include Sylhet, Sunamganj, Hobiganj, Moulvibazar, Netrokona, Sherpur, Comilla, Feni, Noakhali and Lakshmipur.

The FFWC bulletin said the Ganges-Padma continued to rise and is likely to rise further slowly in

the next 24-48 hrs.

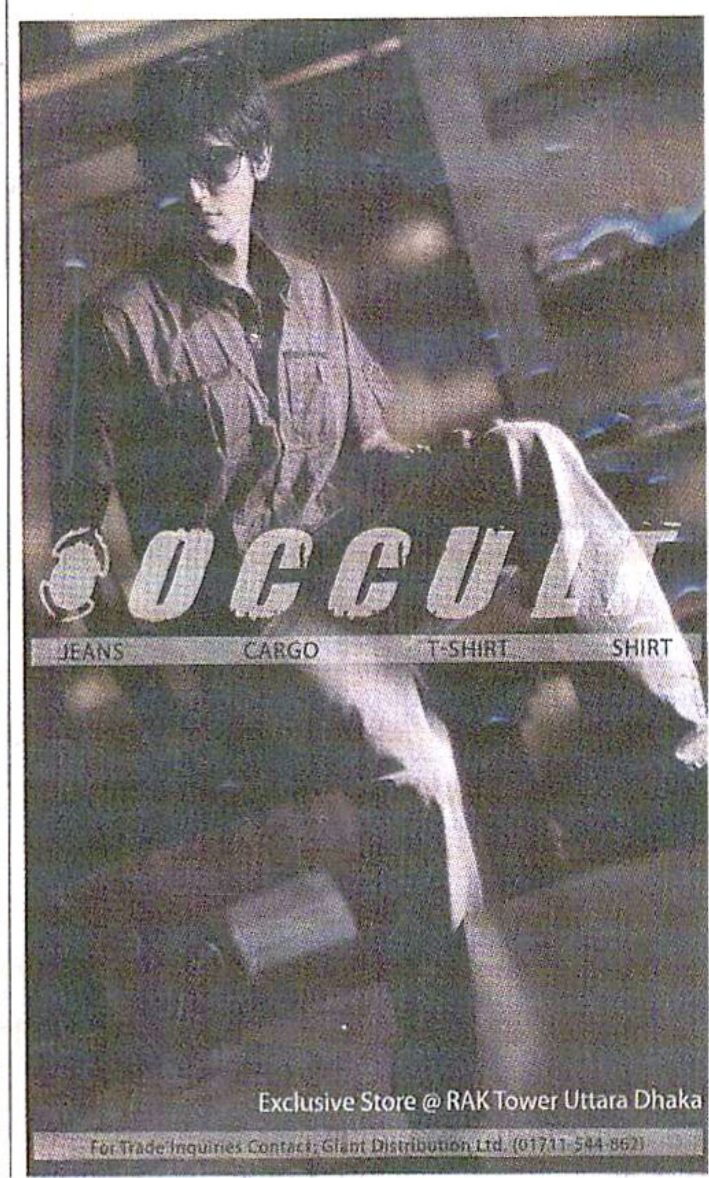
Our Manikganj correspondent reported that overall flood situation in the district has further deteriorated. Road communication between the district headquarters and four upazilas -- Harirampur, Ghior, Daulatpur and Satoria -- remains snapped with floodwater overflowing the roads.

Flood affected people in the district continue to suffer due to shortage of food and crisis of drinking water as most tube-wells went under water.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reports: Onrush of floodwaters breached Maowa-Bhagyakul embankment Thursday night inundating at least eight villages.

Our Netrokona correspondent reported that flood situation improved in bordering Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas and remained unchanged in some places.

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