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RMG workers clash with cops for pay hike

50 including 27 policemen hurt at Fatullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 50 people including 27 law enforcers were injured yesterday, with four of them having shot-gun pellet wounds, in yet another series of clashes between several thousand garment industry workers and police at Fatullah of Narayanganj near the capital.

The three-hour clash, that ensued after police had tried to refrain a group of garment workers from demonstrating for a salary hike adjustment on a par with other garment factories in the area, turned Dhaka-Narayanganj link road at Shibui Market area into a virtual battlefield.

Police fired shotguns and charged batons when several thousand demonstrating workers attacked the law enforcers with sticks and brickbats during the clash, which local residents alleged had been incited by Samik Kalyan Federation, labour front of Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami.

Witnesses said a group of pajama-panjabi clad bearded

young men armed with sticks of garan wood attacked the law enforcers.

The demonstrating workers set fire to felled tree trunks snapping vehicular traffic on the highway. Long traffic jams formed in both directions of the road causing terrible sufferings for commuters.

Three garment workers -- Sohel Rana, Yousuf, and Nurul Islam, and police constable Quaium -- were hit with shot-gun pellets. The injured were undergoing treatment in different hospitals in the capital and Narayanganj.

Police, witnesses and garment workers said the workers of Microfiber Garments came out of the factory and started demonstrating demanding that their salary hike follow the standard set by another garment factory in the area. Referring to Metro Garment's salary hike of Tk 250, the demonstrating workers said their factory owner increased their salary by only Tk 200.

The workers said their anger was ignited by the factory authori-

ties' rough behaviour with them and by the authorities' threat of police harassment as they went to the management for adjustment in their salary increase.

The angry workers came out of the factory and along with workers of some other garment factories attacked and ransacked several factories including Metro Garment, and vandalised some passing buses on the road, the witnesses said. Around 9:00am the demonstrators blocked the busy Dhaka-Narayanganj link road.

When police tried to intervene, the demonstrators staged a sit-in on the highway continuing to block it. At one point of the altercation the demonstrators beat up Assistant Superintendent of Police Mir Mohammad Towhid, and Officer-in-charge of Fatullah Police Station Bhuiyan Mahabub Hasan.

Witnesses said a few panjabi-pajama clad bearded young men were seen beating the policemen with sticks.

The bearded men then tried to

Noab, BSP for waiving VAT on newsprint

Delegation meets CA

UNB, Dhaka

Newspaper owners yesterday requested Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to waive the existing 15 percent VAT on newsprint in the wake of unusual price hike of printing paper on the international market.

They also requested a fourfold increase in rate for government advertisement as they said the existing rate has not been increased for last 20 years now.

The present rate for government advertisement per column-inch is Tk 208.

An eight-member delegation of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad (BSP) called

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Correction

We regret the inadvertent publication of a photo showing two workers of Hijub Tahreer, Bangladesh, as claimed by the organisation, under the news item 'Terrorist Threat', referring to Harkatul Jihad Al Islami Bangladesh (Huji), on page 7 of our monthly publication Forum (April, vol-2, issue-5).



Students at Dhaka University prepare for Pahela Baishakh celebrations. The photo was taken yesterday at the Institute of Fine Arts.

PHOTO: STAR

11,000 sued for violence in Dhaka, Ctg

5-day ultimatum to scrap women policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two separate cases were filed yesterday against around 11,000 unidentified Islamist activists for Friday's violence and vandalism in the Baitul Mukarram area in the capital and Hathazari Police Station in Chittagong.

Out of the accused, only 17 Islamists were identified and arrested for their involvement in the violence in Dhaka. As they were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, the court ordered to send them to Dhaka Central Jail custody.

However, no one has yet been arrested in connection with the Chittagong case.

Meanwhile, one of the agitating

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Govt-AL talks at Padma today

Zillur accepts Hossain Zillur's SMS invitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a reversal of a decision Awami League (AL) presidium finally agreed yesterday to sit in a dialogue today with caretaker government advisers, without a formal invitation.

Earlier on Wednesday, the highest policy making body of the party however had decided not to talk to the government without a formal invitation.

Sources said Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman sent an SMS to AL acting president Zillur Rahman inviting him to an unofficial talk today at 5:30pm in the state guesthouse Padma.

On AL's position about the disputed formal invitation, acting general secretary of the party Syed Ashrafur Islam said in the age of electronics it could be an email, a fax, or a letter. Asked, whether it could be an SMS too, the AL spokesman smiled.

Sources said 'influential quarters' put 'pressure' on a few senior party leaders to review their decision of not sitting with the government short of a formal invitation, or to find out an 'alternative path' for going to the unofficial talk without a formal invitation.

Following the 'pressure', the AL presidium sat yesterday and

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ISLAMISTS' CLASHES WITH COPS No plan to catch masterminds

But govt mulls 'stern action' against emergency violators

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAMIM ASHRAF

The government has no plan to go for the masterminds of recent violence in the name of protesting "anti-Islam" elements in the women development policy but is going to take stern action against the violators of the state of emergency.

The street demonstrations and violence by Islamist bigots have "embarrassed" the government. But it does not want to take a hard-line stance and arrest the masterminds "since it's a sensitive issue"

involving religion and the national mosque, said a high level source in the government yesterday.

While the government is in a dilemma, Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin, acting Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, categorically told The Daily Star yesterday the long-standing tendency of doing politics centring the mosque should stop immediately.

"I think it would be the best solution if the government demarcates mosque as a protected area, barring any kind of political activities. Only thus the sanctity of the mosque should be maintained."

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PHOTO: STAR

Cornered, policemen try to fend off attack from demonstrators near Shibui Market at Fatullah of Narayanganj during yesterday's clashes between garment workers and law enforcers.

CID arrests 'grenade thrower' in August 21 carnage

Ramna blasts probe almost complete, charge sheet soon

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday arrested a person suspected of throwing grenades in the August 21 blasts at an Awami League (AL) rally in 2004.

CID sources said the arrestee, Arif Hasan Sumon, had also carried bombs used in the Ramna blasts on April 14, 2001.

He was nabbed in a swoop at his house at Ali and Noor Real Estate Housing in the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday evening, they added.

The law enforcers launched a

massive hunt for Sumon after his name had come in the confessional statements of detained Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) boss Mufti Abdul Hannan, Moulana Abu Zafar alias Abu Sayeed and Huji Dhaka city unit general secretary Moulana Abu Taher.

Seeking not to be named, a CID official close to the blast investigations told The Daily Star last night that Sumon is a nephew of Taher.

Taher is a brother-in-law of Moulana Tajuddin, one of the suspected masterminds behind the August 21 grenade attacks. Believed to be holed up abroad, Tajuddin again is a brother of BNP

leader and former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, who has been detained for alleged links to the carnage on Bangabandhu Avenue that left 24 AL leaders and activists dead and scores injured.

Sumon became involved in militancy while a student of Dhaka College in 1999.

Meanwhile, investigators claim to have almost completed probe into the Ramna blasts case. They would submit the charge sheet once charges in the August 21 grenade attacks case are pressed, they said.

A top official of CID, which is

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Delwar threatens agitation to free Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the chairperson-appointed secretary general of BNP yesterday made a call for unity in the party, saying that the party would soon announce programmes to free its chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Meanwhile, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, the rival acting secretary general of pro-Saifur faction of the party, yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) has recognised him as the lawful secretary general of the party and he would seek to visit detained Chairperson Khaleda after receiving letter for dialogue from the EC.

However Delwar, while speaking with reporters following a meeting with the recently elected

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CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION Billion dollar fund for Dhaka on cards

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

A billion dollar 'multi-donor trust fund' for Bangladesh is on the cards to finance long-term climate change mitigation and adaptation in the public and private sector.

The national 'trust' would pool money obtained from different national and multilateral climate change funds and be managed by a 'board of trustees'. But the scale and scopes are currently under discussion, according to government and donor sources.

The government and donor officials close to the process say the fund is likely to be around \$1 billion as it would finance long-term

climate change adaptation plans in sectors varied from education and health to agriculture.

"The fund has not really taken shape yet. A trust has to be formed, the trustees have to be decided who will give the money, distribution of the fund, and the role of the government and donors -- all have to be fixed," Economic Relations Division Secretary Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan told The Daily Star.

However, unlike other 'trust-funds', this would be accessible to the government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector who design and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.

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