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A scene of vandalism: a furniture shop that lost its front to yesterday's labour unrest in the capital's Gulshan business hub. Garment workers vandalised dozens of shops and business establishments which are no way linked to the wage issue that aggrieved the workers. They rampaged through parts of Dhaka, protesting the new pay structure announced on Wednesday. Bottom, a police action to disperse the agitators.

PHOTO COURTESY: JESSICA MUDDITT
PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



RMG wage sparks violent protests

Rampaging workers vandalise over 200 business establishments, several factories in city a day after announcement of new pay structure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand garment workers yesterday rampaged through different parts of the capital and Gazipur rejecting new wage structure and demanding Tk 5,000 minimum wage from August.

The workers damaged around 200 business establishments, including several garment factories, and seven vehicles at Mohakhali, Tejgaon industrial area, Banani Chairmanbari and Gulshan Avenue.

The violent protest yesterday rocked the upscale neighbourhood of Gulshan Avenue, a popular shopping area. Angry workers vandalised a series of shops and smashed the glass fronts of offices on both sides of the avenue.

At least 20 people including five police personnel were injured in yesterday's clashes in Dhaka between law enforcers

and workers.

Witnesses said around 8:30am about 4,000 workers blocked the roads at Nabisco in Tejgaon industrial area while some 1,000 others took position near Mohakhali flyover at Chairmanbari, Banani.

Heavily outnumbered, police put barricades on roads and tried to disperse the protestors by charging truncheons and lobbing teargas canisters.

The barricades, however, could hardly hold the agitating workers for long. They started vandalising glass exteriors of many business centres including Navana Tower, Habib Super Market, Jabbar Tower in Gulshan-1, United Commercial Bank at Mohakhali Commercial area and Prime Bank at Amtoli in Mohakhali.

Witnesses said the workers damaged the glass fronts of the establishments, as

the business centres were closed for the weekend.

Meanwhile, the agitators at Tejgaon Industrial Area swooped on a dyeing factory and brought out a huge volume of fabrics on the street. They set fire to the fabrics.

Security guard Abdul Ali was on duty at an ATM booth in Mohakhali commercial area. He said garment workers hurled brickbats and damaged the booth around 11:30am. He and his two other colleagues were beaten up when they requested the protestors not to damage the booth.

The workers damaged five vehicles including three CNG-run auto rickshaws at Shahid Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani and torched a vehicle at Tejgaon-Gulshan link road and a motorbike near Navana Tower in Gulshan-1.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4
MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 12

In the shadows of violence

SOHEL PARVEZ

It was mid-afternoon. Gulshan-1 roundabout was still strewn with debris from the rioting a couple of hours back.

Nearby, a 39-year-old man was talking animatedly to a small crowd.

"Now who will compensate for my losses?" the man, Sheikh Sadi, was actually asking himself, not those who had gathered in front of his spectacles shop vandalised by the marauding garment workers.

"I'm paying for someone else's problem," he said, as

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Minister links RMG unrest with war crimes trial
BNP blames govt for 'wrong policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A political party is behind the violence in the garment sector and has an aim to disrupt the war crimes trial, Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said yesterday.

He, however, did not name the party.

"Generally this sort of violence occurs in Ashulia, Kanchpur and Joydevpur, but today's [yesterday] agitation took place in Gulshan and Moghbazar areas where people are aggrieved with the trial of war criminals," he said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

VANDALISM
BGMEA for stern action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The owners of garment factories have expressed concern over the intensity of the unrest among garment workers.

Abdus Salam Mursheedy, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said, "It is quite surprising that the workers vandalised the factories and other offices even after the announcement of salary hike."

The government should deal with the situation with an iron hand, he added.

He also said the owners will reopen their factories today as Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain assured them of security.

The owners did not expect such mayhem in the garment industry as the wage board was formed comprising all stakeholders.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Bus stops at wrong places create mess

223 unauthorised bus stops in city

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Wrongly planned bus stops and absence of bus-bays at busy locations are two major factors behind the nagging traffic congestion in the capital, experts say.

Currently, the city has around 223 authorised bus stops, a large number of which have been situated on important road intersections hampering smooth vehicular movement.

Sources from traffic department say Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) approves bus stops solely on the basis of applications from bus owners, who

allegedly manipulate the situation for their own benefit.

In addition, the traffic department ignores recommendations of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) during location selection, insiders say.

Besides, public buses frequently ignore the scheduled stops selected by the owners themselves. Haphazard parking, picking up or dropping passengers at any point, even in the middle of roads, continue unabated creating inconvenience for everyone.

Dr SM Salehuddin, additional executive director of DTCB, told The

Daily Star a study recommended 347 locations for bus stops in the capital two years ago. The recommendations also included designs for possible bus-bays.

"The recommendation was ignored by both DMP and Dhaka City Corporation," said Salehuddin, also a traffic engineering expert.

"Bus stops around road intersections are bound to create problems. What we see in Dhaka city is sheer chaos," Dr Salehuddin observed.

The DTCB official sees no option but to create dedicated bus-bays,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Buses stop to drop and pick passengers at random causing severe jam on the busy Airport Road in the capital yesterday.

Militant den busted in city

Firearms, ammunition, 'explosives', bomb-making materials seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday busted a militants' den at Mirpur in the capital yesterday and seized a firearm, ammunition and bomb-making materials.

They also recovered 35kg of powder which they suspect to be explosives. They sent the powder to Detective Branch of police to know for sure what it is.

They recovered a homemade grenade, 36 grenade cases, a pistol, a sub-machine-carbine, 18 bullets, batteries and wires, 150 to 200 clocks and three bags of metals, which police believe are meant for use as splinters. There were 35 books on jihad and Bengali translation of the holy Quran as well.

None was arrested and police are yet to find out which organisation was behind this.

Officer-in-Charge of Shah Ali Police Station Abdul Latif said the clues indicate that the militants were trying to make time bombs. He said they sent the powder to Detective Branch of police to verify if it was explosive.

The recovery prompted investigators to examine whether the militants, who are yet to be identified, were trying to launch attacks at a time when the trial of war criminals has just begun, police said.

The den was in a rented room in a three-storey building on Road-10 of Uttar Bishil in Mirpur.

Landlord Musharraf Hossain discovered sacks and cloth-wrapped packages containing arms and powder in the rented

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Errors in BCS exam papers

WASIM BIN HABIB

Errors and inconsistency have crept into a set of question papers for a preliminary test, designed for examinees to qualify for the 30th Bangladesh Civil Service exams.

There were three sets of question papers, but more than half of the queries in the English section of Set-2 were misplaced, which created confusion among examinees.

The test was held at 110 centres in six divisional headquarters with about 147,988 applicants vying for 2,572 posts under three cadres yesterday.

Some questions in the set, codenamed Makar, had wrongly been put below the answers. The English section in each set has 20 questions.

A number of examinees, who got set-2, said many did not answer some questions -- out of confusion -- since there is a negative marking for any wrong answer.

However, no such error was found in the other two sets.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

JUDICIARY'S CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM

SC for amendment to ensure efficacy

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Appellate Division of Supreme Court seeks restoration of two articles of the 1972 constitution, for making separation of the state's judiciary from the executive branch effective.

The lower judiciary was officially separated from the executive branch on November 1, 2007 following the Appellate Division's directives in a case known as "Masdar Hossain's Case".

Laws were amended and new rules were framed for that purpose as well. However the

constitution was not amended to ensure effective separation.

Upholding the High Court's verdict that declared the fifth amendment to the constitution illegal, the apex court is now saying, "It is our earnest hope that articles 115 and 116 of the constitution will be restored to their original position by the parliament as soon as possible."

Independence of the judiciary, which is one of the basic features of the constitution, will not be fully achieved unless the articles are restored to their original position, the court stated.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

BNP's NEC MEET TODAY
Constitution changes new issue on table

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Members of BNP national executive committee and grassroots leaders will get a chance today to give opinions about the Supreme Court judgment on the fifth amendment to the constitution.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia assigned a number of top leaders and pro-BNP lawyers to scrutinise the full text of the judgment released by the SC on Tuesday, said party sources.

Khaleda will sit with them on Sunday night to discuss the matter.

The apex court had declared the fifth amendment to the constitution illegal.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

AL plans reshuffle in grassroots

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Ruling Awami League, in the face of severe internal feud, stalemate over party activities and lack of coordination between the rank-and-file members, has planned to bring major changes in its grassroots level leadership after the Ramadan.

The changes will be made aiming to bridge the gap

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Nigerian held at airport with 'drugs'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immigration personnel at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday detained a Nigerian national with six kilograms of white powder which, they think, is heroin.

He was caught around 7:00pm at gate-3 of the airport with five luggage and identified as Afolayan-o-Zaccheaus. He was scheduled to fly to Malaysia today.

An immigration official preferring anonymity said that while the detainee was crossing the gate with another Nigerian, the scanner indicator signalled the presence of some metallic things inside the luggage.

As civil aviation officials challenged him, his aide fled the scene but he could not escape.

Immigration officials found 58 small foil packs with white powder inside a total of 10 aluminum packs, his four passports and one ID card.

Three passports mention his name as Afolayan-o-Zaccheaus while the other one as Ronty Aziz and his ID card reads that he is the general

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

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