

Highways become

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victims' families, while families of the poor victims don't opt to file a case as it ultimately becomes a burden on them.

"Hardly any case is filed following an accident. In most cases victims' families don't go for legal action as they reach an agreement with vehicle owners," Manikganj Superintendent of Police Md Masud Karim told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983, maximum speed for light vehicles like cars and motorcycles is 113 kilometres per hour (kmph), for buses and minibuses 56 kmph, for heavy vehicles like trucks 40 kmph, and for fire brigade vehicles 48 kmph. But almost all drivers disobey this speed limit and even don't reduce speed near bridges or curves, the SP said.

The highways police are the custodian of enforcing traffic rules on the highways. But they are poorly manned and operating under serious dearth of logistics. Highways police sources say they have only 34 speed detectors to monitor speed limit of vehicles across the country.

There is also almost no arrangement to provide emergency treatment to accident victims, resulting in deaths of many injured, who could otherwise be saved.

Director of the Accident Research Institute of Buet Prof Md Shamsul Hoque visited the accident place in Uthuli in Manikganj yesterday. He said it seemed from witnesses' accounts that had the two government officials received emergency treatment immediately, they might have survived.

"They were first taken to Uthuli Upazila Health complex, but no doctor was available there. Later they were taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital which took around an hour," he told The Daily Star.

Earlier on March 26, one of Saturday's accident victims Siddiqui Rahman's daughters Sayma Siddika Shikha and Sayda Siddika Tuni were killed when a recklessly driven bus rammed into their car on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in Daulatpur in Comilla. His wife Parveen Siddika was also in the car and is still undergoing treatment.

"My youngest daughter Tuni might have survived if she was given oxygen at nearby Gauripur Hospital. She was taken to Dhaka on an ambulance without oxygen that caused her death," Parveen said.

Asked about the case filed in connection with that accident, she said, "I do not follow the updates of the case as flawed laws regarding road accidents will eventually let the killer escape punishment."

The BRTA has identified a long list of reasons for accidents including issuing fake driving licences, faulty road designs, and violation of traffic rules.

Tapan Kumar Sarker, director (enforcement) of BRTA, said he issued letters to the deputy commissioners of all districts who are also presidents of Road Safety Committees yesterday reminding them to take safety measures on the highways in their respective jurisdiction.

"We have issued such letters earlier. Today I reminded them again," he said.

Of the total 11,806-kilometre highways -- 7,641km national and 4,165km regional -- a good number of spots on Dhaka-Aricha, Dhaka-Chittagong and Tangail-Bangabandhu Bridge highways appear to be the most accident-prone.

Only on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, 141 people were killed and 176 injured in 251 accidents

in the first half of this year. The number deaths and injuries is 35 and 24 in 50 crashes on Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

A good number of fatal accidents also occurred on the 80km stretch between Tangail and Bangabandhu Bridge.

Accidents often take place in Daudkandi, Shahidnagar, Hasanpur, Papiarmur, Iliasang, Gumta, Raipur, Mathail, Chanda, Soagati, Amangandha, Peuri, Lemua Bridge, Fagipur, Mithachar, Sonapahar and Kumira on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, in Muljan, Golora Nayadingi, Uthuly, Banijhuri, Pakuria and Joka on Dhaka-Aricha Highway, and in Charpara, Kodin Dhalla, Shavulla, Pakulla, Karatipara, Baiyakhola and Ghaninda Bypass from Mirzapur to Bangabandhu Bridge.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Mohammad Sohrab Hossain told The Daily Star the standard jurisdiction for a highways police station is 60km, but many such stations or outposts have around 160km-long stretch.

Besides, those stations and outposts badly suffer from manpower and logistics crises, he added.

18 parties

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cancelled. We will however take decision considering overall aspects," Sohul told reporters at the EC Secretariat.

According to the Political Parties Registration Rules 2008, a party must have its financial transactions audited by a chartered accounting firm and submit a copy of the report to the commission by July 31.

Before the ninth parliamentary election in 2008, political parties' registration with the EC was made mandatory.

The registration rules require the parties to submit finance reports to ensure transparency in their finances.

The parties will get seven months from January to comply with the provision for submitting the reports.

Though the deadline was to end on Saturday, political parties were allowed to submit reports yesterday since July 31 was a public holiday.

Leaders of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami submitted financial statements to the EC yesterday afternoon. They however would not say anything about their income and expenditures in 2009.

"The party has yet to take any decision on making its accounts public," Nazrul Islam Khan, BNP national standing committee member, told reporters after submission of the report.

He said the party had its financial transactions in 2009 audited by A Haq & Company, a chartered accounting firm.

Nazrul was accompanied by AKM Aminul Haq, chief of the audit firm.

Jamaat leader Jasim Uddin Sarkar said their party had its accounts audited by MI Chowdhury and Company. He said the members' fees and donations from well-wishers are the main source of their income. The party does not own any business, he added.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal General Secretary Abdul Malek Ratan told reporters his party's income in 2009 was Tk 5.70 lakh and expenditure Tk 5.51 lakh.

"The people have the right to know details about a party's income and expenditure," he added.

According to the Representation of the People Order, registration of a political party may be cancelled for failing to provide the EC with information for three consecutive years.

Iran to exclude Western media from Tehran exhibition

IANS, Berlin

Iran plans to exclude Western media from this year's press exhibition in Tehran, local news agencies reported yesterday.

"The Western media will be excluded from this year's press exhibition," Deputy Culture Minister Mohammad-Ali Ramin said in a press conference carried by Fars news agency.

"We will not allow the presence of those Western media which are vain, dishonest and beguiling and consider themselves as the ultimate media sultans of the world," added Ramin, who is in charge of the ministry's media affairs.

Exceptions would only be those Western media 'which are fitting and independent,' he said without elaborating.

The press exhibition is to be held Oct 25 in Tehran.

In previous years, several Western journalists availed themselves of the occasion to get a press visa and come to Iran for news coverage rather than attending the press exhibition itself.

Khaleda

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and Assistant Secretary General Abdur Razzaq in their short meeting briefed Khaleda about today's appearance of four Jamaat leaders before the International Crimes Tribunal, sources in BNP said.

The Jamaat duo also sought BNP's assistance on the issue, the source added.

Protesters

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The law enforcers also charged batons on hundreds of protesting students who vandalised around 15 vehicles.

The students gathered at Sholoshahar railway station and tried to halt movement of university-bound shuttle trains and buses.

However, two shuttle trains without students on board left the station at around 9:00am, one hour behind schedule.

Police arrested Mir Nixon, a final year student of CU forestry department and an activist of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, near the station around 7:30am when he was trying to halt a vehicle.

Huge number of police were deployed in Sholoshahar Gate no 2 intersection area.

Over 1,200 agitating students brought out a procession at about 10:45am that paraded different city streets and reached Chittagong Press Club.

Two statements sent by veteran anti-British revolutionary Binod Bihari Chowdhury and eminent scientist Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam expressing solidarity to the students' demand were read at a rally which was held there.

The students vowed to continue their movement till their demands are met.

As the students brought out another procession from there and tried to put up barricade at the busy Sholoshahar intersection and vandalised vehicles, it prompted the police to charge batons. At least ten students and student leaders were injured during the time.

Police filed a case in this connection.

Foreign fund

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chaired by the planning minister who urged the ministries to be more sincere in utilising project aid.

In the last fiscal year 91 percent of the revised ADP allocation, amounting to Tk 25,902 crore, was spent utilising 96 percent of allocated government fund, and 83 percent of project aid.

The government had taken up an ambitious ADP of Tk 30,500 crore last fiscal year, which was later revised to Tk 28,500 crore.

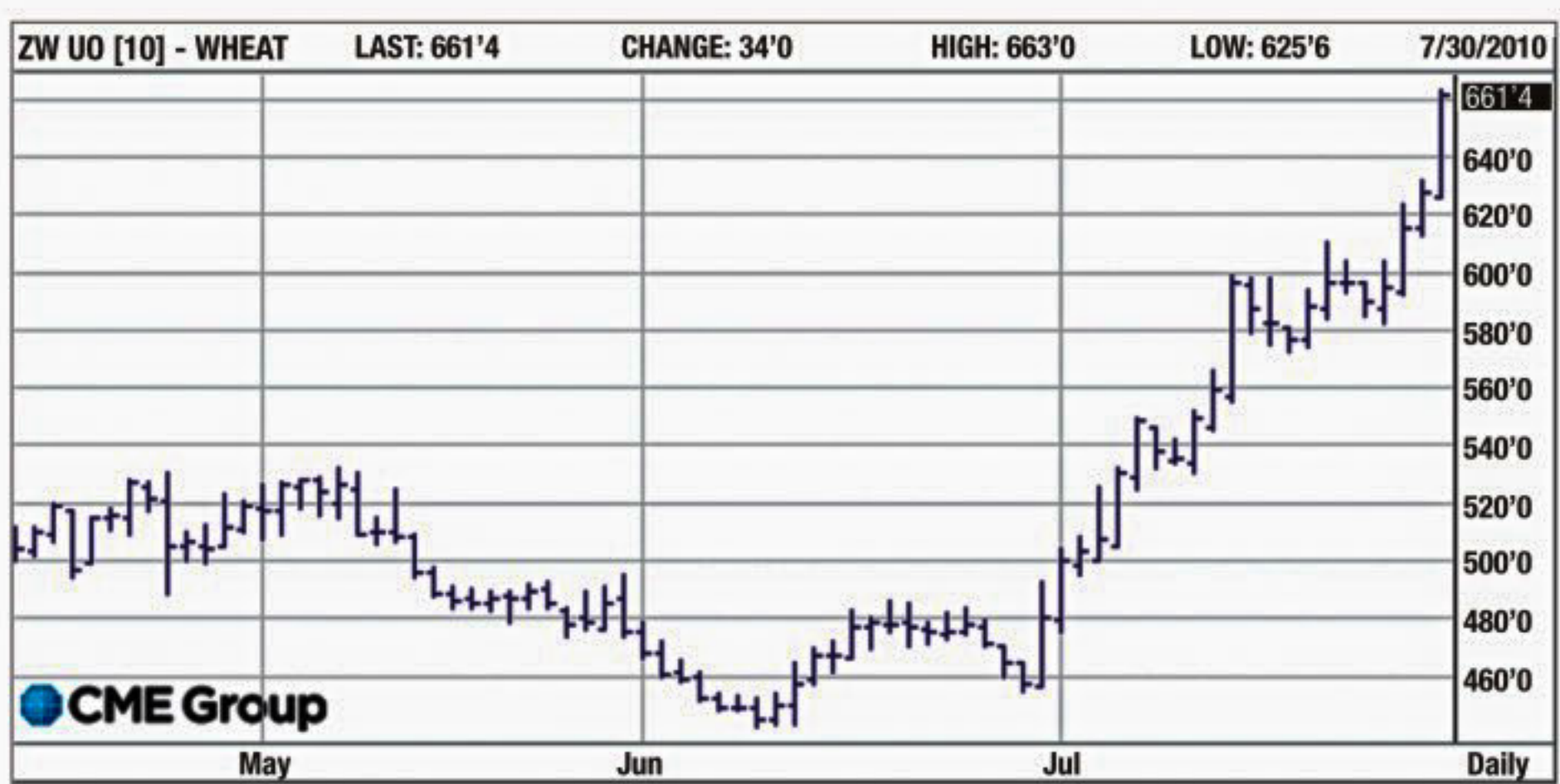
The size of the current ADP is Tk 38,500 crore which is 36 percent more than last year's.

AK Khandaker held four meetings with different ministries last month, and gave directives for more successful implementation of the current ADP. Yesterday he held meetings with 11 ministries.

He directed the ministries to finish approving revised projects by September.

There are 800 new projects in the current ADP as well, which have to be approved by March 2011, according to the planning minister's directive.

The ministries were scheduled to submit to the planning ministry their work plans for the current ADP implementation by July 20 this year, but many ministries failed to do so, prompting the planning minister to extend the deadline up to August 5.



Global wheat

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award a contract by which time international prices go beyond the quoted price.

The six contracts that were awarded last month were priced at \$214, \$219, \$221, \$238, \$241 and \$265 a tonne. But since international wheat price went up by about \$70 to \$80 in the last 25 days, many of these contracts might be defaulted.

Due to severe drought in Russia, Kazakhstan and parts of Ukraine, local importers might declare their contracts force majeure, a clause in contracts that frees parties from liability or obligation when extraordinary events or circumstances beyond the control of the parties, such as war, strike, riot, crime, flooding, earthquake, volcanic eruption, etc prevents them from fulfilling the obligation.

A quick purchase decision by a sub-committee should be in place to avert such price impact on procurement, grain traders point out.

Hot, dry weather in Russia's primary wheat producing region has raised concerns about the country's harvest this year, World-Grain, a prime grain information company, quoted MF Global, a commodity broker of Chicago.

The unfavourable weather could end up making Russia an importer of wheat this year, a stark turnaround from a year ago, MF Global said.

Russia and other former soviet republics like Kazakhstan accounted for 20 percent of the world's wheat exports last year, and so a drastic change in their production severely cuts into global supply.

"If China's corn crop comes in below estimates, they will make a large purchase," said

Steven A Freed, vice-president of research, Archer Daniels Midland Investor Services Inc of Chicago. "This would push up the prices of corn, and soy and wheat prices would follow."

Reuters reported that Ukraine's government might limit food grain exports in the second half of the 2010-11 season to avoid domestic shortage in the wake of crop damage.

Frost and drought have destroyed about 1 million hectares of Ukrainian grain crops, and the government said the harvest could fall to 42 million tonnes in 2010, from 46 million in 2009 and 53.3 million in 2008.

Canadian Wheat Board reported that unseeded farmland will be 18 percent higher than last year's, and production will be no more than 18.5 million tonnes compared to previous projection of 24.5 million tonnes.

Dinajpur

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Their demands include job regularisation, removal of the board Chairman Taslima Akter Banu and withdrawal of the cases filed against the eight muster roll staff.

Sources said the protesters yesterday barred Taslima from entering the board office.

They alleged that the chairman was bribed into making the recruitment without regularising their jobs created under the former board chairman Md Sanaullah in 2007.

The agitators kept Taslima confined in her room since morning to evening on Thursday.

Police later came to her rescue.

Workers agree

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the government, owners and workers to curb labour unrest in garment sector.

The committees start functioning today in Dhaka, Ashulia and Narayanganj with an aim to save the garment industry from vandalism, the minister told journalists after the hour-long meeting.

"I hope the garment industry will not witness any unrest from tomorrow [today] as the labour leaders of 42 organisations agreed to the new wage structure," he said.

The minister asked the wage board to review worker pay under grade-V and VI as demanded by the labourers. The board still has two weeks for a review.

He assured the owners that enough law enforcers will be deployed in the troubled industrial zones to ward off violence.

The minister said the new wage structure will take effect from November 1, which is earlier than it takes to implement any new pay scale. In line with the law, owners get at least six months to put any new structure in place.

He said the government will investigate the matter to find out the people involved in vandalism for the last few days.

The minister said rice rationing for garment workers will start soon.

Mosharraf also said he had already held talks with the World Bank about housing for garment workers. He said dormitories for labourers in the Export Processing Zones will be constructed soon.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan called for responsible trade unions. He said some people often resort to malpractice in the name of trade union.

"The government will not tolerate it," he said.

The minister alleged that some non-governmental organisations instigate violence in the name of awareness programmes.

He also called for formation of participatory committees in factories.

AK Azad, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Salim Osman, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association and Abdus Salam

Murshedy, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association spoke at the meeting.

The labour and employment minister announced the new wage structure for garment sector on Thursday in line with the recommendations of the minimum wage board.

The board recommended Tk 3,000 for minimum wage for an entry-level worker under grade-VII, Tk 9,300 for a worker under grade-I and Tk 2,500 for an apprentice.

The announcement provided the spark for protests by a section of garment workers, who rejected the new pay structure.

Projects

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are signed, commitment charge will be imposed for delay in implementation of the projects, the officials said.

They however mentioned that although the credit agreement will provide for commitment charge, Bangladesh won't have to pay it since project preparation has already started, and implementation will start as soon as the agreements are signed.

The officials hoped that the credit would be disbursed in three years.

According to the final draft of the agreement on Indian credit, rate of interest is 1.75 percent and the time limit for repayment is 20 years including a grace period.

The rate of interest on the Indian credit is less than that on the ADB's commercial loan, which is about three percent now, the ERD officials noted.

Sources said Dhaka had submitted 29 projects to Delhi for utilising the \$1 billion loan. The two sides at a recent meeting in Delhi reviewed those and finalised 14.

Most of the projects are for development of railway infrastructure in Bangladesh. The other projects include purchase of dredgers, procurement of double-decker buses and construction of roads.

All the projects will be placed before the Executive Committee of National Economic Council soon.

Some of the projects are aimed at new connectivity between the two countries, officials pointed out.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced the credit of \$1 billion during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's state visit to that country on January 10-13 this year.

Pranab likely

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Indian finance minister on August 7, reports our diplomatic correspondent.

Mukherjee, who will be going to Dhaka by a special flight, is expected to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and meet his Bangladeshi counterpart AMA Muhith, sources in New Delhi said yesterday.

Mukherjee will take the opportunity to review the state of India-Bangladesh ties with special emphasis on the progress made in implementing the key decisions taken by the two countries during Hasina's Delhi visit in January this year.

During her visit, India had agreed to extend the one billion dollar line of credit to Bangladesh in what constituted the biggest ever loan by New Delhi to any country.

This will be the first high-level political visit from India to Bangladesh since Hasina's visit.

The entire gamut of bilateral relations and issues, including Teesta water-sharing, are likely to come up for discussion between Mukherjee and Bangladesh leaders.

Mukherjee on the same day will return to Delhi so that he can attend the 125th birth anniversary of India's ruling Congress party the very next day.

Contacted, Director General (South Asia) of Foreign Ministry Mohammad Imran told The Daily Star that the foreign ministry officially has not yet received any information about the Indian finance minister's visit to Dhaka on August 7.

He said there has been discussion that the Indian finance minister will pay a brief visit to Bangladesh regarding signing of an agreement of US \$1 billion line of credit.

"But we have not yet officially been informed the date of his visit," he added.

"No official confirmation yet," said an official of the Indian High Commission when asked about Pranab Mukherjee's visit on August 7.

Officials at the Economic Relations Division in Dhaka,

which is looking into the credit line agreement, also could not confirm Pranab's visit on August 7.

PSC blames

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"The BG press has made the mistakes while shuffling the sets," Saadat told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

The moderators prepare a number of question papers and give it to the BG Press for printing, he said adding that the press then makes three sets for each question paper as per the moderators' direction.

Asked whether the moderators check the sets before exam, he said rechecking is not necessary since the sets are done as per the moderators' direction.

Saadat said, "We will get a solution which will be scientifically correct".

The commission will make sure that none have any problem with the decision, he said.

PSC sent an advertisement to different newspapers yesterday saying that for such examinations, a number of question papers are made and those usually have several sets.

Well-established teachers or national level subject-wise experts carry out the duties of examiners and moderators, the advertisement said adding that the commission select a question paper through lottery 25 minutes before the examination.

Many candidates called the office of The Daily Star yesterday expressing their concern over the issue.

Some of them fear that the PSC would take any decision that might go against the examinees.

A group of candidates held a press conference at Dhaka University yesterday demanding the cancellation of the preliminary test.

On Friday, the test was held at 110 centres in six divisional headquarters with about 147,988 applicants vying for 2,572 posts.

RMG hubs

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on the road in front of the factory. The authorities of 150 factories at Kathgora announced holiday following the incident.

Labourers of the closed factories joined the agitators and attacked other factories at Jamgora and Jirabo. They barricaded the Dhaka-Tangail Road using huge logs and burning tyres.

They clashed with police after the law enforcers charged baton on them. Police fired rubber bullets and used water cannon to disperse the workers, who retaliated by pelting them with bricks.

The labourers rampaged through the streets damaging factories and vehicles.

The authorities of the factories at Narasinghapur, Nischintapur, Jamgora, Beron, Ghoshbagh, Byipile, Palashbari and adjacent areas hung holiday notices at about 10:30am.

Shed Fashion Ltd, Shed Fashion International Ltd, and P&O Attires Ltd at Beron were shut indefinitely.

Clashes between labourers and police broke out in Shimultola area at about 11:30am after several thousand workers of factories at Jamgora brought out a procession from Byipile.

When police tried to stop them by charging baton and firing rubber bullets, the workers attacked the law enforcers with sticks and hurled bricks at police.

About 75 people, including 20 policemen, were injured the clash that ended at around 12:00noon.

The clash prompted the authorities of at least 150 factories to suspend production yesterday.

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Savar Police Station, said vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Tangail highway remained suspended for nearly half an hour.

On Saturday, police filed a case against 3,060 workers for attacking law enforcers, obstructing law enforcers from performing duties, vandalising vehicles and setting them on fire the same day in Ashulia.

Mohammad Shahidullah, deputy director of Shed Fashion, filed another case against 646 workers for attacking the factory and damaging property.

CLASHES IN FATULLA
At least 50 people including three policemen were injured after RMG workers clashed with locals and law enforcers.

Production of most factories in the area were suspended following the clashes.

Witnesses said the workers took to the streets in the morning demanding a hike in wage and release of Montu Ghosh, adviser of Garment Shramik Trade Union Kendra.

Workers of Pall Mall, Microfiber, Liberty, Mitsuwear and Cadtrix in Katherpul area demonstrated inside the facto-

ries in the morning. Their attempt to take to the streets was frustrated by the armed policemen deployed in the factories.

Labourers of Metro Garments came out of the factory around midday and pelted the law enforcers with stones.

When they tried to block the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road, policemen charged baton to disperse them. Locals joined the police and clashed with the agitators.

Locals accused the workers of attacking their houses.

The workers of Sinha and Opex in Sonargaon also demonstrated inside the factories, sources said.

Jibon Kanti Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Fatulla Model Police Station, said police dispersed the protesters when they tried to block the highway.

Police and Rab personnel were deployed in the area to ward off further clash.

PORT CITY VIOLENCE
RMG workers went berserk at Kalurghat in Chittagong yesterday demanding a pay hike.

Workers from at least eight garment factories demonstrated on city streets.

Some agitators reportedly damaged windowpanes and doors of Orchard Garments, Azim Mannan Garments and Legacy Garments.

HOME MINISTRY MEETING
The core committee of home ministry in a meeting last night decided to take stern action against those who will indulge in vandalism and damaging property following the RMG wage issue.

With Home Minister Sahara Khatun in chair, the meet was also attended by State Minister for Home affairs Shamsul Alam Tuku and senior officials from law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Delwar

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into cognisance the charges against the three for intimidating to kill the prime minister.

Helali in his complaint stated BNP leader Rafiqul Islam at a Muktangan rally on July 25 threatened Sheikh Hasina the fate similar to her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was assassinated on August 15, 1975. Khandaker Delwar and Moazzem clapped when the threatening speech was made.

Helali held the threat tantamount to high treason seeking issuance of arrest warrants against the accused.

Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Emdadul Haque recorded the statement of the complainant after the hearing and issued an order asking the three leaders to appear before it on the given date.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the government not to harass or arrest Rafiqul Islam Mia and Moazzem Hossain following a writ petition jointly filed by the two.