

## Ashulia

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some fellow workers on Tuesday night.

The demonstrators put blockades on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Narasinghpur, halting traffic for about four hours since 8:00am causing immense sufferings to commuters.

It all began on Monday when about 4,500 workers of Artistic Design Ltd, a packaging factory of Ha-Meem Group owned by FBCCI President AK Azad, took to the streets around 9:00am demanding a raise in their wages.

Several thousand workers from other factories in the area joined them within hours, forcing the authorities to suspend production in more than 100 factories.

However, following two days of clashes, the authorities at a meeting with the labour minister and labour leaders on Tuesday afternoon decided to resume production from yesterday.

But around 8:00pm on Tuesday, the authorities of Ha-Meem Group and police beat up at least 30 workers of Express Washing and Dyeing, another sister concern of Ha-Meem Group, a number of workers alleged.

When workers of Artistic Design Ltd went to their factory around 8:00am yesterday in line with Tuesday's decision, they found it locked.

This along with the news of torture on fellow workers the night before prompted them to stage demonstration, workers said.

Later, workers of other factories joined them, demanding action against those involved in torturing their colleagues, in addition to their demand for a pay raise.

Police charged baton, fired 135 rubber bullets and 33 teargas and used water cannons to disperse the workers, who responded with brickbats, Fayezul Kabir, deputy director of Industrial Police, told The Daily Star.

Asked about police action on some workers on Tuesday night, he said police were forced to take action as the workers of the washing and dyeing unit were locked in a clash inside the factory.

"They were fighting as one group wanted to join work while another opposed it," he said, adding: "Then the police had to charge baton to disperse them."

Around 3,000 law enforcers, including Industrial Police, Dhaka district police, Armed Police Battalion and Rapid Action Battalion were deployed in the area yesterday.

The agitating workers left the streets only when the district administration announced around 12:30pm that the prime minister himself was looking into the matter and that she asked the workers to calm down, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, factory owners in the area yesterday again decided to reopen their units from today upon the assurance that there would be no damage to their factories.

The decision came from a tripartite meeting between the government, factory owners and labour leaders. Labour and Employment Minister Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain chaired the meeting at his office.

A three-member committee was formed at the meeting to look into the cause of frequent clashes in the garment sector, including the last three days' violence.

Talking to this correspondent, Brig Gen (retd) Mohammad Ali Mondal, director of the project in Ashulia of Ha-Meem Group, on Tuesday said the workers wanted a raise between Tk 1,500 and 2,000.

Currently, a garment worker gets between Tk 3,000 and 5,500 a month.

Workers say the amount is too little at a time when house rents and prices of essentials are increasing sharply.

Mohammad Ali, however, said the issue of pay hike could not be settled by a single company. It must be resolved through discussion among all the stakeholders, including the government.

## Refugee boats

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The baby was in a terrible condition and did not have the strength to even cry, said Maj Saiful.

The BGB men rushed the baby to the nearby border observatory post in Shah Por Island, provided primary treatment there and kept it temporarily under the care of a local fisherman.

Fisherman Kabir Ahmed, a resident of Gholapara village and father of seven, said hearing about the rescue of a baby he had contacted BGB and requested them to give him its custody.

"I am deeply shocked to see the destitute Rohingya. I would like to bring up the baby because it would make me feel better that I could do something for a helpless human being," said Kabir.

He said after feeding, the baby got back some strength.

Maj Saiful said they had already informed the higher authorities of the matter and necessary steps would be taken later.

BGB suspects that the trawler, in which the baby was, might have been attacked by robbers and the passengers abandoned the boat leaving the newborn behind.

Border and coast guards intercepted five trawlers, including the one with the baby, until 5:00pm yesterday and held 153 Myanmar refugees, who were fleeing the ongoing sectarian clash in neighbouring Rakhine state.

Maj Saiful said the refugees intercepted had told him that one trawler was attacked by robbers in the Naf Tuesday night.

While visiting a trawler that was carrying 44 intruders and was challenged by BGB near Gholapara Char area around 4:00am yesterday, a 34-year-old mother found with a six-month-old baby also told The Daily Star about robbers' attack in the Naf.

Hosna Begum, the mother, was seen begging her fellow passengers for a little space under the plastic roof of the trawler to protect her child from rain.

Approached, she said she got detached from her three other children and husband in the face of violent attacks in their village. She with the infant headed for a safe shelter in Bangladesh on Sunday. The rest of the family were now at Sakkipara in Myanmar, she added.

After failed attempts to get into Bangladesh for couple of days they almost reached the coast around 11:00pm on

Tuesday when their trawler came under attack of robbers, she said.

Almost all the passengers jumped into the river and she with her son somehow managed to swim to the shore, said Hosna Begum.

But her desperate attempt failed again as she was caught by the BGB yesterday morning and was pushed back with the others.

This trawler with 44 passengers attempted to get into Bangladesh on Monday too and then it had 47 passengers.

Asked what had happened, the boatman said three of the passengers jumped into the river when BGB men spotted their boat.

They might have reached the shore safely, he said, adding that they had been trying to get into Bangladesh through different points including St Martin's Island, Teknaf and UKhia.

Twenty three out of the 44 passengers were children and many of them were suffering from diarrhoea, said the boatman.

BGB and locals provided the refugees with food, water and saline yesterday as the intruders had to be kept waiting in Bangladesh due to bad weather. They were finally escorted out of the territory around 5:00pm.

BGB and Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) intercepted another boat carrying 30 refugees near the Naf estuary around 7:00am. They brought the boat to a nearby jetty where the guards with the help of locals gave the intruders some dry food, water and saline. The people were pushed back around 12:10pm.

Around 5:00pm, BGB and BCG intercepted a boat with 32 intruders and pushed them back around 7:45pm.

A BCG patrol team intercepted another trawler with 39 passengers at St Martin's Island around 3:30am. But these people could not be sent back as their boat needed repair and due to rough weather, said Operation Officer of BGB 42 Battalion Capt Kamrul Islam.

Meanwhile, BGB had detained seven Myanmar nationals during a raid in Jaliapara village of Shah Por Island last evening, said Kamrul Islam, adding that the raids would continue.

ANM Nazim Uddin, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Teknaf, admitted that some Myanmar nationals had secretly entered into the territory escaping strict vigilance.

After failed attempts to get into Bangladesh for couple of days they almost reached the coast around 11:00pm on

## ACC quizzes Destiny high-ups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday interrogated the chairman of Destiny Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd and its three officials centering on irregularities in money transfer, reports a private television channel, ATN Bangla.

This is the second time Mohammad Hossain, chairman of the company, was quizzed. He claimed that the company had transferred and exchanged money legally. "As Destiny Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd is a company and has bought other institutions, the company has to pay their share money," he said.

The other three officials are Destiny Group directors Didarul Islam, Sakib Uzzaman Khan and its accounts officer S D Karmarker.

Meanwhile, the clients of Destiny Group demanded arrest of the group's Chairman Rafiqul Amin and their money back at a protest rally and a human chain programme in front of local press club in Laxmipur district, the ATN Bangla report added.

## New gas

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The discovery of a modest gas reserve at a Sangu well in the Bay of Bengal has helped with this decision and the formal announcement will be made by the government high-ups, said Petrobangla Chairman Hussain Monsur.

The government had suspended giving new connections to commercial consumers from July 21, 2009 and domestic users from July 13, 2010.

The Petrobangla chief said around 17 mmcfd gas will be added to the national grid after resuming production at the new gas field at Sangu.

On Tuesday, 2200 mmcfd gas was supplied as both the production and supply have increased recently due to setting up a compressor at Muchai in Habiganj, he mentioned.

## Army command

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staff, he said Bangladesh Army has now seven divisions which may be put under the two new commands and a lieutenant general rank officer might be given the charge of each command.

He said if the new commands are introduced, opportunity will be created to expand the army and make it stronger.

In his scripted answer to questions, the planning minister said an organisational structure of an overall intelligence headquarters will be prepared with efficient manpower and modern electronics equipment for the army.

"Steps will be taken to include manpower with skill in information technology and equipment at the organisational structure of every sector headquarters and unit," he said.

On purchase of arms and ammunition and equipment, the minister said process is under way to purchase 44 modern MBT-2000 tanks, three armoured recovery vehicles, two weapons locating radars, 18 self-propelled guns, one electronic mate station, two pieces of sound raising equipment, 200 surface-to-surface missiles, 130 short-range anti-tank guided weapons, 10 automatic grenade launchers, seven light mortars, one ground surveillance radar, and 25 machine guns.

The minister said 29 headquarters/units will be formed in the army under a mid-term plan and another 25 headquarters/units will be formed under a long-term plan.

For Bangladesh Navy, the minister said the government has moved to purchase two off the shelf [readymade] frigates, two large patrol crafts, two maritime patrol aircraft, and five patrol crafts.

For the air force, the minister said process is under way to purchase 16 fighter planes, three Mi-17SF helicopters, and two air defence radars.

The minister said the government has made the moves to strengthen the defence services to protect the country from external aggression.

It is the third attack on Agricultural University students this month. At least 10 students were injured in two attacks at KR Marker on campus on June 6 and on June 7. Two students of the university had been expelled for their alleged involvement in the attacks with non-students of the university.

Yesterday, it was observed in the mini zoo that the tiger cubs, underweight and weak, had been transferred to a



Two-hundred and seventy-one Birman passengers wait for their vehicles at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong to go to their hotels yesterday after their flight to Jeddah was delayed.

PHOTO: STAR

## Suffering at Shah Amanat

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accommodated in different hotels around 3:00pm yesterday.

Officials at Birman's flight control department in Dhaka said the delay was caused after technical glitches had been detected in the lone operational DC-10 aircraft prior to take off from Dhaka at 11:00pm Tuesday.

The flight finally left Dhaka around 10:30pm yesterday.

A flight-control official wishing anonymity yesterday said, "The passengers' suffering went on as the engineering section promised to repair the problems with a short time but repeatedly extend time. After several time extensions, they finally said the flight will depart at 10:00pm today [Wednesday] and then we took the passengers to hotels."

Birman has a fleet of 13

aircraft but only eight are now operational. The flight schedule of the carrier has almost broken down. Reports of flight delays for several hours have become a regular phenomenon for the national flag carriers since three of its four DC-10 went out of order in the last few months.

Apart from this, an F-28 aircraft remained grounded for a long time while an Airbus A310 was stuck up in Singapore for the last few months following a dispute over overhauling charges.

Most of the passengers of the flight were on their way to Saudi Arabia to perform umrah.

Mojibur Rahman, stranded in Chittagong along with his family, said, "I was stranded in the airport lounge since 9:00 last night with my wife and child. We could not sleep the entire

night," Mojibur complained yesterday.

Some of the passengers even slept on the floor, he said.

He added, "The flight was scheduled to depart at 1:30am [from Chittagong] and we reported at 9:00pm."

Instead of taking care of the passengers, the authorities kept changing the flight schedule the entire night and also in the day, he alleged.

"They gave us new schedules at 2:30am, 5:00am, 11:30am, 2:30pm and finally 11:45pm [Wednesday]," Mojibur said last night.

Contacted, Dilip Kumar

Chowdhury, district manager of Bangladesh Birman, Chittagong, said the flight was delayed due to technical glitches and the passengers had been accommodated in four city hotels."

## 2 arrested

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of his bank account information, and his Personal Identification Number (PIN) with the bank.

"No Brac Bank account was hacked...our system is secure," claimed Zeehan.

He said following the incident around March 24 midnight, accounts of the victim and hackers were frozen. Brac Bank realised that the money transferred had been withdrawn almost immediately and hence they could not refund the money to Anwar.

Zeehan said Brac Bank had lodged a complaint with the central bank asking it to take actions.

Victim Anwar, however, alleged that bank officials were involvement in the incident. "After the incident, the bank did not provide me the required support to get my money back. Later, I informed Rab of the matter," said Anwar, adding that Bangladesh Bank had ordered Brac Bank to take initiatives to refund the money by the first week of last month.

The arrestees were handed over to Chandgaon Police Station and they would be sent to Khilkhet Police Station in Dhaka as Anwar had lodged the case with that station on March 28.

Both groups  
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and Kamal Uddin Khondaker, an office assistant of RHD and general secretary of pro-AL Sramik Karmachari Union, as they took money from the bidders promising to manage them works.

They were also trying to influence two ongoing tenders involving Tk 100 crore, the sources said.

Their feed reached a peak recently centring the High Court verdict regarding relocation of the RHD office from Ramna to Elenbari in Tejgaon.

Both of them were involved in manipulating tender process together in the past. But Kamal wanted to do the business alone now as the office has been under process of shifting to Elenbari where he happened to have clout of influence.

Shamim-Sentu group, however, has dominance in Ramna area and that is why they wanted to organise movement against the HC verdict.

Sources said Kamal group was showing its muscle power at Elenbari office while Shamim-Sentu group at Ramna for the last 20 days and threatening their rivals.

Shamim and his supporters including his closest associate Farid Ahmed Sentu, also a contractor and former Chhatra League leader, were prepared with firearms on Tuesday to face Kamal group at Sarak Bhaban.

At least five people were bullet-hit in the 10-minute-long gunfight on the Sarak Bhaban premises in broad-day light. The two gangs fired around 30-35 rounds and Kamal left the scene by the time the cops came.

Bullet-injured Shamim was undergoing treatment at Labaid Hospital.

During a visit at the RHD zonal office at Elenbari yesterday, this correspondent found Kamal absent at his work without an authorised leave. His room was locked. Though he is an office assistant, a third-class government employee, a room was allocated only for him.

Meanwhile, police arrested Abul Kalam Azad, assistant storekeeper of the RHD, from his Shyamoli home around 3:00am in a case filed against him centring Tuesday's violence.

A supporter from Shamim-Sentu group, Golam Azam Mamun, proprietor of Three M Enterprise and also a listed contractor