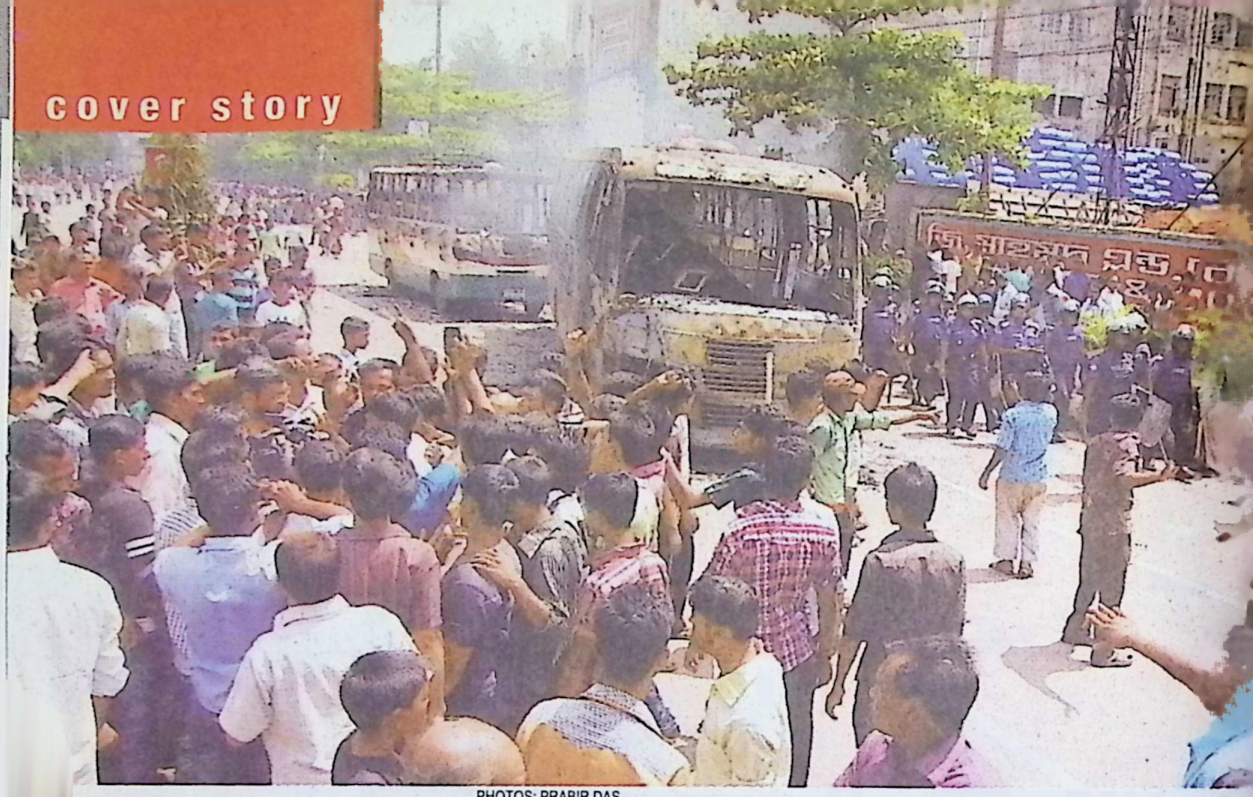


PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

After a garment worker dies in a road accident near Agrabad, Chittagong garment workers vandalise vehicles on the road.



became clear when I found Mustafiz guiding the Industrial Police to me," Azam says.

As Azam was leaving the factory premises on a bicycle on October 22, Mustafiz helped the Industrial Police at Ashulia to turn Azam in.

"Mustafiz was at the meeting we had held earlier. Now with him aiding the police, it seems all pre-planned," says the former garment worker, who was accused of 'inciting violence in the garment sector and a murder'.

Azam however, was freed by the Industrial Police after an interrogation of about one hour. As he stepped out of the police station, he found Mustafiz, now accompanied with plainclothes men from an intelligence agency.

Azam was dragged into a white microbus. 'The men kept beating me all the way till we arrived at Ramna thana,' says Azam. On the way he was cautioned that the next time he would want to arrange a press conference, they would kill him.

Ramna police did not have any specific charges against Azam and took him in under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, showing him arrested on suspicion. The sub inspector at the time, Md Jafar Ali in a court forwarding mentioned, 'an intelligence agency' captured Azam for attempting to 'destabilise' the government by inciting garment workers to make unrest at Ashulia Export Processing Zone.

Azam, who has changed profession, thinks the law won't be able to bring any changes unless the owners and the government are willing to change it. "I heard that the amended law contains the problems it had before. I was a leader and I have gone through unbearable sufferings. So if the government fails to recognise these problems, the unrest will be an ultimate choice for the workers," Azam says.

Over the last 22 years, the country's apparel sector has boomed to achieve a competitive position in the world. Having entered the apparel sector in 1978, with three decades of experience, Bangladesh has contributed 19 billion dollars to the country's export sector in the last 2011-12 fiscal year and is targeted to lift it to 21 billion dollars in the next fiscal year. Although the amount of earning is increasing every year the law and the government is yet to identify the problems of the workers, who are the real hero behind all the success.