



Panic grips a passenger as garment workers obstruct the rickshaw in the capital's Malibagh area. Police chase agitating workers at Malibagh, *top right*, and a car, *bottom right*, burned down by protestors at Tejgaon. The photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

RMG workers go berserk

FROM PAGE 1
Abdus Salam Murshedy, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, after the meeting also confirmed that they would reopen the factories from today.
Two more decisions, including submission of the wage structure within November by the minimum wage board, although the board has time up to December, and payment of workers' salaries and bonus well ahead of Eid-ul Azha, were made in the emergency meeting.
Also attended by State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku, top officials of Rapid Action Battalion and industrial police, the meeting was chaired by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan.
GAZIPUR
Workers of three garment factories attacked an Ansar

camp in Bhogra by-pass area of Joydevpur upazila yesterday around 8:30am.
They looted eight rifles and 135 bullets, leaving eight Ansar members, including a commander, injured. They set fire to four of the rifles.
The other four rifles looted were recovered from roadside bushes after the attackers had left the scene. The bullets are yet to be found, said Noor Mohammad, officer of Ansar and Village Defence Party in sadar upazila.
In the morning, workers of Rose Knitting and Sumon Textile Ltd went to adjacent Colossus Apparel Ltd and asked its employees to join them. Together, they attacked the nearby Ansar camp with sticks and bamboo.
Commander of the camp Apan Mollah, 40, and three of his colleagues -- Alamgir Hossain, 28,

Mahalam, 23, and Abu Raihan, 25, were injured in the attack and were undergoing treatment at a hospital in Uttara of the capital.
Garment workers also put barricades at different points of Chandona, Pagarh and Duttapara in Tongi upazila disrupting vehicular movement on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for four hours, said Sub-Inspector (SI) Moniruzzaman of Tongi Police Station.
He said it all started around 8:30am when more than 10,000 workers with sticks and bamboos gathered on the highway.
To disperse them, law enforcers used truncheons and fired from shotguns in which 50 workers were injured, including 18 bullet-hit, the SI said.
The injured were taken to Tongi Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital, reports our

Gazipur correspondent.
Fifty more people were hurt when agitating workers vandalised at least 15 vehicles and set fire to a roadside shed for Ansars at Chandona.
Gazipur police said a group of workers clashed with law enforcers on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Borobari area while another group vandalised at least six garment factories along the highway at Konabari.
More than 100 vehicles were vandalised in the demonstrations in Gazipur.
The authorities of almost all the garment factories in the district decided to keep their units closed for Monday due to the unrest, said Mosharraf Hossain, assistant superintendent of Gazipur Industrial Police.
DHAKA

Around 1,000 workers of several garment factories in Tejgaon industrial zone took position on Tejgaon-Gulshan link road and began demonstrating around 9:30am.
They vandalised several vehicles creating traffic congestion. During the time, some workers hurled brick chips at roadside factories. They also broke the close circuit camera of a Ha-Meem Group unit.
An employee of Ha-Meem Group, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that the unruly workers torched a microbus and two motorcycles parked in front of the factory.
Locals said the situation aggravated around 10:30am as the workers halted traffic on the road and adjacent areas for an hour and vandalised at least four more vehicles.
Police had used 20

shotgun bullets and seven to eight teargas canisters to bring the situation under control, said Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Moniruzzaman of Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station.
Meanwhile, several hundred workers from different garment factories in Badda area marched towards Rampura yesterday around 4:30pm, said Iqbal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station, adding that police had chased the workers away.
SAVAR
At least 40 people, including six policemen, were injured in clashes between apparel workers and law enforcers at Karnapara, Genda, Ulail and Savar Bus Stand areas along Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday.
The violence erupted around 9:30am as police

tried to disperse more than 4,000 workers demonstrating on the highway halting vehicular movement for about two hours.
Confronted with resistance, the workers vandalised at least 10 vehicles and several garment factories there, reports our Savar correspondent.
At one stage, police had charged truncheons and use rubber bullets and several canisters of teargas as the agitators retaliated with brick chips, said a witness.
Following the agitation, the authorities of more than 10 ready-made garment factories kept their production suspended for yesterday, said SI Omar Faruk of Savar Industrial Police.
In another incident around 12:30pm, at least 15 people were injured when more than 2,000

garment workers of GK Garments and Savar Textiles clashed with police in Savar Bus Stand area.
Traffic movement on Dhaka-Aricha highway came to a halt, for the second time in the day, for one and a half hours due to the clash, said witnesses.
This time the agitating workers vandalised at least five buses.
Production at two more garment factories had been kept suspended for the day after the violence, said industrial police.
In July 2010, the minimum salary for garment workers in Bangladesh was fixed at Tk 3,000, almost double the previous minimum salary.
Three years later, as garment workers demand that the minimum salary be revised, factory owners have offered a 20 percent or Tk 600 hike.

VESTED PROPERTY RETURN Govt to amend law amid criticism

ASHUTOSH SARKAR
In the face of widespread criticism, the government yesterday decided to amend the Vested Property Return Act, 2001, repealing the provision of categorising the vested and enemy properties.
The decision came at an inter-ministerial meeting with Law Minister Shafique Ahmed in the chair at the conference room of the ministry, advocate Aksir M Chowdhury, assistant private secretary to the minister told The Daily Star.
Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira and high officials concerned attended the

meeting.
Aksir M Chowdhury said now a proposal for amending the act will be placed before the cabinet and after its approval, the proposed amendment will be sent to the parliamentary standing committee concerned.
If the parliamentary body approves, a bill will be placed in the parliament.
He added that the harassment of original owners of the vested properties and enemy properties will be reduced if the proposed amendment is passed.
Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, who has been dealing with vested and

enemy properties for several years, told The Daily Star that no category of vested and enemy properties will remain after passage of the proposed amendment.
Subrata added that vested properties and enemy properties have been categorised as schedule Ka and Kha following an amendment, which created legal complications over ownership.
The law minister could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts over the phone.
Different rights organisations have long been demanding the repeal of categorisation.

PM in NY to attend UNGA

BSS, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was cordially welcomed as she arrived in New York yesterday morning on an eight-day visit to attend the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
She will address the UNGA session on September 27. On the sidelines, she will attend a number of high-level events and bilateral talks.
Hasina is scheduled to hold meetings with her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.
An Emirates flight carrying the prime minister and her entourage landed at John F Kennedy (JFK) International Airport at 9:00am (NY time).
On the way, she made a two-hour stopover in Dubai.
Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Akramul Qader, and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN AK Abdul Momen received the prime minister at the JFK.

A large number of expatriate Bangladeshis including leaders and workers of Awami League and its associate bodies were also present at the airport.
From there, Hasina was taken to Hotel Grand Hyatt at Park Avenue through a ceremonial motorcade. She will be staying there during her visit.
In the afternoon, Commonwealth Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma was scheduled call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her hotel suite. In the evening, she was to attend a reception hosted by US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

Witness's delay

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initially decided not to record his testimony. "We'll send him to custody and record his testimony tomorrow," he said.
"This is not a joke," said Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim.
Following the incident, the tribunal warned the prosecution that it would close the trial proceedings, at which the prosecution apologised to the court.
Azabuddin, 40, who is an assistant librarian at the newspaper section of Bangla Academy, yesterday testified to establish the veracity of the newspaper clippings that had been collected by the investigation officer of the case.
Because the recording of his testimony was not over in one and a half hours, the

tribunal adjourned the proceedings for an hour at about 1:00pm.
The tribunal sat again at about 2:15pm. Four defence counsels were present but there was no sign of the prosecution. Prosecutors Mohammad Ali and Abul Kalam arrived a few minutes later, but the witness was yet to show up.
Ali rushed to Tribunal-2 to look for the witness who was not there either.
Mir Iqbal Hossain, another prosecutor who had been assisting the tribunal in recording the testimony since morning, strolled into the courtroom around 2:27pm.
"Where is the witness?" the tribunal asked Iqbal.
"He was here," he said.
A minute later, Ali came back to the tribunal and said

the witness had left the prosecution office (which takes about five minutes on foot) for the tribunal. "His [Azabuddin's] health has suddenly deteriorated."
Azabuddin arrived in the courtroom at 2:30pm.
Justice Kabir told the prosecution angrily, "The manner in which you have been conducting the case, we will not allow it. We will close it."
"Why didn't you turn up at the court at 2:15 pm?" said Justice Selim to the prosecution.
Ali then said, "It has been a mistake and won't happen again."
Noticing the witness's lack of concern, the tribunal said, "He does not seem to have realised what a mistake he has made."
At this point, Azabuddin

also apologised.
The 33 newspaper clippings of different dailies, including the Sangram, Ittefaq, Bangladesh Observer and Azad, were collected from Bangla Academy.
Swapan Kumar Biswas, in charge of the newspaper section of National Museum, also gave a deposition on the seizure list documents.
The defence then completed cross-examining them.
The prosecutor of the case said the documents would prove four of the 16 war crimes charges against Nizami.
The proceedings of the case were adjourned until tomorrow, when the investigation officer, who is also the last witness of the case, is set to testify.

Too much, too little

FROM PAGE 1
The proposal that roused the workers to take to the streets is now seen as a source of all troubles.
Sadiq Ahmed, vice-chairman of Policy Research Institute (PRI), said the impact of salary hike by such margins on the cost of production had to be considered.
"The production cost has already been increasing by nearly 13 percent every year -- incorporating that salary hike would send the cost through the roof."
Moreover, the pay rise is likely to shut the door for the currently unemployed pool of workers, the PRI vice-chairman says.
"If the garment owners increase the salary to a large extent for a limited number of workers, would they be able to afford any new hires? That has to be considered too when bargaining for a higher minimum wage."
The country's main advantage is its surplus labour, so the wage should be fixed in such a way that it makes the best use of the

AREAS	WORKERS' PROPOSAL (IN TAKA)	OWNERS' PROPOSAL (BASIC)
Food	2,189	2,400 (basic)
House rent	3,000	960
Clothing	300	
Medical	500	240
Conveyance	300	
Recreation	200	
Cosmetics and others	375	
Family assistance	500	
Festivals	500	
Refreshment	250	
Total	Tk 8,114	Tk 3,600

SOURCE: MINIMUM WAGE BOARD FOR GARMENT WORKERS

boon. "As things stand, we can divert much surplus labour from the agricultural sector to manufacturing."
Sadiq cited the case of China, whose undisputed position as the number one apparel supplier in the world is dissipating due to rising costs of production by way of high wages.
"The safety and security of the workers should also be taken into cognisance while fixing the salaries of the workers," he added.

After extensive criticism from around the globe, the government in May announced a new wage board to fix the salaries of the 3.6 million garment workers.
The minimum wage for the garment workers was first fixed at Tk 627 in 1985, which was increased to Tk 930 in 1994. Then in 2006, the garment workers were handed out a 78.79 percent pay rise, which was raised to the current level of Tk 3,000 in 2010.

The world of Angela Merkel

FROM PAGE 1
per cent. The Free Democrats are out of the Bundestag because of the measly 4.8 per cent they have come by.
Mrs Merkel, in all these years she has been chancellor, has quietly demonstrated a firmness of leadership that people generally liken to the toughness once exemplified by Margaret Thatcher in Britain. But where Thatcher was loud and abrasive, Merkel has been soft and ready to go out all the way to convince the other side of the logic in her arguments. Her deft handling of the economy and her forceful presence on the global stage have made her what she is today, one of the most powerful political figures in the world.
And, of course, when compared with other women in politics, Angela Merkel beats them all. Hillary Clinton comes quite close, but only just. But if one were to search for a woman politician of comparable strength in the past, it would be Indira Gandhi who could be regarded as a precursor to the

eventual rise of Angela Merkel in Europe. Mrs Gandhi led India through trying times, successfully steering it out of a poor economy and out of the consequences of war, thereby setting the country on course for a place among the leading nations of the world.
There are, and there have been, other women leaders around the world whose record does not, however, match the brilliance the German chancellor has demonstrated in her pursuit of politics. In Sri Lanka, Sirimavo Bandaranaike remained a prisoner of the policies pursued by her murdered husband insofar as Tamil-Sinhala relations were concerned. Bandaranaike's daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga was a better politician, but then one cannot quite ignore the fact that in her time the Tamil Tigers gave the majority, often uncaring Sinhala, a tough time. The LTTE nearly killed Kumaratunga. Prabhakaran's men ended up giving her a damaged eye.

For unruffled demeanour in leadership, Merkel can be observed in relation to Israel's Golda Meir, who combined the exercise of power with a grandmotherly administering of her household. Both Merkel and Meir have been noted for the fierceness with which they have guarded their family lives, which is not what you can say about Argentina's Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. The Argentine president is out there on the national stage because of her husband, the late Nestor Kirchner. The couple are a presidential dynasty, not exactly something that would interest Merkel.
Angela Merkel's third straight electoral triumph, achieved on the strength of her performance in the economy and, to a significant extent, on ensuring a leadership role for Germany around the world, could well lead to serious reflections among Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia.
Neither woman, despite being in the limelight for three decades or more, has

been noted for strong leadership, in power or out of it. Neither has had her finger on the economy or on the issue of a progression to a state of mature, stable, liberal political conditions in the country. Neither of them has reached out to the country, across the political divide, in the way Angela Merkel has in Germany.
Gloria Arroyo and Benazir Bhutto were a huge disappointment, in the Philippines and Pakistan. In Indonesia, Megawati Sukarnoputri and, in Australia, Julia Gillard, were tales of disaster. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson struggles to hold Liberia together. Michele Bachelet presided over a colourless presidency in Chile.
Angela Merkel is on a greater, higher pedestal than all these others. The next four years will be hers.
She will dominate Europe. She could well graduate from being Germany's most powerful politician to the world's most influential stateswoman.