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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

SHOUT



SONGS OF FREEDOM

How some tunes and lyrics became part of 1971 war

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JACK THE RIPPER IDENTITY

Writer believes the serial killer was an artist with links to the royal family

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BLOCKADE VIOLENCE

4 killed on first day

Commuters suffer most; vehicles attacked on highways

STAR REPORT

Announced all of a sudden the night before, the opposition's three-day blockade left at least four people killed and put tens of thousands of travellers across the country in peril on its first day yesterday.

Many people were bewildered after reaching inter-district bus terminals early in the morning having no idea of the fresh blockade, called hours after another ended on Friday morning.

Passengers of long-route buses suffered most as vehicles that hit the roads soon after the previous blockade got stuck at different points all over the country.

The trucks and lorries laden with perishable goods, particularly vegetables, lay stationary for hours on end.

In Rajshahi, Jamaat-Shibir and BNP activists torched a pharmaceutical company's microbus and four rice-carrying trucks throwing petrol bombs at Katakhal Dewanpara on the eve of the blockade.

Bangladesh Truck & Covered Van Owners Association fears the entire road transport system will collapse if the current political impasse continues.

In a statement yesterday, it demanded the government compensate the affected owners; otherwise, they won't be able to return to business.

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Rizvi held in early hours cop raid

Lawmen ransack BNP office, assault newsmen

RASHIDUL HASAN and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

In an outlandish pre-dawn raid on the Nayapaltan headquarters of the BNP, plainclothes detectives yesterday assaulted its Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed and arrested him.

During the raid, cops also picked up BNP executive committee member Belal Ahmed, roughed up four reporters and three camera persons and damaged two video cameras for recording the arrests.

Nearly 11 hours after the arrests, the two were sent to jail through two Dhaka courts.

THE RAID

Witnesses said around 10 to 12 members of the Detective Branch of police climbed onto the balcony of the first floor of the

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PHOTO ON PAGE 16

NEWS ANALYSIS

Living in anarchy

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

SCENE ONE

A man's eye falls out of its socket as the bandage is removed. The sight pushes his distraught wife into unconsciousness. His son, petrified, cries his heart out at the eerie scene before him.

Screaming men and women cause a near stampede as they try getting out of a bus set afire by motor cycle-riding bomb throwers. Many of them get terribly burnt in the process, raw flesh gaping out of their sizzling wounds. Many others suffer burns on diverse parts of the body -- arms, face, neck, shoulders. As they are wheeled into hospital, beds are conspicuous by their scarcity and doctors and nurses are at a loss on how to cope with the casualties.

The body of a public transport vehicle driver, wrapped in a sheet, lies on the grimy floor of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The tragedy causes uncontrollable tears to well up in his helpers, boys in their early teenage. They might as well have lost a father and, with him, their hopes of survival.

Across the country, the cries of new widows do not move the heavens. A poverty-stricken mother comes all the way from a distant village to be beside a thoroughly bandaged, almost unrecognisable son. She bursts into tears. A

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Dream left in ashes

Arson-hit compliant RMG maker suffers Tk 1,200cr loss; owner devastated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only two days ago, he was an employer of 19,000 workers at his apparel factory complex in Gazipur. But a single mindless act of sabotage has taken Mosharraf Hussain, owner and managing director of Standard Group, to the brink of bankruptcy overnight.

Early Friday, some outsiders burnt valuables worth Tk 1,200 crore of his factory complex -- a nine-storey and a six-storey units -- in Konabari to ashes.

"I am a beggar now," said the 69-year-old as he lost control over his emotions during a press briefing at the BGMEA headquarters in the capital yesterday, nearly 40 hours after the incident.

Mosharraf gave vivid details of the incident, which came as a massive blow to the country's already-under-pressure \$20 billion garment industry.

He said that on Thursday, the factory had closed around 8:00pm. Only the washing unit was functional with 200 to 250 workers inside.

Around 10:30pm, some 70 to 80 outsiders began banging on the main gate trying to break into the factory premises. Inside, there were 25 to 30 industrial police who tried to resist the attackers.

At one point, the police had to charge truncheon and fire rubber bullets to drive the troublemakers away. The effort left one of the attackers bullet injured.

The wounded was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital by an ambulance owned by the factory.

Sensing more trouble, the authorities of the factory immediately closed the washing unit.

Later, some people announced on the horn

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MORE ON STAR BUSINESS

We don't want to see military rule

Says PM; offers home ministry to BNP if it wants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has again said that her government will not allow any unconstitutional force to rule the country.

"We will allow no unconstitutional forces to grab state power again. We do not want martial law either," she asserted while addressing a rally marking the 41st founding anniversary of Awami League's youth front Jubo League at the capital's Suhrawardy Uddyan yesterday.

Reassuring the BNP-led opposition alliance of a free, fair and credible election, Hasina asked the opposition to participate in the upcoming parliamentary polls and join the

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MINDLESS ACT OF ARSON

The raging fire destroyed all equipment, bottom, inside a factory building, top right, of Standard Group and the heat even bent the fan blades. Fellow garment factory owners hold Standard Group Managing Director Mosharraf Hossain, top left, who breaks down in tears during a press conference at the BGMEA Bhaban yesterday afternoon. Mosharraf lost six factories to arson on Friday.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ominous sign

INAM AHMED

The sights are raw and unthinkable. Over a million square feet of factory space lay charred. Truck after truck of brand apparels just to be exported turned to ashes.

The sights also send out a chilling anxiety over the future of not only the country's booming garment sector but also the total industrial activities.

Just consider these points -- Standard Group is the largest single garment factory of the country. It operated in the most ethical way with full compliance, it treated its workers ethically and it paid its workers dot on time. It can be termed the jewel of the crown for Bangladesh. That jewel is now a smouldering heap.

This criminal act took place at a critical time for Bangladesh garment when it is seeing a fall in exports and orders. Take the last two months' figures of which are available. From \$2 billion exports in September, it came down to \$1.6 billion in October. Orders from March next year have slumped because buyers are already worried about the long-drawn political violence in Bangladesh. In fact, if buyers had a ready option, they would have shifted much earlier.

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Arson: foul play of outsiders

Local influential people played key role

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND

Friday's fire at Standard Group's factory complex in Gazipur was a clear case of arson by workers from neighbouring factories and some influential locals.

It all started on November 13, when a meeting was held at Baluchar, a neighbourhood near the factory, on how to organise demonstrations for higher wages.

The workers of Standard Group, one of the most compliant companies, stayed away from the meeting. More

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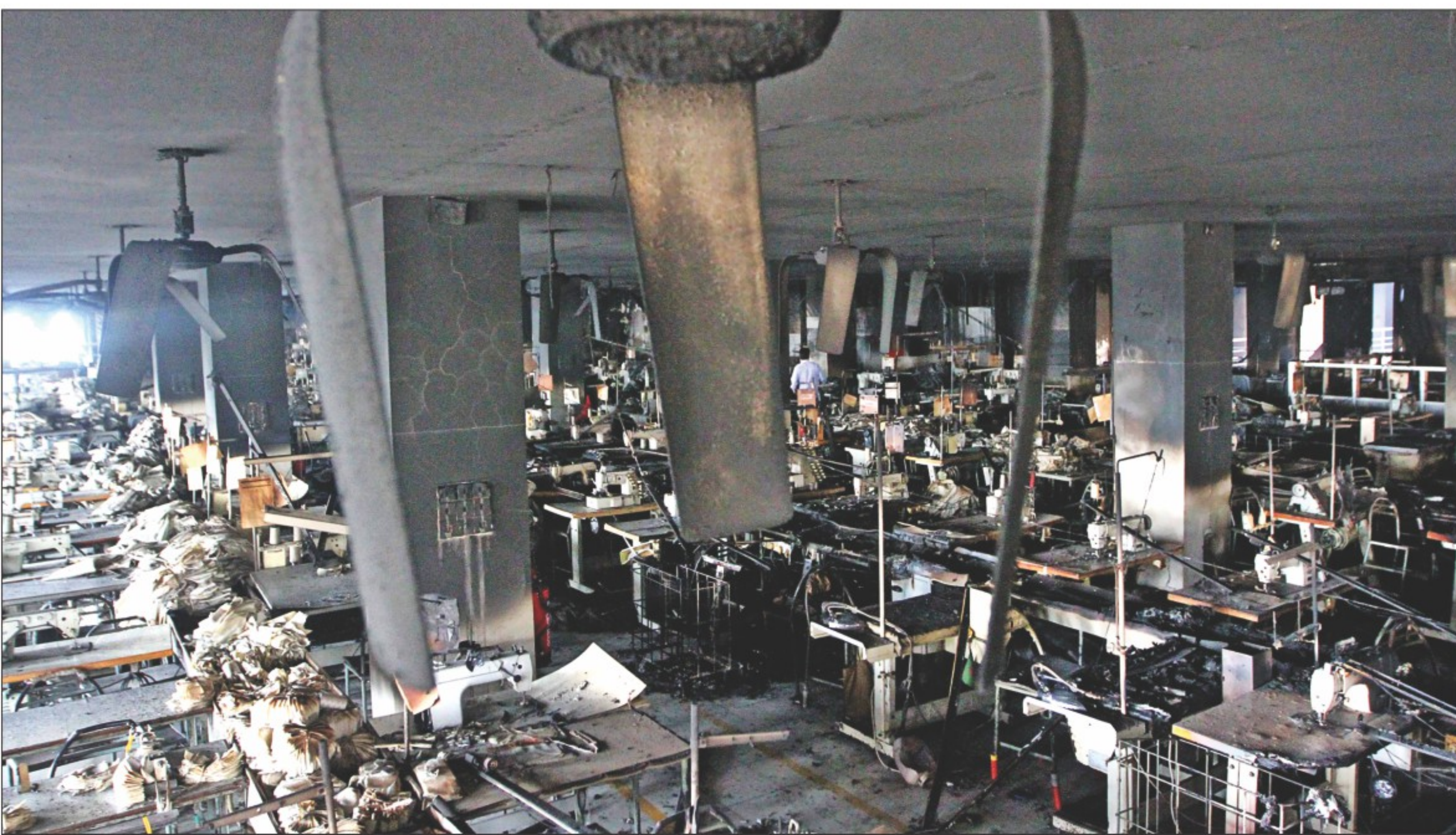


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/ BGMEA