



**Garment workers in Badda go on the rampage after police action on workers of Tuba Group who were demonstrating inside their factory for unpaid wages. Several vehicles were vandalised in Bir Uttam Rafiqul Islam Avenue in Badda, panicking passengers in vehicles and locals. Reportedly pro-ruling party activists joined in with the police action on the garment workers. Police escorted the mother of a worker out of the Tuba Group factory on Wednesday night, bottom left. She had gone there believing she would be able to convince her son to have food. The workers had been on hunger strike since the day before Eid. Another woman, bottom right, was seen yesterday morning trying to send food to the workers.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN/SK ENAMUL HAQ

# Crackdown on Tuba workers

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 "Police were asking us to leave the place. Suddenly 15-20 police personnel stormed into the seventh floor and started spraying us with pepper," said Minhazul Haque Nahid, a 23-year-old agitating worker of Tuba Group.  
 "My eyes, nostrils and throat were burning. I couldn't see anything," he said.  
 "We were on protests due to our hardship. What is our fault?" said a sobbing Bijli Begum, after being thrown out of the protest site.  
 Amid police action, workers were seen coming out rubbing their blood-shot eyes.  
 However, police denied the allegation of driving the workers away. "We did not force the workers to leave the

site," said MA Jalil, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station.  
 Rubi Akhter, a worker, said: "I was hit by the pepper spray from a close distance and I fell on the ground. Later my colleagues helped me come out of the building."  
 Three hours before the police action, water supply to the building was cut, some workers said.  
 Workers were seen hanging ropes from the top floors of the building to collect drinking water from their relatives and colleagues outside.  
 But their bids failed as policemen cordoning the building were cutting off the ropes.  
 Police did not make it clear who cut water supply but a senior police officer on the spot said there was enough

supply for the workers.  
 More than 200 garment workers were injured in the hour-long police action, said a leader of Tuba Group Shramik Sangram Committee.  
 Police also detained two trade union leaders -- Moshrefa Mishu of Garment Workers Unity Forum and Joly Talukder of Garment Workers Trade Union Centre. They were freed later.  
 Just before the crackdown began, hundreds of workers from nearby factories blocked Pragati Sarani to express solidarity with Tuba workers.  
 The traffic came to a halt amid clashes between the angry workers and police. Police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to quell the protests.

Clashes continued for one and a half hours between agitating workers, police and a group of people opposing the hunger strike.  
 Fears gripped the neighbourhood as a group of 50-60 started chasing a rival group.  
 As The Daily Star spoke to a worker of Tuba, Aleya, another group of 15-20 threw brickbats on standing buses and cars, damaging dozens of vehicles. Panicked passengers were seen getting off the buses through windows.  
 Lata Begum, a worker from another factory nearby, hurried in to join street vandalism. "Why do police detain and beat workers when they agitate to realise their arrears?" she said.  
 Some other workers were seen with

sticks in hand. Another worker was looking for brickbats.  
 The mayhem quietened after police stepped in. Accompanied by a group of ruling Awami League activists, law enforcers used truncheons and water cannons and fired blank shots to disperse the protesters. The road was freed after 2:15pm.  
**WORKERS DIVIDED**  
 A clear split opened among trade unions when some workers said they were barred by labour leaders from taking salaries from BGMEA.  
 A section of workers blamed Moshrefa Mishu, president of Garment Workers Unity Forum, for prohibiting them from taking partial salaries. Mishu was not available for comment as her mobile phone was

switched off.  
 Shahidul Islam Sabuj, a leader of Garment Workers Unity Forum, denied the allegation.  
 Defending Mishu, Minara Begum, another worker, said nobody forced her to stay inside the factory. "I just wanted full payments at the factory, not at the BGMEA office."  
 All of Tuba Group workers -- 1,475 -- have collected two of their three months' outstanding salaries from the BGMEA headquarters at Karwan Bazar over the last two days, said Atiqul Islam, president of the association.  
 But concern over wages is far from over. Sumi Begum, a Tuba worker, said: "The owners may not give us the rest of the salaries."

## First day

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 Nila's scarf got tangled in one of the wheels and knotted tightly around her neck, strangling her to death. She was heading to Azimpur High School and College along with her mother, sister and a friend.  
 "We were chatting away cheerfully and did not notice how Nila's scarf entangled itself with the wheel. She suddenly stooped over and fell on the floor of the vehicle," said Iti, her friend.  
 Although the driver stopped the vehicle immediately, Nila died by the time she was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Nurul Muttakin, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station, said they seized the vehicle and detained the driver.  
 "An unnatural death case was filed with the station. However, Nila's family member took the body away without an autopsy," said Muttakin.  
 Harun-ar-Rashid, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh division, told The Daily Star that easy bikes are not authorised to ply the city road. I really do not know how they still ply the streets illegally."  
 Nila, eldest daughter of the boatman, Abdul Halim, had recently got admission at Azimpur High School and College after passing her SSC from Kamrangirchar Ashrafabad High School with GPA-4.19.

## Broadcast policy takes effect

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 position.  
 "Everyone in the electronic media and those who attend talk shows, discussions and other programmes will now feel some kind of pressure thinking that somebody up the ranks is monitoring them," said Shykh Siraj, director of the private TV station Channel I.  
 The scope for discussion with the government is still there to relieve the media of discomfort, he added. "We'll sit with the information minister soon to discuss the issue."  
 Siraj, who is general secretary of the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO), hoped that the thriving

mass media would not go backward due to the policy. "Both the country and the government will be benefited if the media flourish further."  
 Media personalities and rights groups had urged the government not to bring the policy into force until an independent broadcast commission, the ultimate implementing authority, was formed.  
 The policy did not mention any time frame for the formation of the commission, raising worries that the information ministry might enforce the policy if the commission was not constituted soon. In that case, the ministry might misuse the policy provisions in the name of

maintaining standard of news, programmes and advertisements.  
 The ministry will now place a bill in parliament to enact the national broadcast act.  
 ATCO has demanded the immediate formation of an independent broadcast commission with competent members. It has insisted that the ministry should not enforce the policy until the commission is formed.  
**PROTESTS POUR IN**  
 The Jatiya Press Club yesterday expressed concern over the enforcement of the National Broadcast Policy 2014.  
 Condemning the gazette on the policy, the club in a statement

demanding immediate scrapping of the policy.  
 "Such a policy is an ill attempt to tie the hands and legs of the country's private television channels and radio stations," read the statement.  
 Supreme Court Bar Association President Khandker Mahub Hossain said the national broadcast policy was an ill attempt of the government to gag the media.  
 The talk shows could now be fully controlled through this policy, he told a press conference at the auditorium of the SCBA.  
 Meanwhile, police yesterday charged batons on Jamaat-Shibir men in the

capital's Arambagh while they were holding a meeting in the area to protest the national broadcast policy.  
 Four people were injured in the incident and eight Jamaat-Shibir men were detained by police, said a Jamaat-Islami leader.  
 Speaking at the meeting before the skirmish began, Shafiqul Islam Masud, assistant secretary of Dhaka city Jamaat, said the "illegal" government wanted to prolong its rule through conspiracies.  
 "By enforcing the repressive broadcast policy, the government wants to gag the media. There will be no freedom of expression if the policy is implemented," he mentioned.

## Israel, Hamas at odds over truce

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 afternoon, with the focus on extending the deadline.  
 But the Israeli delegation was headed back home yesterday afternoon, an official told AFP. It was not clear whether they would return to Cairo later in the day.  
 Israel has said it would be prepared to prolong the ceasefire "unconditionally".  
 But Hamas said agreement had still not been reached to extend the calm which went into force on Tuesday.  
 "There is no agreement to extend the ceasefire," Hamas' exiled deputy leader Mussa Abu Marzuq wrote on Twitter.  
 With the guns silent, some sem-

blance of normal life has returned to Gaza with traffic clogging the streets and people bustling about their business as shops, banks and markets resume business.  
 In some areas, there are scenes of utter devastation, with certain districts reduced to an endless sea of rubble and shattered hulks of buildings, an AFP correspondent said.  
 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that Gaza would be rebuilt -- but hopefully for the last time, as international patience showed signs of wearing thin.  
 "The senseless cycle of suffering in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as in Israel, must end," he said.

"Do we have to continue like this -- build, destroy, and build and destroy?" Ahead of yesterday's talks, Obama insisted that Gaza could not remain forever cut off by Israel's blockade, now in its eighth year.  
 "Long-term, there has to be a recognition that Gaza cannot sustain itself permanently closed off from the world," Obama told a news conference in Washington, saying the Palestinians needed to see "some prospects for an opening of Gaza so that they do not feel walled off."  
 Lifting the blockade is the main Palestinian demand in the ceasefire talks in Cairo.  
 Although Israel has expressed will-

ingness to extend the truce indefinitely, there was no immediate word on its response to that.  
 Israel's Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon sounded a cautious note, saying it was not clear where the talks would lead.  
 "I'm not sure what the outcome will be of the current discussions in Egypt," he said.  
 London, Paris and Berlin tabled an initiative offering an outline for rebuilding Gaza while ensuring Israel's security concerns were properly addressed, a diplomatic source said.  
 The proposal aims to strengthen the hand of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas and his Palestinian Authority

while clamping down on Gaza-based militant groups.  
 It proposes Abbas' security forces take control of border crossing in Gaza in conjunction with EU representatives and outlines a mechanism for preventing the rearming of militant groups or the construction of new tunnels.  
 It also envisages opening the Rafah border crossing with Egypt then eventually opening other crossings to Israel. It also refers to the opening of a commercial port in Gaza, the source said.  
 Netanyahu on Wednesday said Abbas' Palestinian Authority had an "important" role to play in Gaza, particularly in the reconstruction efforts.