

More bodies, more cries

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College Hospital (DMCH) while two others at Orthopaedic Hospital, sources at the army's control room said.

The rescuers removed 30 percent of the debris till yesterday evening, third day into the collapse.

It may take up to five days to complete the rest of the work, Brigadier General Nizam Ahmed, who is coordinating the rescue works, said yesterday afternoon.

"We're trying our best to complete it at the earliest. We have to work with utmost care so that we can rescue if anyone alive is inside the rubble," he said.

"Possibility of rescuing anyone alive is now very little. It's too hot inside and a long time has already passed," said a fire fighter.

Brigadier General Nizam also believes that there is no one alive inside the debris now.

"Rescuers have broken in, by making passages into the debris and searched for the trapped, two dog squad have also searched. But nothing could be found," he said.

However, digging out the body of electrician Humayun Kabir from the first-floor debris yesterday morning proved wrong Nizam's idea expressed on Sunday night that possibility of any dead victim's remaining inside is thin as it would have sent out strong stench due to the hot weather.

Recovery of Humayun's body came as a shock to his elder brother Shamim, also an electrician, who was lucky to make his way out of the rubble one and a half hours after the building collapsed on Saturday.

Traumatized with seemingly unending wait, Shamim made several attempts on Sunday and yesterday morning to enter the rubble to find his brother, but rescuers held him back, saying that there was no one inside.

Five minutes after Shamim started for their Jatrabari house taking Humayun's body in an ambulance, their mother Ambia Begum and father Shahjahan Jamaddar reached the site. They reached Dhaka Sunday morning from their village home in Shankarpasha in Nalchhiti of Jhalakathi district on getting news of the misfortune.

"I stayed here for you the whole day yesterday and waited till 11:30 in the night. Were you alive then, my son?" the mother was uttering, as if talking with her son, hitting her chest in a fit of trauma.

A sudden outburst of howling was heard over the sound of the large equipments' operating when rescuers brought a part of the mutilated body of Syed Rustom from the eastern side of the collapsed building at 12:30pm.

Rustom's son Al Amin and nephews Babu, Kazimuddin and Mizan were holding each other with tears rolling down their cheeks as rescuers were bringing out Rustom's body from the ground floor.

Most of Rustom's boned were broken and his right arm was hanging from a thin skin.

Al Amin identified his father with the help of the telephone index and a calculator kept in the pocket of his shirt.

As army men asked Al Amin to prove that the body was his father's, the ill-fated boy uttered the first telephone number in the index that was his (Al Amin) cellphone number.

Convinced, the army men handed over him the body, which he took to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) later.

Earlier on Sunday night, the rescuers told Rustom's relatives who had been waiting near the site since the collapse that there was no one inside the rubble, dead or alive.

"We were sure he was inside it, because we knew for sure he was supervising the works during the incident. When we called at his mobile phone half-an-hour after the incident, the phone rang. But it did not respond after 1:00pm on Saturday," Al Amin said.

"We did not find father searching all the hospitals in Dhaka," he said.

After post-mortem at the DMCH, they took Rustom's body to their village home at Lamchar in Laxmipur for burial.

Meantime, relatives of a dead male victim identified his body at the DMCH yesterday.

The deceased, Mizanur Rahman, 25, was a labourer working on the third floor during the incident. His wife Aklima Begum and nephew M Hasan, who rushed to the capital from their home village Mothbari under Rajapur of Jhalakathi district, went to the DMCH yesterday noon after failing to find him at other city hospitals. They took his body to their village home.

FRANTIC EFFORTS ON
"Please respond, if anyone alive is staying inside, please respond," Fire Brigade Deputy Director Selim Newaz Bhuiyan was saying through a loudhailer, sitting on a hole made at the north-eastern part of the collapsed building.

Three fire fighters were moving inside the debris to see whether anyone, alive or dead, could be found as Selim continued with the loudhailer: "If you are too weak to talk, please make sound with whatever you get near your hands. The rescue team is inside to bring you out. Please attract their attention."

The rescuers passed air into the debris with air blower to help the alive, if there was anyone inside, to breathe.

"CONSTRUCTION RESULTED IN COLLAPSE"
The building owners were transforming the garment factory building into a hospital without Rajuk's approval, said Emdadul Islam, Chief Engineer of Rajuk and a member of the six-member probe team.

"They violated the rule of taking

permission before redesigning. We could not sense it as they were working by covering the building with clothes," he told reporters at the site yesterday, adding that the Phoenix building authority's claim of having the permission to build a hospital is false.

As the authorities demolished some walls on the ground floor during reconstruction, the building which stood on 2000 square feet area failed to bear the load and collapsed, he said, adding: "The design was not appropriate for such a massive building."

Head of the probe body Golam Nabi said they were trying to identify the architect and engineers of the building. "Everything will be clear if we can talk with them," he said, adding that they would submit the report in five to seven days.

"REGULATORY BODY IS A DEMAND OF TIME"
There should be a regulatory body to ensure that construction of buildings go in line with Rajuk approval, said Monaj Ahmed Noor, an assistant professor of Buet and a member of the probe body.

"People get their design approved by the Rajuk but construct their buildings according to their will without complying with the approved design," he said.

Such practice could be stopped if we had a regulatory body or monitoring team to see it, he said, adding, "It is a demand of the age."

The case filed in connection with the building collapse was transferred to the Detective Branch yesterday. Inspector Shafiq will investigate it.

Charges framed

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Rickshaw-puller Atoar Rahman, Dulal, Ahab adherents Azizul Bari Mintu, Jahangir Alam, Rabiul Islam confessed before magistrates under Section 164.

Azizul Bari Mintu in his confidential statement said 10 persons were involved in seven blasts at four places and the bombs were distributed under Bazla Ahab mosque.

Other arrested accused are Ahab's cultural front Al Hera Shilpi Gosthi Chief Shafiqul Islam, Ahab mosque Imam Hafez Md Shafiqul Islam, Majnu Mia, Dulal Hossain, Mozammel Haque, Idris Ali, Abdul Jabbar, Aminul Islam, Ziaur Rahman, Redwan Bari Akhand, Mustafizur Rahman, Md Selim, and madrasa teacher Mehdi Hasan.

Former union Jamaat-e-Islami president Montezar Rahman is among the four accused who are absconding.

Public Prosecutor Ketab Uddin moved for the state and Advocate Ekramur Rasul, Ashrafal Alam, Sarwar Jahan moved for the accused. The state employed lawyers for the accused as none came forward to defend them. The case was transferred to the tribunal from Joypurhat on December 24 last year.

More time is likely to be wasted on the same matter in the next workdays as the AL lawmakers have decided to keep calling for discussion each time they would take the floor on a point of order.

How much time will it take up if the treasury bench allows general discussions on the issues? Discussion on a single topic should not take more than an hour. It may even be held for half an hour. Besides, the ruling alliance's refusal to discuss the matters on grounds of shortage of time appears to have been done without rhyme or reason.

The facts available in the proceedings of the House indicate that none of the previous governments had so bluntly opposed a call for a discussion in parliament.

Since restoration of parliamentary democracy after the fall of Ershad regime, the previous two parliaments—fifth and seventh—were much

less than the current one in terms of discussing issues of urgent importance. General discussions on dozens of topics during the terms of those two parliaments were possible because of the then governments' attitude favourable to discussion.

The fifth parliament held at least 11 discussions on the same number of issues ranging from foreign policy to the prevailing situation in educational institutions across the country. State of the educational institutions back then was debated for two days. The House even formed a 15-member parliamentary body to review the way developments were taking place at the institutions.

Besides, discussions on seven-murder in the city's Lalbagh area, push-in attempts by India, Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam and Gono Adalat [people's tribunal], miserable conditions inside the prisons, cyclone in the southern districts, transport strike and accompanying hassles in the northern region.

The then ruling BNP allowed the general discussion on Golam Azam and Gono Adalat to continue for three consecutive workdays.

The sixth parliament, constituted after the controversial election of February 15, 1996, saw only 11 workdays with no general discussion.

The seventh parliament held at least 11 general discussions on as many number of issues ranging from foreign policy to law and order. Besides, there were debates on national energy policy, education policy, water-sharing treaty, share market fiasco, transit and regional cooperation, and price of essentials. AL was the ruling party then.

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Factory safety

FROM PAGE 1
units, are under their supervision. Each of them is supposed to inspect at least 10 factories a month.

Thousands of small unregistered factories in various sectors are not under their jurisdiction.

From 1995 to 2004, a total of 23,989 factory accidents occurred—3,412 serious and 20,414 minor—claiming 163 lives and leaving thousands injured, according to the factory inspection office.

But other sources said the number of casualties was much higher.

A survey conducted by a non-governmental organisation -- Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation -- said more than 400 workers (including construction workers) died and more than 3,000 were injured at their work places last year.

Some sources said inspectors cannot take any effective steps against faulty and risky factories due to bureaucratic tangles and corruption, resulting in recurrence of accidents.

There are only 13 inspectors in three categories -- general, safety (engineering) and medical -- for more than 14,000 factories, including nearly 5,000 garment factories, in the city and Narayanganj.

The number of factory inspections and cases filed are amazingly high compared to the number of inspectors. In 10 years from 1996 to 2005, factories were inspected 4,42,462 times and 10,3024 cases were filed. But that improved the safety situation very little as evident from the number of accidents.

A labour court source said inspectors are keen to file cases because when they do so, factory owners negotiate with them and make payments for withdrawal of the cases. But they hardly file cases regarding violation of safety measures.

"I cannot remember if they (inspectors) have filed any case here for violation of safety measures in recent past. We get cases mainly concerning wages and job discrimination," said a labour court official, requesting anonymity.

Meanwhile, the factory inspection office filed cases against 92 garments factories with civil courts after the Spectrum Garment collapse, the biggest factory tragedy in recent times. Despite this, safety system in the factories hardly changed.

People's interests

FROM PAGE 1
ruling parties including the BNP had considerably been in favour of allowing parliamentary discussion on issues of immediate importance.

Since its first meeting on October 28, 2001, the current parliament held discussions on law and order, price hike of essentials and August 21 grenade attack on the Awami League (AL) rally. The main opposition AL

joined the debates on law and order and price hike. But the party boycotted the discussion on August 21 blasts on September 13, 2004 after the speaker had denied its demand for holding the discussion adjourning all other business of the day.

The AL lawmakers started boycotting the House since then. On its return to parliament, ending a 17-month boycott on February 12, the largest opposition in parliament demanded urgent discussion on 10 issues including crises of power, diesel and fertiliser, price spiral of essentials, law and order, grenade attacks on AL rally.

But the treasury bench refused to allow any discussion on the pretext of having little time to do so and urged the main opposition to raise the issues rather during the motion of thanks on the president's address.

In response, the AL lawmakers demanded that at least one or two of the issues be discussed on every workday of the current session. By this time, more than five hours have been spent on debating whether to hold formal discussion on the burning issues.

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Minister faces

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from the meeting.

The existing system of distributing fertiliser is faulty, he said, adding, "Two years ago, we recommended appointing one or two dealers at each union parishad across the country. Now there are 10 to 20 dealers in a upazila, who confine their distribution activities mainly to the headquarters."

The agriculture minister agreed to the committee's recommendation to appoint dealers at the union parishad level.

AL lawmakers and committee member Abdul Razzak said after the meeting, "In the meeting, I presented adequate documents on the fertiliser crisis. But the agriculture minister denied any crisis."

Another committee member Motahar Hossain, an AL lawmaker from northern Lalmonirhat district, narrated the acute fertiliser crisis faced by the farmers in his constituency.

But the minister rejected the allegation, saying that the media has 'created' the crisis.

He also criticised the AL for 'enforcing' agitation programmes over the issue, meeting sources said.

Asking why the crisis prevails if there is adequate stock of fertiliser, AL lawmaker Abdul Razzak said,

"It is the ruling party men who created an artificial crisis to make money while the farmers are forced to purchase fertiliser at higher cost."

Whatever the minister claims about the stock of fertiliser, the truth is that farmers are not getting fertiliser, Jatiya Party lawmaker and committee member GM Quader said after the meeting.

Referring to the committee's recommendation for recruitment of dealer at the union level, the committee chairman said, "There would not have been the fertiliser crisis had the ministries initiated steps earlier to improve the fertiliser management system."

"I suspect a section of unscrupulous officials at the ministry did not comply with the committee's recommendation in a bid to please the present fertiliser dealers," he said.

The agriculture minister refused to talk to the press after the meeting held at the Jatiya Snagsad Bhaban.

Tejgaon collapse

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Tk 2,000 each.

The injured and their relatives alleged the money given by the building owners is insufficient for treatment. "I have already spent Tk 4,000," said injured M Musa, helper of a mason. A woman named Jobeda gave him Tk 2,000 at 10:00am yesterday, he added.

His nephew Shah Alam, one of the injured, received no money as yet, he mentioned.

Four others said none has offered them any assistance.

Doctors at Ward-32 of the DMCH, where nine injured are under treatment, however said no victims had to buy any medicine.

"We've provided them medicine available at the hospital and also bought them medicine worth over Tk 20,000," said Dr Kazi Eusuf, assistant registrar of the ward.

Relatives of most of the injured however refuted the doctors' claim and said they had to buy some medicine from outside.

They also demanded immediate payment of the compensation offered by the building owners.

Relatives of the dead told this correspondent that they have heard about the offer of compensation. "But none came to us with the offer. We don't know whom to contact for this," said Aklima, wife of one of the dead, Mizanur Rahman.

Syed Al Amin, son of another dead, Syed Rustom Ali, who was working at the building as a subcontractor, said, "Owners of Phoenix building owe us over Tk 30 lakh and none has contacted us as yet about the money."

Indians' bid

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thousand Indian nationals from Nasirpara village in Karipur upazila of Nadia district carrying lethal weapons entered Bangladesh at Thotapara at about 6:00am and started ploughing the lands.

As the landowners informed Mohishkundi border observation post (BOP), BDR Subedar Nurul Islam went to the spot and asked the Indians stop the cultivation. But the Indian people and BSF men accompanying them ignored his request.

Later, Deputy Commander of 9 Rifles Battalion Major Tareque Masud Bhawal with two platoons of BDR personally rushed to the spot and protested the incident.

After a brief altercation between the BDR and BSF men, BSF Inspector RG Sharma asked the Indian people to stop ploughing and go back to the Indian territory.

Sources said the BSF official claimed ownership of the land. BDR officials said it has become difficult to demarcate the border at Thotapara due to river erosion. At present there is no border pillar at the place.

Locals said the Padma devoured 25,000 acres of land in Thotapara, Mohammadpur Chardoba, Gacherdia and Gangerdoba villages in 1996, rendering 2,000 families homeless. This year the lands emerged again.

BDR sources said they have enhanced patrol in the area amid tension among the villagers. The BSF also strengthened its power at the border point.

Trawler sinks

FROM PAGE 1

of the four-day long gathering a large number of followers of the Pir headed home by different types of water transports and connecting road transports via Barisal yesterday morning.

"Every year both of us come to attend this mahfil and return home safely, but this year one of us returning alive with the dead body of the other," Nurul Islam said with tearful eyes.

The trawler which capsized and went under 40 feet of water while trying to depart the station had a capacity of carrying only 20 to 30 passengers but was loaded with 80.

Local people rushed to the spot and rescued the passengers and recovered the floating dead body of NurMuhammad.

A team of divers from Barisal Fire Service Station tried to salvage the capsized trawler and find the missing persons for few hours yesterday without any success.

Shaeb Ali, head of the divers, said heavy current at the spot affected by land erosion with 40 to 50 feet depth of water and some technical problems hindered the rescue operation.

A rescue team of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) with a salvage vessel reached the scene at noon and tried to mark the spot where the trawler had sunk.

Shahjal Huq, senior deputy director of BIWTA in charge of the salvage and rescue operation said the position of the sunken trawler was marked under fifty feet of water and due to strong current in the river, immediate recovery of the trawler might not be possible and a salvage vessel, Hamza, might have to be called in for the rescue operation.

Musaddek Billah, a son of Chamonnair Pir, and Shahidul Islam Kabir, media cell chief of Chamonnair Mahfil, alleged that the local administration did not provide adequate security to the large gathering of the Muslims.

Only three police constables who were put in duty at the launch terminal failed to control over loading of the trawler and the heavy rush of home-bound passengers causing the fatal accident, they said.

Outage leads

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka Wasa's supply has fallen from 1.73 crore gallons a day to a maximum of 1.43 crore gallons now and that too has been made possible by operating alternate power generators.

"Providing Dhaka residents with piped water by using alternate power is not Wasa's mandate. Still the situation is forcing us to operate generators at many of our water-lifting points. But these generators can't be run for more than two hours at a stretch because of tripping problems resulting in supply shortage of water at various

city neighbourhoods," Dhaka