

Mohammadpur fire victim dies

Blaze in Kalyanpur injures four

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the seven people who were burnt in a fire caused by an explosion at a scrap material shop in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area on Tuesday died earlier yesterday at a hospital.

Faruk, a shop employee who suffered 56 percent burns, died at the High Dependency Unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery around 2am, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

Three injured were still being treated for their burns, while three others were released but were asked to take treatment as outpatients.

The fire broke out at the shop near Chand Uddyan Bhangra Mosque when abandoned bottles were being smashed by a machine and one of them exploded.

Meanwhile, another fire broke out at Notun Bazar slum in the capital's Kalyanpur on Friday night in a similar way, while workers of a scrap material shop were crushing perfume bottles, said locals.

At least four people including two workers, Anwar (21) and Akter (19), were burnt in the fire.

A perfume bottle exploded, starting a fire at the three-storey tin-shed structure that housed the shop. The fire later spread

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Tin walls and roofs of the shanties in Kalyanpur lie crumpled up by the heat of the blaze, as a nearby tree stands barren with its leaves burnt. Inset, Kohinur Begum shows a "relief" card she received yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, SHAHEED MOLLAH

Dreams of a family, burnt down to ashes

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Kohinur Begum (57) came to the capital 25 years ago with her husband, who was a rickshaw puller, and four sons from Bhola, as their house was destroyed by the nearby river.

Like many others of the district, they too decided to settle at the capital's Notun Bazar slum in Kalyanpur. They went through a lot of difficulties over the years, having to face two massive fires and an eviction. Each time, they had to restart their lives.

This time, the six rooms they used to live in and two shops, which were their means of livelihood, were all gutted in Friday's fire. They had built everything by taking loans, which still must be repaid.

"Now how will we repay the loans? Where will we even stay?" asked a hopeless Kohinur.

Friday night's fire did not just raze houses, it engulfed the dreams of people, most of whom are marginalised.

Hard work had changed Kohinur's luck, and despite the loss of her husband seven years back, her struggle was bearing fruit. She was ready to beat all odds with her now five sons and two daughters.

"I had a wood shop, and my elder son Sohel had a furniture shop. My daughters are tailors, and the others day labourers," she said.

"We took loan, and built our homes and invested in business...now all has turned into ashes," Kohinur said, while staring at the burnt remains of what was once their home.

"When I first came to the capital with my husband, we built four rooms in the slum, which were gutted in a massive fire 20 years back. We were homeless for seven months. Later, we built two rooms taking some loans," she continued.

"After my husband's death in 2013, another fire gutted the rooms. Again, we rebuilt them. But two years ago, city corporation evicted us from the slum," she said, adding that when they came back and rebuilt their home after taking loans, the fire once again took everything away.

She said they are yet to repay Tk 1 lakh loan, which they took for

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

N'GANJ MOSQUE EXPLOSION

CID set to press 'exemplary' charges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday said it is going to submit an "exemplary" charge sheet by accusing government officials in connection with Narayanganj mosque blast.

"We have almost completed our task and want to submit the charge sheet within one week," said Nasir Uddin Ahmed, special superintendent of police (SP) of CID in Narayanganj.

"But we need some time to take permission from authorities concerned to accuse any government official. That is why the process is delayed," he said.

"We have prepared the charge sheet in such a way so that it becomes an instance for everyone and no such incident happens further due to negligence in duty," he added while talking to journalists at the conference room of the district's SP office yesterday.

A deadly explosion took place at Baitus Salat Jame Mosque in Pashchim Talla of Narayanganj city on September 4, leaving at least 34 people dead and many others injured.

It is largely believed that the explosion occurred due to gas pipe leakage.

A day later, a sub-inspector of Fatullah Model Police Station filed a case accusing some unnamed persons. Later, the case was handed over to CID for investigation.

Talking to journalists yesterday, CID official Nasir Uddin said the mosque's management committee did not care about public safety and did not take any measure to repair the gas pipe leakage, although they were aware about it.

Furthermore, the mosque's electricity connection was illegal. Its construction work for making it a multi-storey building was going on without any government permission.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

HIKING POTATO PRICE

7 wholesalers fined in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined seven potato wholesalers in Dhaka's Mohammadpur Krishi Market Tk 4.30 lakh for selling the vegetable at prices higher than that fixed by the government.

The wholesalers are: Tanha Enterprise, Ma-er Doa Banijjaloy, Munshiganj Banijjaloy, Allah-r Dan Vander, Manik Enterprise, New Bikrampur Banijjaloy and New Shahalam Trading.

Executive Magistrate Palash Kumar Bosu, assisted by Rab and Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM), conducted the drive and fined the business outlets.

"The traders were selling per kg potato at Tk 40-45 defying government order," Palash told The Daily Star.

On October 7, DAM fixed the price ceiling at Tk 30 for retailers and Tk 25 for wholesalers. It also set Tk 23 for businesspersons who had kept potato in cold storages.

But caving in to the pressure from businesspeople, the government on October 21 raised the price ceiling for potato by Tk 5 to Tk 35 per kg at retail markets.

First nat'l cyber drill brings strange results

Three law enforcement, security orgs score zero; organisers say they 'observed', didn't participate

SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

The first national level cyber-security drill, organised recently by a government agency and participated by 35 private and public institutions, has produced some rather quizzical results.

The government's e-Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT) hosted the drill -- held online remotely -- for 20 banks and 15 non-banking financial institutions, law enforcement agencies, and private entities on October 22. Each organisation was given six problems and a stipulated time to come up with solutions.

At least 13 of the 35 participating organisations failed to solve any problem, including Bangladesh Police, Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, and the Digital Security Agency.

Contacted on Thursday, AFM Al Kibria, deputy commissioner of CTTC, said he could not recall of any participation from his agency in any cyber drill.

Digital Security Agency and Bangladesh Police did not respond to request for comments.

Tarique M Barkatullah, project director of BGD e-GOV CIRT, later told The Daily Star that due to "ongoing heavy workload", only apprentice-level officials from the three agencies participated in the drill, at a capacity of "observation and assessment".

Another organiser, wishing not to be named, also insisted that this does not reflect the true capability of the law enforcement agencies in dealing with cyber threats.

Requesting anonymity, a source at Bangladesh Computer Council, who was involved in organising the event, confirmed that members of the three agencies were present at the drill "on-and-off".

The results of the drill, which had been uploaded on the website of Bangladesh Computer Council (the governing organisation of CIRT), were removed sometime in the last two days. This newspaper has preserved a copy of it.

"This drill was first of its kind in Bangladesh and our objective was to provide a real-life experience for the participants on incident handling and mitigation," said Md Bahauddin Palash, one of the organising team members of the cyber drill and the information security specialist of BGD e-GOV CIRT.

NCC Bank came first with a score of 85, while Pubali Bank secured second position with 83. Bangladesh Bank, the regulator of all financial institutions, came fourth with a score of 70.

Senior maintenance engineer and team leader for Bangladesh Bank, Fahad Zaman Chowdhury, described this drill as an eye-opener.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

WAR CRIMES

Qaisar seeks review of death sentence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Convicted war criminal Syed Mohammad Qaisar has filed a petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court seeking review of its verdict that upheld his death sentence for committing crimes against humanity and war crimes during the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Qaisar filed the petition on Thursday through his lawyer Tanvir Ahmed Al Amin, seeking acquittal of the charges in which he was convicted and sentenced to death.

In the review petition, Qaisar mentioned a total of 18 grounds for which the apex court may consider his prayer, lawyer Tanvir Ahmed told The Daily Star.

The lawyer said Qaisar is 82 years old and ill. He also uses a wheelchair to move around. There is no precedence of sentencing such an old and ill man to death in the world, he said, adding that Qaisar is now in Keraniganj jail.

On January 14, the SC upheld the death sentence of former Jatiya Party leader Qaisar, for his involvement in crimes against humanity and war crimes -- including killing and rape -- during 1971.

The apex court delivered the verdict, allowing an appeal in part filed by Qaisar -- a local leader of the then Razakar and Peace Committee, two anti-liberation forces -- challenging the International Crimes Tribunal-2 verdict that sentenced him to death for the crimes committed in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria in 1971.

A four-member bench of the SC's Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain came up with the verdict by the majority view.

The ICT on October 22 issued death warrant against him after the Appellate Division released full text of its verdict.

On January 14, after the SC announced the short verdict, Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that the government would execute the apex court verdict on completion of all legal procedures. Five Jamaat leaders have already been executed for committing crimes during the Liberation War while one is serving jail until death.

Online classes 'not that effective'

Finds BYLC-MJF survey on youth development in Covid-19 era

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regional and institution-wise disparity in digital infrastructure and readiness affected students' learning during the pandemic, as only 39 percent of youth said their educational institutions were offering online classes in July 2020, a recent survey shows.

According to the survey, more than 50 percent of the youth surveyed referred to online classes taken by their educational institutions as "slightly effective" and "not that effective" due to the lack of interaction between teachers and students, lack of learning

materials and teachers' inability to conduct classes online.

They also mentioned that classes on theoretical subjects were organised but lab classes were postponed or cancelled.

The findings were presented at a webinar last evening, titled "Youth development in the Covid-19 era and beyond", organised by Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC), and supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and UKAid.

The survey focused on understanding the impact of Covid-19

on youth's education, employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, and mental well-being. It was conducted with 1,464 youth aged between 18 and 35 from different socioeconomic backgrounds across the country.

62 percent of young entrepreneurs reported that they had to shut down their businesses temporarily or permanently due to the pandemic.

Besides, 61 percent of survey participants mentioned experiencing mental stress due to Covid-19, but only 20 percent of them who felt an

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Rows of idols of the Hindu goddess Laxmi, along with clay pots and pans, were prepared to be sold at "Laxmir Haat", a traditional fair in Barishal which has been taking place for more than a hundred years, ahead of Laxmi Puja. Sculptors from around the district gather to sell their idols, however, sales have been decreasing over the years, according to them. The event started on Thursday at Hatkhola Hori Mandir premises.

PHOTO: STAR

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