

Dhaka Day by Day

The Welding Hazards

by Rahat Fahmida and Sharier Khan



Rashed, a twelve-year old boy, was busily welding a window grill in a welding shop in Maghbazaar. But shockingly enough, Rashed was not using any mask while working. And no one in the shop seemed to be bothered about his protection. The pedestrians almost involuntarily stopped to have a look at his work. Little do they know how dangerous it is to even look at a welding work.

Rustam Ali, the owner of this welding shop, located in a dingy lane of Maghbazaar, was contently chewing his 'paan'. Talking to 'The Daily Star' he revealed important facts of this trade. "It is true, we need to have a licence, but no one really comes to check. As you know, that 220 volt electric supply is required in a residential area. But we, having connection with the junior mechanics of Power Development Board arrange for a 440 volt line which is required for any welding operation. We usually don't have to go through the formalities.

"We know, it is not right for us to operate at night, but we just can't help it. Let me tell you, this is quite a profitable business."

Rustam Ali said, these small welding shops which actually involves very little investment, earns a profit of around ten thousand taka per month. Accessories for these shops involves very little money. A locally made welding machine, which is used mostly in all these shops cost around three thousand taka. This does need to be repaired every three month or so. The most expensive welding machine which is used costs around Tk. 18,000 (eighteen thousand taka).

Recently these welding shops have come up in hundreds in the city. Talking to Dr Ikhtiar Omar, Professor of Chemical Engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, it was known that people are exposed to a number of dangerous effects from these welding shops. The intensity of light produced in the process of welding is damaging to the eyes.

This expert suggested, these shops should be ideally set-up indoors. And that is what the municipal corporation's regulations says, too. "This job involves gas. The combination of acetylene gas and oxygen which are required for welding, are strong pressure gases producing very high temperature," Omar continued, these shops, in and around residential areas, risk high possibility of explosion or bursting of cylinders. This is not risky just for the people living near the shop, but also for the pedestrians.

It is often noticed, that the man working with the welding machine holds a mask-like shield to prevent his eyes. But his assistant and others in close proximity do not have

protection of any sort. Helmets or special strainer-like nets are not used at all while working in a high rise building. These shops, which also operate at night, consume immense power.

Health officials of the City Municipal Corporation reported to have had complaints of welding operations causing health hazards, like eye injuries, skin burn and risk of other physical injuries.

But information regarding welding shops, its location and health hazards is not found in the central office of the City Municipal Corporation. It was learnt, the head office distributed its responsibilities among the zonal offices from 1989. These zonal offices now deal with these matters, but sends no information to the central offices for discussion and new decisions.

Welders or rather the owners of the welding shops require to have approval of the Corporation, which clearly states for these shops to be located indoors and preferably not near residential areas. Welding shops should have big and open space for operation, which is well ventilated and protected enough for both public and the workers.

On paper, all the requisite formalities and regularities are maintained in setting up a welding shop. In reality, officials observe, these are not maintained. In the absence of monitoring and supervision, strong steps are not taken to improve the situation.

Alongside these welding shops, about 600 casting shops have recently come into existence in the city. Casting disposes dangerous acids and fumes which in certain cases cause tuberculosis and bronchitis. Health officials agreed, the growth of these shops also should be strictly regulated.

Ruhul Amin, 39, owns three welding and casting shops in Fakirapool. Talking to him, his ignorance about the Corporation's regulations and the dangers of outdoor welding shops, was inevitable. He was unaware of the health hazards, which his workers might face in due course. There are many Ruhul Amins and Rustam Alis in the city, with similar attitude.

Will innocent people continue to pay with their lives for the ineptitude of a handful of organisers? Though one is trying to skirt the blame by saying most shops have been registered, the other throws the blame as lying. No one takes much notice of the deaths and health hazards caused simply by ignorance. Keeping in mind, this is a profitable business, to improve its working environment responsible bodies of this sector need to be extremely careful at the earliest.

JCD blames BCL for killing its Ctg leader

Leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday warned the pro-Awami League Chhatra League against politics of killing and urged them to stop it immediately, reports UNB.

JCD, student wing of the ruling BNP, organised a huge gathering on the Dhaka University campus yesterday noon to protest the killing of one of its leader at Chittagong.

Jahirul Islam Jahir, AGS of Chittagong Government Commercial Institute Students' Union, was shot dead on Monday at Agrabad CGS colony in the port city.

The protest rally was addressed by JCD General Secretary Ilias Ali, Organising Secretary Abdul Malek, central leaders Moniruzzaman Monir, Habibunnabi Sohel and Ali Akkas Nadim.

They blamed the Awami-backed Chhatra League for the brutal killing and demanded exemplary punishment of those involved in it.

DUCSU

The Vice President of Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) Amanullah Aman MP and its General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon yesterday strongly protested against the killing of the AGS of Chittagong Commercial Institute and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Jahirul Islam by a certain violent quarter.

In a joint statement the leaders said this certain quarter was relentlessly conducting planned terrorist activities and killing in the academic institutions throughout the country. The killing of Chhatra Dal leader Jahir was the part of such activity, they said.

No Shakespeare in JS library

The library in Jatiya Sangsad is enriched with a huge collection of nearly 50,000 books on different subjects ranging from law to literature but not a single copy of Shakespeare's works, reports UNB.

The fact was revealed when some newsmen went to the library in the ground floor of the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday morning to verify a quote from the Merchant of Venice of William Shakespeare.

"Sorry sir, we have no Shakespeare", said an employee in the library after checking the library catalogue. He said the library contains books on many subjects — law, history, economics, science and some on English literature — but no works of great English playwright Shakespeare.

To a query, the employee said the library is exclusively used by members of parliament and officials of the parliament secretariat. The demand for books on literature is rather rare, he added.



Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal brought out a rally on Dhaka University campus yesterday protesting the killing of its leader in Chittagong. —Star photo

Jagannath College teachers meet Biswas

A 7-member teachers' delegation of the Jagannath University College yesterday met President Abdul Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban, reports ISS.

Led by the Principal, Dr Qam Habibur Rahman, the delegation apprised the President of various problems of the college including transport shortage of the teachers.

They also informed him that centenary of the college would be celebrated this year and sought his cooperation in this regard.

President Biswas assured the teachers that their problem would be looked into.

He urged the teachers to spread education in a peaceful atmosphere and maintain peace on the campus.

Plan to privatise BPC enterprises protested

The employees and officers of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) yesterday strongly protested the recent proposal of denationalising the commercial enterprises of the organisation, reports UNB.

In a joint statement the officers and employees said some high officials of the corporation are involved in conspiracy to denationalise the profitable organisation.

They held a meeting at the head office premises of the organisation and demanded the immediate expulsion of the corrupt officials from the corporation.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by General Secretary of the officers association Miaz Uddin Khan, President of Workers'

union Sheikh Ahmed Hossain Mirza and its General Secretary Rakibuddin Sarker.

A united action committee was also formed in the meeting to realise their demands.

Later, they brought out a procession protesting the anti-proposal.

Tea sale centre opened

National Tea Company Limited with a view to making available fresh tea of its own gardens to the general consumers at subsidised rates, opened a "sale centre" at its head office at 17, Kakrail Road, Dhaka on Tuesday, says a press release.

The sale centre was formally opened by Dr Mirza Abdul Jalil, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce. Mohammed Ali, Chairman, National Tea Company Ltd was present as special guest.

IPSA library inaugurated

Agriculture Minister M Majid-ul Haq formally opened the newly constructed library of the Institute of Post Graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) at Gazipur at Shalna Tuesday, reports BSS.

The library construction work starts from April '91 at a cost of Taka eleven crore. The construction has been completed with the co-operation and financial assistance of USA and Japan.

About eleven departments of M Sc and PhD course students of agriculture field will be benefited from this library. The library consists of a well equipped audio-visual system and also natural lighting system, field laboratory and other essential modern facilities.

Inaugurating the library, Agriculture Minister said this Institute (IPSA) has already classified itself as unique and effective educational organization.

He said after the establishment of this library, the teachers and students of IPSA will be enriched with more modern agricultural research and information.

Later, the minister went round different sections of the library.

Happy Birthday

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HERE and THERE

Customs officials

Customs officials Monday planted trees in front of the Dhaka Customs House at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) as a part of tree-plantation programme launched throughout the country.

Secretary for Internal Resources and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), Dr A K M Mashur Rahman inaugurated the programme while Customs Collector Soeb Ahmed presided over the function at the house at 3 pm.

Nirmul body

The Chief Coordinator of Ekatturer Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee, Lt Col (Rtd) Kazi Nuruzzaman in a statement demanded the withdrawal of cases against 60 student leaders of Rajshahi University.

He also condemned the filing of cases against Shamsul Alam, Anzad Hossain and Abul Hossain of Joypurhat and demanded the withdrawal of the cases against them.

BIBM

A fortnightly course 'on Foreign Trade and Foreign Exchange' concluded here Monday.

Conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), the course was participated by 33 officers of different banks and financial institutions.

AHM Nurul Islam Chowdhury, Director-General BIBM in his presidential speech at the concluding session underscored the importance of conducting transaction in foreign trade and foreign exchange.

CPB

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) criticising the proposed budget said that it did not suit the requirements of the country because the budget was made according to the suggestions of IMF and World Bank.

In a press release Monday, CPB said the budget did not reduce expenditure in the non-productive sector.

The criticisms were made at a central committee meeting of CPB recently presided over by Saifuddin Ahmed Manik.

Shahidullah Biddiyapith

The 108th birth anniversary of late Dr Mohammad Shahidullah was observed Friday last at the Dr Mohammad Shahidullah Adarsha Biddiyapith in Mirpur.

Presided over by eminent educationist Biddiyapith Managing Committee Chairman AFM Shahidullah, the function was attended by Dhaka University Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Wakil Ahmed and Director of the Bangla Academy Bashir-al Helal.

Textile Assoc

An emergency meeting of Bangladesh Specialised Textile Mills and Powerloom Industries Association Tuesday regretted that no steps have been taken to overcome the problems of textile sector despite declaration of it as thrust sector.

The meeting decided to hold a protest rally in front of National Press Club on July 26.

Pak HC calls on Matin

The High Commissioner of Pakistan in Bangladesh, Anwar Kemal, called on Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury at his office Tuesday, reports ISS.

They discussed matters of mutual interest.

They expressed the hope that the existing ties and good relations between the two friendly countries would be strengthened and consolidated in days to come.

Weather

No change in day temperature

By Staff Correspondent

Weather forecast for the next 24 hours commencing 6 am today (Wednesday) says, light or moderate rain or showers are likely to occur at most places over Khulna-Chittagong Divisions and at many places over Dhaka-Rajshahi divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over the country.

Day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country, the Met office forecast.

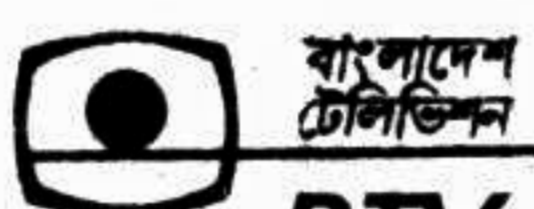
The country yesterday (Tuesday) experienced moderate rainfall at many places. The rainfall recorded in 6 hours during the day were: Patuakhali 25 mm, Khepupara 23 mm, Satkhira 21 mm, Chandpur 18 mm, Dhaka 12 mm, Jessore 11 mm, Khulna 10 mm and Iswardi 6 mm.

The maximum temperature of 32.0 degree Celsius was reported from both Chittagong and Madaripur and the minimum of 23.8 degree was reported from Chandpur and Feni yesterday.

The sun sets today at 6.47 pm and the sun rises tomorrow at 5.24 am. The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns of the country yesterday (Thursday) were:

Cities/Towns Temperature in degree Celsius Humidity in percentage

	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	31.6	25.5	80	83
Chittagong	32.0	25.0	88	78
Rajshahi	30.4	25.4	85	93
Khulna	30.0	24.2	98	82
Cox's Bazar	30.8	24.5	85	83
Sylhet	31.7	24.2	84	91
Rangpur	31.7	24.2	84	91
Jessore	31.0	25.0		



BTV Wednesday

5.00	Opening announcement, Al-Quran, Programme summary
5.10	News in Bangla
5.20	Recitation from the Geeta
5.25	Unmukta Bishwabiddaloy
6.00	Sports programme
7.05	Hijal Tomal: Folk songs
8.00	News in Bangla
8.30	Bishwa Parikrama
9.00	Film: Show Macgyver
10.00	News in English
10.25	Parliament round-up
10.35	Mukhumukhi
11.30	Khobar/The news
11.40	Thursday's programme summary
11.45	Closing

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