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11 die as 6-storey building collapses

25 believed trapped in the Shankhari Bazar tragedy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 11 people were killed in sleep in a pre-dawn collapse of a six-storey building built on 200-year-old three-storey foundations at Shankhari Bazar in Old Dhaka yesterday, triggering a daylong search for people believed trapped in rubble.

Some local residents said about 25 people were trapped in subsided

lower floors, while others said 11 others, including Bishwa Nath, Modhu Nath, Shankar and Shambhu, were missing.

The Daily Star correspondents saw three top floors of the building, home to 12 families and some shops, propped on nearby buildings and parts of the lower three floors underground or crushed to brick and mortar.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

32 Shankhari Bazar buildings vulnerable

PINAKI ROY

At least 32 more buildings out of 142 in Shankhari Bazar is highly vulnerable and may collapse anytime.

Rajdhani Unnayan Katrapakkha (Rajuk) has already asked the owners of these buildings to reconstruct them, Rajuk sources said yesterday.

"We have sent notice to the owners of 32 buildings in Shankhari Bazar recently, pointing out they are vulnerable and need reconstruction," said Abdul Latif Helali, authorised officer-1 of Rajuk.

Rajuk officials put the number of such vulnerable buildings in the capital at 130.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

75-yr-old dug out alive after 4hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four hours after the collapse of a six-storey building in Old Dhaka, rescuers yesterday pulled a 75-year-old woman alive from the rubble.

But the crash had already killed her son and two others of her family among the 11 dead.

Witnesses said locals with bare hands and firemen rescued Modhu Mala Sur limp from the building remains after the pre-dawn collapse in the densely populated neighbourhood of Shankhari Bazar.

"Firemen and I entered the ruined first-floor apartment and found the woman blinking at me. She looked like an idol as dust caked

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

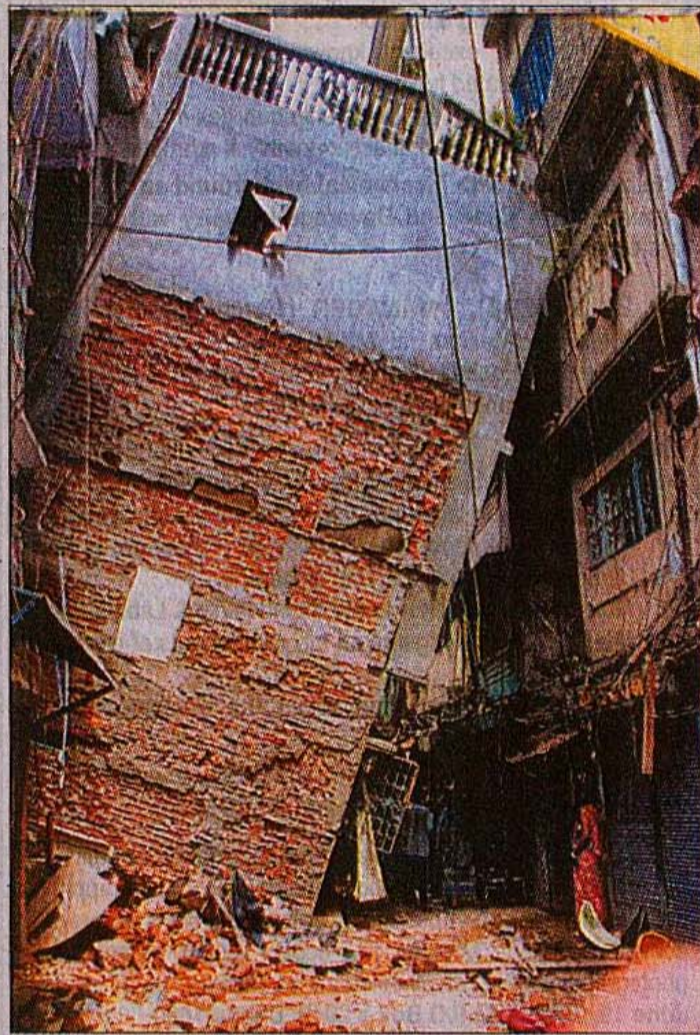


PHOTO: STAR
The upper half of a six-storey building at Shankhari Bazar in Dhaka tilts after its pre-dawn collapse killed 11 people yesterday.

Saifur's record

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman he will achieve a remarkable feat likely to remain unrivalled in the immediate future as he presents a budget for the 10th time in a country that has had 34 budgets since independence.

The veteran minister tabled his first one before the parliament back in 1980-81 and the second one in '81-82.

And after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) staged a comeback to power in 1991, Saifur tabled five budgets in as many years. He placed two more budget proposals after the BNP again assumed office in 2001.

Saifur's first budget involved only Tk 4,108 crores, but the latest one is expected to be a massive Tk 60,000 crore in size.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Pull of the strings

Saifur walks into JS for 10th time to present a crucial budget today

INAM AHMED

When M Saifur Rahman walks into parliament for the 10th time in his career as finance minister to place a budget, he will certainly feel a diverse pressure.

With the election year looming, he will feel the pinch of constituencies. He will have the pressure of GDP contributors, the dilemma and challenge of getting finances for all the things he promised, the urban voter pressure, the global challenge knocking at the door and a political challenge to see that no-one is hurt in the process, that a feel-good sense prevails for at least another year.

Will he waver under such diver-

gent exigencies? Can he balance all these crystal balls? But then again, Saifur is a seasoned finance minister, he knows many tricks and already weathered many a challenge.

Talking about challenges, the Centre for Policy Dialogue has pointed out that spreading GDP growth equally to reach the rural poor is now a key challenge.

Saifur has already spelled his mantra -- to focus on the rural poverty, to give a greater fillip to agriculture. He has planned an around Tk 850 crore subsidy for agriculture, up from this year's Tk 300 crore, much of which will go into cutting costs of inputs including seeds and waiving

agriculture loans.

But this will address a factor that only contributed to about 11 percent of the incremental GDP growth this fiscal and will not address a host of other factors and questions like why a farmer sells palwal at Tk 1.5 at his end while the same sells at Tk 12 in the city. Input subsidisation is important, but other pulls are no less important too.

With GDP growth reaching a plateau of around 5.5 percent for a long time, Saifur will have to find boosts for sectors giving more incremental growth to GDP like manufacturing. And he had better know that some comparisons are stark enough

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Explorers strike gas at block 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The explorers at block 9 have finally struck gas in the Lalmai area, ending nearly three-year's quest for natural resources in the highly prospective zone.

The Irish company Tullow Oil along with its partners Niko Resources of Canada and Bapex of Bangladesh hit gas at a depth of 2800 meters in the Lalmai-3 well on May 25. They carried out a nine-day test on the gas deriving from the zone at 2420-2460 meters to confirm stability of the field.

"It is too early to comment on the commercial value of this gas field,"

said Aiden Heavey, chief executive of Tullow that is leading the block 9 exploration under a production sharing contract (PSC) with Petrobraga.

This is the maiden gas discovery under the PSC signed in April 2001 and also first for Tullow that has been operating in various blocks for several years.

The discovery is located close to existing pipelines and there is a ready market for any available gas in Bangladesh, says a Tullow press release.

Tullow is formulating plans to appraise potential of the Lalmai

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

WB okays \$250m for reforms

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) yesterday approved an interest-free credit of \$250 million for Bangladesh to go ahead with its strong programme of enterprise and banking reforms.

Announcing the credit approval the donor agency noted that Bangladesh has embarked upon a programme "to spur growth and increase opportunities for new employment by improving the environment for private sector investment".

The WB said the country made "slow but steady progress" in financial-sector reforms, including the

strengthening of its central bank. The Enterprise Growth and Bank Modernisation Project will help the government move out of the industrial and financial sectors, spur the development of private-sector enterprise, and develop a competitive private banking system.

The project will support reform of the country's nationalised commercial banks -- Rupali, Agrani, Janata and Sonali. It will also encourage the development of small enterprises while strengthening institutions like the Board of Investment, the Privatisation Commission, and the Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

মানবতার সেবায়-উন্নত স্বপ্ননায়
|১০০ তে ১০০|



বাড়িতে আসবে গাড়ি



বাসে ব্যাগে রান
একবারেই সেঞ্চুরীর সুযোগ
সেঞ্চুরী হাঁকানেই পুরস্কার
হাজার-হাজার

প্রতি ১০ দিনে পুরস্কার
মেয়াদ শেষে ১০০টি মেগা পুরস্কার

"প্রতি ছয় মাস অন্তর ছয় বছর পর্যন্ত
শিতকে ডিটামিন A ক্যাপসুল খাওয়ান"

মেয়াদ: ১০ জুন থেকে ১৯ জুলাই, ২০০৪

বিস্তারিত জানতে সিমেন্ট-এর দোকানে যোগাযোগ করুন।

এ প্রচারণার সমস্তকালে প্রতি সপ্তাহে সিমেন্ট-এর একটি বিশেষ পুরস্কার দেবে। সিমেন্ট-এর স্টকআউট সিস্টেম-এর প্রথম পুরস্কার।

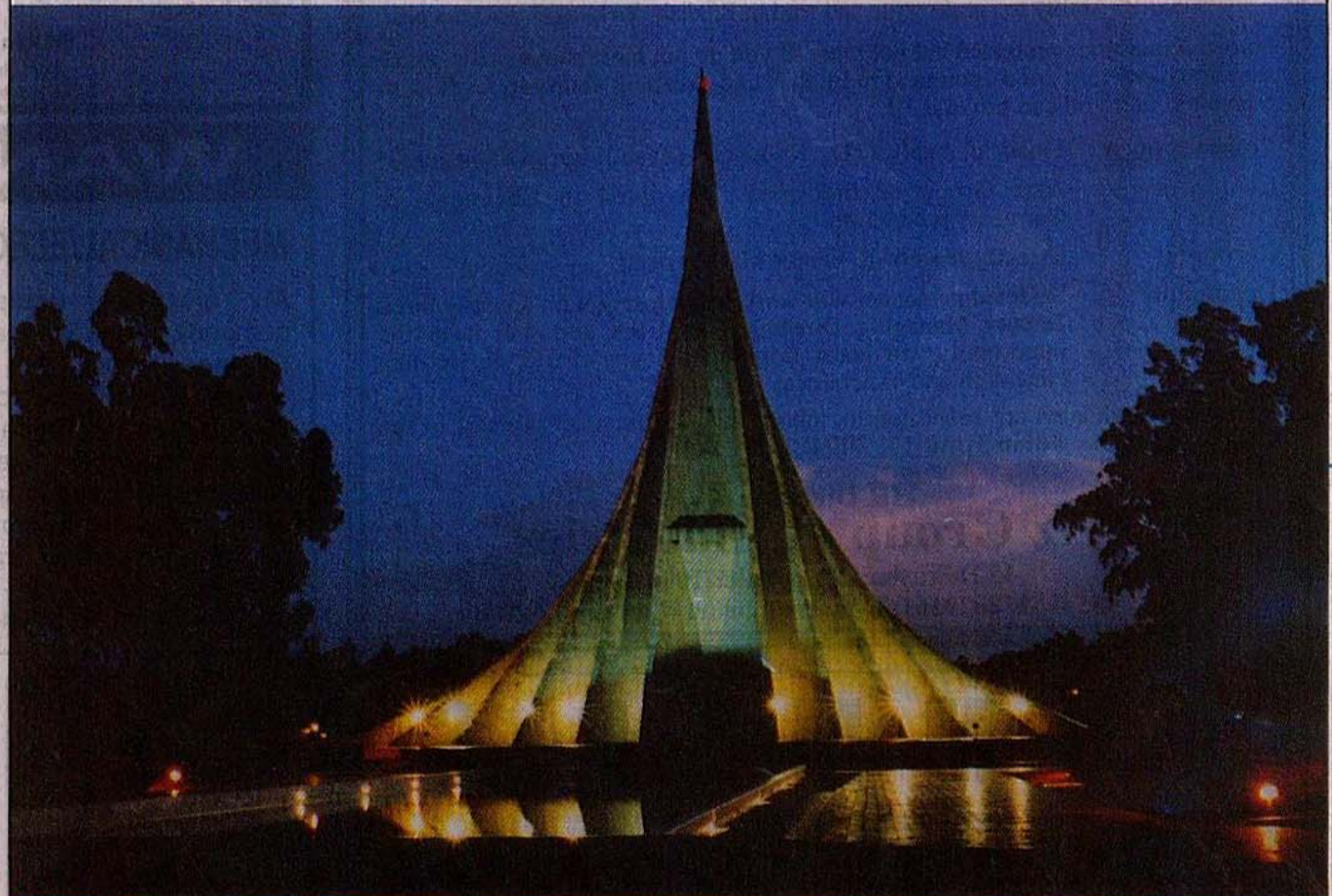
জন্ম, সৃষ্টির লক্ষ্যে



আমার সোনার বাংলা।



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