



The firefighters try to enter the market amid thick smoke during an incident of fire at Tamakumandi Lane on Friday, left; two fire fighters equipped with fire-extinguishers inside the narrow passage of the market, middle, and the anxious businessmen wait outside the market, right.

Market sprawl causes heavy loss during fires

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD
The fire fighters are unable to do their duty during the incidents of fire as the markets in the port city have no sufficient space for exit or entry. Following this, incidents of fire take a heavy toll on the businessmen and sometimes make many of them penniless. Unplanned and closely knit buildings posed a threat to over 4,000 shops only in three markets of Reazuddin Bazar, Zahur Hawkers Market and Teri Bazar. The October 7 devastating fire, which damaged goods and properties worth taka several crore at Rizwan Complex at Reazuddin Bazar at Tamakumandi Lane, a centre for electronics and other valuable items, reminded the businessmen of their helplessness. The fire, which originated from electric short-circuits at around 1:00pm, damaged 36 shops, 22

reduced to ashes. According to the fire service sources, the fire damaged properties worth over Tk 1 crore while the traders put the amount of loss at around Tk 4 crore. The extent of damage is higher as the unplanned construction of the market buildings did not have any passage for entry of fire fighting vehicles, witnesses said. "Besides, it was difficult for the fire fighters to make way as thick smoke blanketed the view," said Abu Taleb Chowdhury, a shop owner of Rahman Plaza of Tamakumandi Lane. "The passage for fire fighting vehicles apart, the buildings and shops are so closely packed that they even hinder movement of the customers," he said. "The congested shops of Tamakumandi Lane and Reazuddin Bazar also lack proper ventilation system giving the visitors a choking

feeling," said Zahirul Islam Babu, a customer from Dewan Bazar Machhua Zharana area. The Tamakumandi Bank Samity General Secretary Iqbal Sharif Chowdhury said the fire fighting activities were hampered due to the absence of passages to market, which also forced the fire fighters to keep their vehicles half to one kilometre off the spot. "We must appreciate the sincerity and skill of the fire fighters. Without their sincere efforts the extent of loss in the fire on that day could have reached several hundred crore," he said. When asked about the measures in such fire incident in future, he said, "There should be strong coordination among the owners of the market buildings to keep sufficient space for vehicular and public movement for the sake of safety and security of all." In this regard, he urged the Chittagong Development Authority

(CDA) and administration concerned to take steps during construction of buildings deviating approved design and related provisions. The workers and staffs, who stay on the upstairs of the market buildings, cook food with gas or electricity posing a risk of fire at any moment, said the businessmen of the market. Besides, the power supply lines of the markets had been lying in mess with the electric polls raised in the 70s with some 150 connections each, said Abu Taher Chowdhury, vice-president of the samity. The samity leaders demanded of the Power Development Board authorities for orderly arrangement of the power supply lines. The scenario of the other parts of Reazuddin Bazar is also the same. When Tamakumandi Lane has some 80 buildings each turning into a market, over 150 buildings grew up at Reazuddin Bazar to house around 2000 shops.

The condition at Zahur Hawkers Market is worse than that of Reazuddin Bazar. The market houses over 1500 shops in four rows of two-storey semi-pacca structures. The condition of Teri Bazar, the largest wholesale market of fabrics, is also not good. Around 800 shops are housed in a serious congested way in some 41 buildings without any passage for fire fighters, sources said. Fire Service Assistant Director Rashedul Islam Majumder said narrow lanes and absence of water reservoirs in and around the market places are obstacles to fire fighting. "We have repeatedly urged the owners to develop their markets in an orderly way and construct some water reservoirs. But, our calls fall on deaf ears," Majumder said.

SHOPPING MALLS WEAR COLOURFUL LOOK



With eye-catching decoration and lighting, all the shopping malls of the port city now wear a colourful look to attract costumers ahead of Eid Ul Fitr. Amin Centre, a shopping mall at Lalkhan Bazar Ispahani intersection, top, and Bipani Bitan, the New Marketing, bottom.

Maa-Shishu Hospital an example of better service

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR
Chittagong Maa-Shishu O General Hospital started its journey with a view to providing services to the children and promoting child healthcare through immunisation, nutrition and healthcare education programmes in 1979. To contribute more to the healthcare services, it began treatment of general people last year and in its latest venture, the hospital management is going to set up a full-fledged nursing institute and medical college, sources said. The hospital is located at the city centre of Agrabad. Run under a 26-member committee, the hospital provides a wide range of services, including paediatric medicine, paediatric surgery,



The Maa-Shishu O General Hospital building complex at Agrabad.

Ear-Nose-Throat (ENT), neonatal, asthma, child growth, family planning and EPI services from the very beginning. Later, medicine, gynaecology, orthopedic surgery, general surgery and dental medicine were included in the list of services. At present the three-storey hospital complex established on nearly five acres of land, has 250 beds, including 20 cabins, for in-door patients. Besides, it offers treatment to over 200 patients at its out-door department from 8:00am to 2:30pm everyday. A 345-member team comprising doctors, nurses and staffs is offering round-the-clock service at the hospital. Some of them work voluntarily. Its new addition is a

laparoscope's machine. After installation of the machine, four successful surgeries were conducted by Associate Professor Dr Jafrul Hannan Liton. The hospital also has a modern laboratory enriched with medical apparatus like electrolytes, lab rotator and hot-air machine for better services. The fund to run the hospital is raised through donations by the generous and philanthropic personalities and some pharmaceuticals and multinational companies. Anybody can become a life member of the hospital donating a bed for Tk 1 lakh. Besides, there is a zakat fund to meet the expenses of the hospital. "We help poor Muslim patients

from the zakat fund while expenditure of the patients from other communities is met from the hospital fund," said Dr Anzuman Ara Islam, secretary general of the hospital executive committee. Mohsin Hossain, an attendant of a patient who came from remote Fatikchhari upazilas, said "I came here as I heard of its better service." "And in reality, I found the service far better than what I expected from such a charitable hospital," Mohsin said. "The hospital is very neat and clean and the doctors and nurses also sincere to take care of the patients," said a man whose wife was undergoing an operation in the labour room. "My first baby was also born

here," he added. Mohammed Haider Ali, an outdoor patient, said the patients who are aware of the service offered at Maa-Shishu O General Hospital usually will avoid other public hospitals for better treatment. The hospital executive committee also runs Maa O Shishu Hospital Nursing Institute with 69 students. Twenty students are enrolled in the institute every year. "We are planning to set up Maa-Shishu O General Hospital Medical College and a proposal in this regard is now awaiting approval by the Prime Minister's office," said Professor ASM Fazlul Karim, president of the hospital executive committee.

theweekthatwas

Pay wages, bonus before Eid

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury urged the shop owners to pay the wages and bonuses to their staffs and employees at least 10 days before Eid. He was speaking as chief guest at a rally of Chittagong Shop Workers' Federation on the New Market premises on Friday with Federation President Bakhtair Uddin Khan in the chair. Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury also requested the shop owners to allow their employees to enjoy Eid holidays, including weekly day-offs. Awami League leaders Abdul Khaleque Chowdhury, Rahim Uddin and Md Ilias and Federation General Secretary Zainal Abedin also spoke at the rally.

'Help the distressed'

Speakers at a seminar here on Saturday

Physiotherapy unit opens at USTC

urged the affluent section of the society to come forward for wellbeing of the distressed people. The seminar titled "Get united for humanity" was organised by Lions Clubs International District 315-B4 at Taher Memorial Hall in the city. District Lion Governor Anwar Shawkat Afsar spoke as the chief guest with Kamrun Malek in the chair. Chairman of the English Department of Premier University Professor Dr Mohit Ul Alam presented the keynote paper. Vice Lion Governor Dr Shri Prakash Bishwash, Principal of Enayet Bazar Mohila College Nilufar Khanam, Najmul Hoque Chowdhury and PR Sinha also addressed the seminar. The speakers emphasised the need for united efforts from all to build up a self-reliant nation. They also urged the younger generation to take proper training for poverty alleviation from the country.

University of Science and Technology, Chittagong (USTC) Vice Chancellor

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Protect consumers' rights

Professor Dr Nurul Islam said new inventions and modern technologies in medical science will help identify and protect diseases easily. He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural ceremony of Physiotherapy Department at Bangabandhu Memorial Hospital. "With this launching today, patients will now get an opportunity to receive medication in cheaper rate at the department," said Prof Islam, who is also a national professor. Hospital Director Col (Retd) Eskandar Hossain presided over the ceremony. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Abdullah-AI-Ahsan and all faculty deans and department chairmen of the university also spoke. After formal inauguration, Professor Islam rendered free physiotherapy services to two poor patients. Hospital sources said, the authorities will provide treatment to the paralysed, sports injured and disabled at low cost while poor people would get it free of charges.

Leaders of Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd (BGSL) Contractors Welfare Association at a meeting on Thursday demanded appropriate measures to give gas connection to residents and industrial units.

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Eid Bazar begins

The fourth Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Eid Bazar began on the Bangladesh Women's Association (BWA) School and College premises on Friday. Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman inaugurated the month-long fair. Women Entrepreneurship (WE), Chittagong chapter arranged the fair in cooperation with IFC, SEDF and the World Bank group. The speakers lauded the role of women entrepreneurs along side their male counterparts in building the country's economy and said women can contribute more to the society if they are given opportunities. WE, Chittagong President Monwara Hakim Ali presided over the inaugural function. Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury and BNP leader Begum Rosy Kabir were present as the special guests. Writer Begum Runu Siddique, Ladies Club President Zinat Azam, Chairperson of the Fair Committee Gulshan Ara, Senior Vice President of Chittagong WE Khaleda Awal also addressed the function. Different types of goods of small and cottage industries, blocks, boutiques manufactured by women entrepreneurs were put on display in the fair. A total of 110 stalls are participating in the fair.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman inaugurates WE Eid Mela through releasing spawns into an earthen water tub on Friday. Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs organised the month long Eid shopping festival at Bangladesh Women Association (Bawoa) School ground.

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