



1. Firefighters try to rescue people gathered at the balcony of a floor in BSEC Bhaban at Karwan Bazar in the capital as a devastating fire rages through the building yesterday. 2. Several people climb down a fire service ladder while a man's life hangs on a rope as he tries to get down from an upper floor. 3. A Bangladesh Air Force helicopter used in rescuing people from the roof of BSEC Bhaban. 4. Two people use ropes and cables to reach the fire service ladder. 5. A fireman rescues a child strapping him on his back. 6. Smoke covers the whole area as bystanders, many with hands on their heads, are anxiously watching the rescue operation. 7. A man breaks down in tears seeing the horrific incident. 8. Firefighters try to douse the flames from the nest of a snorkel fire engine. 9. A woman worried about her husband, trapped in the burning building, tries to reach him over phone in desperation.

## Roaring inferno at Karwan Bazar

3 killed, 50 injured; first time chopper rescue attempted; dozens of offices including ntv, Rtv completely gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people died and at least 50 were injured as a devastating fire swept through the 11-storey Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) Bhaban in the city's Karwan Bazar yesterday morning.

Over a thousand people were evacuated as massive rescue efforts including the first-ever airborne rescue operation went on throughout the day.

According to witnesses and employees of offices in the building, the fire might have originated in one of two offices - Bengal Carpet or Jamuna Oil Company Ltd - on the first floor around 10:10am.

It soon spread to other floors due to the absence of effective fire extinguishers.

The home ministry formed a committee led by Fire Service and Civil Defence director general to probe the fire.

The multi-storey building in the teeming commercial district

**Electric fault fire source?**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The devastating fire at BSEC Bhaban yesterday originated from the first floor, witnesses and employees of different offices said.

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Several witnesses said the fire

President, CA, Khaleda, Hasina shocked

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed have expressed deep shock at loss of life and property in a devastating fire at Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

In separate statements, the president and the chief adviser prayed for peace of the departed souls and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and those injured.

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Allotment of 686 Rajuk plots stalled

UNB, Dhaka

Housing and public works ministry has postponed the allocation of 686 plots by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) in the city's five areas.

The ministry postponed the allocation of plots in a notification yesterday.

Of the plots, 48 are in Tongi Industrial Area, 53 in Uttara Residential Area, 534 in Badda Rehabilitation Area, 50 in Banani Residential Area and one is in Nikunja area.

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**New anti-terror law soon for quick trial**

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

and life imprisonment.

The government is going to promulgate an anti-terrorism ordinance to hold trial for criminal offences within six months through special tribunals.

The law ministry has already drafted the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2007 that defines terrorists, terrorist acts, terrorist organisations and prescribes punishments including death sentence

**Sonali Bank CBA don Bakir finally held**

Joint forces seize 1,032 CI sheets of relief fund

STAR REPORT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday said they arrested Sonali Bank trade union leader BM Bakir Hossain along with his two associates while joint forces made three arrests - the CBA president of Jalalabad Gas, a close aide to former post and telecommunications minister of the immediate past alliance government and the chairman of MGH Group.

The forces also seized 1,032 corrugated iron (CI) sheets mostly



BM Bakir Hossain

from BNP leaders and activists' houses.

Meanwhile, Sirajganj police filed a criminal case against former MP Major (retd) Manjuro Quader and five local BNP leaders accusing them of misappropriating CI sheets meant for relief, UFN reports.

Sub-inspector Zahid of Enayetur Police Station filed the case against the MP and his associates Liqat Ali, Aitar Rahaman Ata, Tepa Khaleque, Abdur Razzak and Niazuddin.

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**Five graft suspects sent to jail**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five graft suspects including two former ministers, a lawmaker and a bureaucrat arrested on the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) office premises on Sunday were sent to jail yesterday with their bail prayers rejected.

The five arrestees are former housing and public works minister and BNP leader Mirza Abbas,

former civil aviation and tourism minister and AL leader Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, ex-lawmaker from the BNP Hafiz Ibrahim, former power secretary ANH Akhtar Hossain and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Ward Commissioner Abdul Qayyum.

Four of them - Mosharraf, Hafiz, Akhtar and Qayyum - were sent to jail as execution of their

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## Living horror

INAM AHMED and SHAHEEN MOLLA

"Tongues of fire all around me! I am being roasted alive! Help!"

These were the last words Maksuda Begum (45) sent to her husband over her mobile. Then the set went silent in an eerie way. Akbar Hossain knew something terrible had happened to his wife. Something ominous. He turned numb.

Maksuda was then hurtling down to the ground from the sixth floor of the building. She worked as a peon on the ninth floor at the Bangladesh Steel Engineering Corporation (BSEC) office.

In her frantic scramble for life, she ran down to the sixth floor but then a wall of crackling fire and roiling smoke stopped her.

"Please tell me what will I do? Please." She was sobbing.

"Go to the roof. Go. Go. Go." Akbar said. But instead she threw herself out the window to the ground, to her death.

Ehsanul Haque Mia (40) was working at ntv when he heard the fire alarm. Immediately, he shot out of the office where he worked as front desk executive and blindly ran down the stairs through plumes of smoke.

When he emerged out of the inferno on the ground floor, Ehsanul suddenly remembered his colleagues still inside ntv. It did not

take him a second to turn and bolt back inside the building. A wave of panicked people were clattering down, but he kept moving against the tide.

He collected a few of his colleagues and came out again. But to his horror he found the collapsible gate on the sixth floor firmly shut.

Fire was leaping wildly beyond the porous barrier. He turned back and headed for the roof to find himself amidst around 200 others under the open sky.

"People were crying around me. We were all scared that the roof would turn into a frying pan if fire caught hold the floor below," Ehsanul said.

He remembered the face of his dearest wife and thought maybe he would never meet her again. But he did not show his panic, rather he tried to calm others down.

"The chopper is coming to take us out," he remembered telling others.

Then the chopper came, a big one, Russian made Mi-8. The rotors snapped the air in rhythms, hovering above. A basket was lowered on a rope line and two people jumped into it. But not Ehsanul.

After what seemed like years, the chopper returned again. After painstaking minutes, it left with another guy hanging on to a rope.

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## Lack of right gear delays rescue

Fire dept not equipped to reach beyond 7th floor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Firefighters and rescue workers were bogged down due to lack of proper equipment delaying evacuation during yesterday's fire at BSEC Bhaban in Karwan Bazar in the capital even though their sincerity in doing their jobs was unquestionable.

Meanwhile,

firefighters

and rescue

workers

from BNP leaders and activists' houses.

Meanwhile,

Sirajganj police

filed

a criminal case

against

former

MP

Major Imran of the army took initiatives to rescue the two people who were trapped. From the snorkel fire engine's nest he held a bamboo-made ladder so that the two on the eighth floor could climb down.

Ashok Jaa, country director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd, was one of the two victims who were trapped. He told journalists that he had lost heart when he saw rescue ladder failing to reach the required height where he was trapped.

He tried to climb down one floor so that he could reach rescue ladder but he could not due to the heat and smoke.

A fire department official said

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