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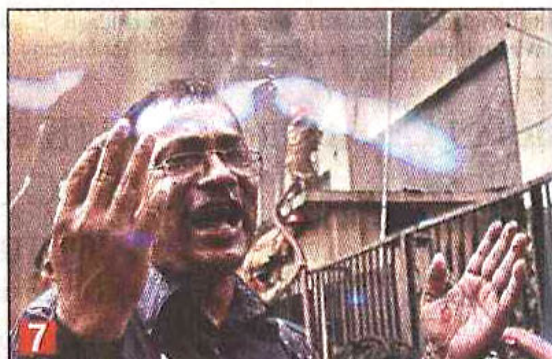


PHOTO: STAR

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 Living horror

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

houses a number of media outlets including ntv, Rtv, and the daily Amar Desh.

The three who died were identified as Maksud Begum, 40, Jyotsna Begum, 50, and Aftabuddin Mollah, 55. Both the women jumped from the fifth floor trying to evade the flames. The injured include office workers, firefighters, and some others who volunteered to fight the fire.

Thousands gathered on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and watched the blaze raging on for hours. They shuddered at each risky step taken by the evacuees and cheered every successful escape from the state-owned building in flames.

Earlier, as the inferno spread across the floors, panic-stricken office workers rapped frenziedly on the windowpanes while many headed to the roof.

The fire brigade officials claimed they received the first call at 10:35am and sent a fire engine to the scene within the next 15 minutes. But at that time, they did not

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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.

Several witnesses said the fire

originated from electric oven while some others said it was sourced from electric short-circuit.

The home ministry in order to probe yesterday's fire incident formed a committee led by Fire

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Trapped people climb down a fire service ladder as raging flames engulf the BSEC Bhaban at Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday.

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.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

The Bravehearts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue was covered in black smoke, it was lit up with the rare courage of men who came forward to put up a massive rescue effort to evacuate over 1,000 people from the burning building. These are their stories.

The first heroes of the hour were civilians. Fellow workers, pedestrians or shop-owners from the neighbouring Karwan Bazar emerged as the sole providers of emergency support for people trapped inside the building during the first minutes of the fire.

These civilians, who immediately thronged to the scene after the fire broke out, were forced by circumstances to take control of the

situation in absence of government agencies, as the fire service arrived 40 minutes after the fire was detected.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Major Imran

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) Manjoor Quader and five local BNP leaders accusing them of misappropriating CI sheets meant for relief, UNB reports.

Sub-inspector Zahid of Enayetur Police Station filed the case against the MP and his associates Liaqat Ali, Ataur Rahman Ata, Tepa Khaleque, Abdur Razzak and Nijajuddin.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Allotment of 686 Rajuk plots stalled

UNB, Dhaka

Housing and public works ministry has postponed the allocation of 686 plots by Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (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.

New anti-terror law soon for quick trial

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

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

and life imprisonment.

The government will temporarily forfeit wealth of criminals charged with non-bailable offences, sources said quoting from the draft ordinance.

The forfeiture will continue in case of their conviction by court.

Those who will finance terrorist groups will also be tried under the ordinance. The minimum punishment under it will be a five-year

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

ACC accepts Iqbal's wealth report from wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday received former Awami League (AL) lawmaker HBM Iqbal's wealth statement from his representative following a High Court (HC) order though the deadline for 50 graft suspects to submit their statements expired Sunday.

The HC on February 25 asked

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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 Quayyum.

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

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

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.

Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence department is equipped to fight fires up to the height of six to seven storey buildings as their snorkel fire engines (fire engines with a crane and a nest mounted on it) could reach only that high.

Two people were trapped at the western side of the eighth floor of BSEC Bhaban for more than three hours yesterday, as the snorkel fire engines could not reach them.

The fire department has only one "turntable ladder" (TTL), which could reach heights over

seven floors, and it was being used to rescue people from the rooftop at the northern part of the building.

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 a rescue ladder but he could not due to the heat and smoke.

A fire department official said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

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