

Safety at workplace improves, shows study

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Workplace safety level in Dhaka has improved a bit due to greater awareness and law-abiding attitude of business owners during the state of emergency, experts conducting a survey said.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (Bils), a research organisation advocating labour issues, conducted the study on workplace safety level in January thru June 2007.

At least 395 workers in different sectors were killed or injured in accidents or due to violence at workplaces in Dhaka during the months of the survey as opposed to 1,017 deaths or injuries in 2006.

The study, based on news items published in national dailies, found that 71 workers were killed, 315 were critically injured and 9 were raped in workplaces this year.

The annual workplace safety report for 2006 by the same organisation detected 1,017 deaths or injuries at workplaces in Dhaka. Among them, 147 were killed and 870 were seriously injured.

The study also found that the garment sector is still on top of the chart with accidents and violence while construction sector maintained the second position.

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study also surveyed transport workers, shop workers, electric workers, cleaners and domestic workers.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, assistant executive director of Bils, said, "As the task force and the government took many tough measures to address various issues in the garment sector, the business owners become more aware and careful about any unpleasant incidents in their factories. And that reduced the number of accidents and violence in the sector."

"The level of awareness among the workers and owners has definitely improved than before. Though the safety level improved significantly in the garment sector within the first half of the year, the safety sce-

nario in other sectors like construction or domestic help did not change much," he observed.

Though the number of incidents has reduced, the study found that the level of brutality was horrible, he said. "This is a good news to make us hopeful, but we should not be celebrating yet with this small improvement."

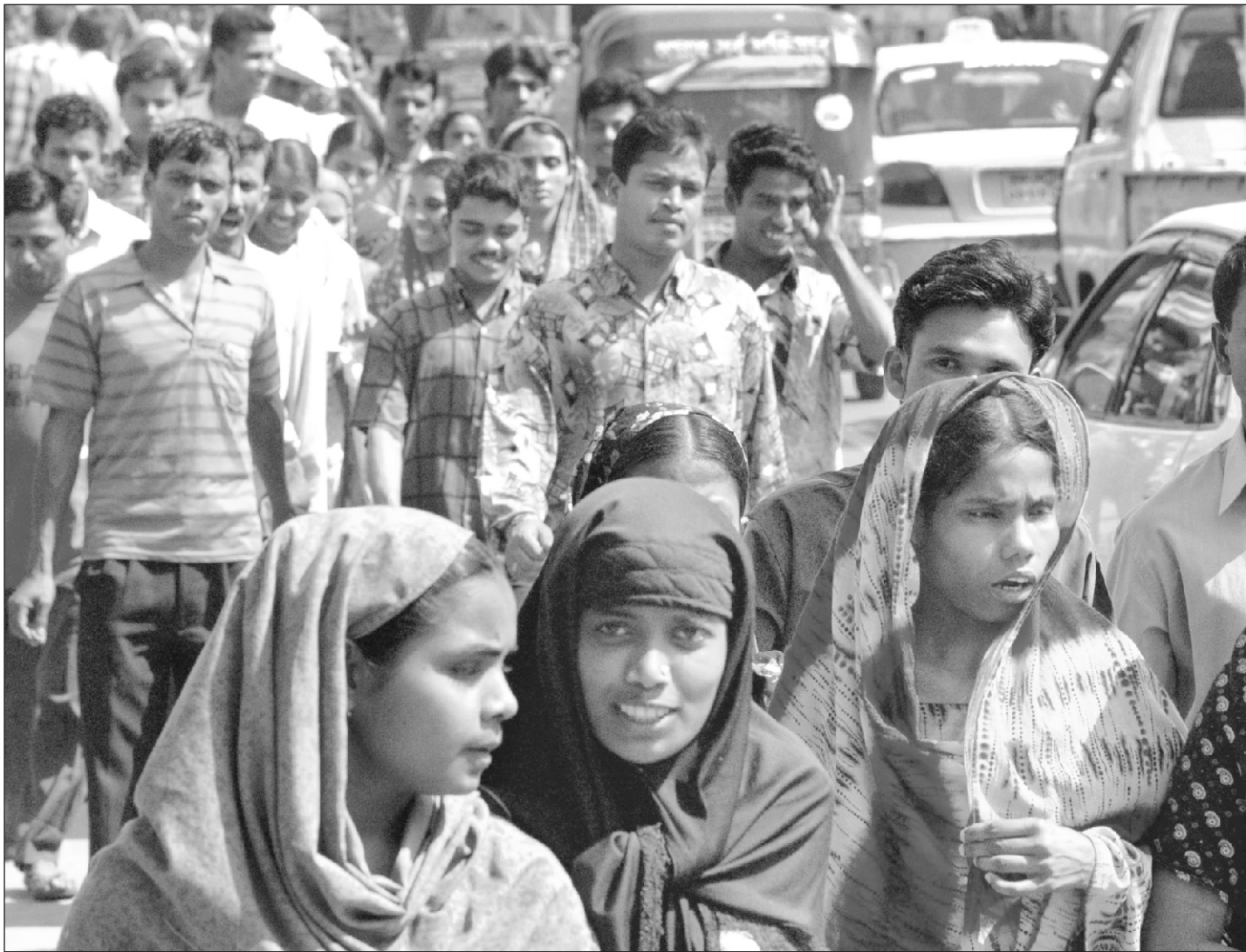
"We should wait and see if this safety [practice] sustains. The ball just started rolling. Nothing will be achieved unless other related sides concerned also join the process."

Wajedul Islam, coordinator of Sromik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP), also said the situation has improved a bit in the garment sector, but the scenario remains the same in

other sectors.

Amirul Haque, general secretary of National Garment Workers' Federation told Star City that many workers die due to violence and stampede in garment factories each year. But this year, despite many pending issues, the workers refrained from violent protests since there is a state of emergency in effect.

Many factory owners on the other hand, also made infrastructural improvements like installing emergency exits or widening staircases in factory buildings to avoid accidents during the period of this interim government. These things helped reduce the number of accidents as well as deaths in workplaces, he explained.



STAR PHOTO

Workplace safety has improved due to increasing awareness among business owners.

Tales of two workers

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there are hundreds of such factories where workers dismantle different parts of dry cell batteries.

Nurunnahar, 15, works in such a small factory beside the Buriganga River. During a visit to the dismantling unit, this correspondent found the girl dismantling dry cell batteries with a hammer while another worker was sorting different parts of the used batteries.

"I am doing this work for the last five years. I can dismantle one full sack of used batteries a day. I work from 7am to 5pm along with three other workers for Tk 50 daily," said Nurunnahar with her face smeared with black ash.

Farida Begum, the employer of Nurunnahar, said she and her husband has been in this business for the last 25 years. "We buy sacks of batteries from bhangari (scrap) shops at Tk 1,200 per sack. One sack contains 2 maunds (around 75kg) of scrap batteries," she said.

"We separate every part of the batteries -- lead, plastic, tin and pencil. We sell the lead and pencil to battery factories, tin to bhangari shops and plastic to traders of Islambagh," said Farida. "The price of one maund of pencil is Tk 400, tin Tk 600 and lead Tk 3,000," he added.

"We don't have much work these days because the use of batteries have gone down due to rechargeable devices," she said.

Lead acid battery

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Every part of a scrap battery has a recycle value -- the plastic casing, plate separators and sulphuric acid. Big manufacturers buy the lead for making batteries while the other parts are traded in informal sector.

According to Lokman, around 800 tonnes of lead is imported each month to meet domestic demand. "One tonne of imported lead costs \$24,000. By recovering lead locally, we can save more than \$20 million every year."

According to the Waste Concern study, locally recovered lead could meet 60 percent of the total lead requirement of the country.

Lokman and other battery dismantling factory owners are now waiting for government approval to resume their business in an environmentally safe method. "We will start our work again after six months after getting proper licence from government. We will import a machine from India to recycle batteries that will not pollute environment. By using that machine we are expecting to recover 65 percent lead," he said.

Iftekhar Enayetullah, director, Waste Concern, put emphasis on passing laws as a first step to stop unsafe recycling of lead acid batteries and introduce a safe method of lead recovery.

Lead poisoning causes serious environmental and health hazards, especially to children and the battery-dismantling workers. It affects human brain and may even lead to death, Enayetullah said.

During the process of dismantling lead acid batteries, a large volume of acid, lead smoke, lead dust, fuel smoke (from coal burning) and burnt coal is released, causing air, water and soil pollution, he added.

According to an estimate of World Health Organisation, 120 million people are exposed to lead and 99 percent of the severely affected are from developing countries. Batteries account for more than 75 percent cases.

"Big factories like Madina stopped unsafe dismantling after the restriction was imposed. We first need laws to save people from unsafe recycling and then start doing it safely using modern technology," said Enayetullah.

"The aim of our study on lead acid battery was to solicit the government to pass a law so that people start recycling safely. In future we have a plan to do a study on dry cell battery to stop its unsafe recycling," he said.

At present there is no study on the recycling of dry cell batteries.



STAR PHOTO

Rab personnel yesterday evicted Karwan Bazar hawkers after they returned to occupy over five seats of the thoroughfare following their eviction only two months ago.

Advertising, Bank & market timing

AD AGENCIES

Macomm
House 42 (2nd floor),
Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka. Ph: 9110351,
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9330556

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9124380-4

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8856598-9, 8837751-2

ART & CULTURAL CENTERS

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Bangladesh Shishu Academy
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German Cultural Center
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Indian Cultural Center
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Nazrul Institute

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Fax: 8113026,
Email: roscult@accsstel.net

Shilpakala Academy
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9561709, 9562801-4

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
House 275/F, Road 27,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 8123115
Email: bf@bdonline.com

Cezanne Art Gallery
UAE Moitri Complex,
Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani
Dhaka
Tel: 8826578, Email:
cezanne@bangla.net

Drik Gallery

House 58, Road 15A(New),
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9120125, Fax: 9115044,
Email: office@drik.net

Gallery Chitrak
House-21, Road-4,
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka
Tel: 8620345, Email: chittrak@agni.com

National Art Gallery
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9562801-4

Shilpa Rag
House 15, Road 16,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 8117085
Fax: 8117085,
Email: shilparg @vasdigital.com

Shilpangan
House-25, Road-5,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 8614246

Tivoli Art Gallery
F/33, DCC Super Market (1st Floor)
Gulshan-2 (North), Dhaka, Tel: 9895903

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9566074-75

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9550060, Fax: 9562236

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9568537-39
Fax: 9561889

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9558390-1, Fax: 9562364

First Security Bank Limited
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Fax: 9561637

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Habib Bank Ltd
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9561784

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9560099, Fax: 9564532

IFIC Bank Ltd
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9562015

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Fax: 9565762

Janata Bank
9560000, 9560027-30, Fax:
9564644

Mercantile Bank Limited
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Fax: 9561213

National Bank Ltd
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NCC Bank
9561902-4
Fax: 9566290

Premier Bank Ltd
8015276, 8811417

Prime Bank Ltd
9567265, 9556282
Fax: 9567230

Shahjalal Bank Ltd
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9557413

South East Bank
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9550093

Standard Chartered Bank Ltd
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Sonali Bank
9550426-34
Fax: 9561410

The City Bank Limited
9565925, Fax: 9562347

The Trust Bank Ltd
9871095, 9871074, 9888068,
Fax: 4071094

Uttara Bank Ltd
9561438, 9551162-3,
Fax: 8613529

United Commercial Bank Ltd
9561580, Fax: 88-02-9560587

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
Powell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday