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Dangers lurk in city skyscrapers

The Daily Star visit to 6 leading high-rises reveals sorry state of fire safety

TAWFIQUE ALI and HELEMUL ALAM

Most of the multi-storey buildings in the city are dangerously exposed to fire disasters as they lack adequate firefighting equipment and properly trained personnel.

Because of poor preparedness, say experts, Basundhara City shopping complex, the largest mall-cum-office tower in the country, saw its top six floors go up in flames Friday.

Some of the skyscrapers have firefighting machines including fire detectors, alarm bells and hydrant boxes with hoses, but they do not have persons skilled enough to operate the systems.

One such high rise is the 15-storey Land View in the city's Gulshan area. It has water reservoir, hosepipe, fire detector and alarm bell, but no-one with expertise required to man those.

"We don't have anyone here to work the firefighting equipment," said Mahmud Hassan,



The 20-storey Jiban Bima Tower is one of the many high-rise buildings at risk in the city as most of its fire-safety measures are inoperative. PHOTO: STAR

project engineer of the Land View Properties.

General Manager of NYK Line (Bangladesh) Shohail Alam in his rented office room located

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Probe begins, PM visits Bashundhara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government-formed probe committee yesterday began its investigation into the Friday's fire incident at Bashundhara City Complex.

After visiting the spot, the committee members said they would keep in mind all possible causes including sabotage behind the fire incident.

The probe body will examine whether the complex was equipped with modern and automated fire-fighting equipment and if so, why those did not work.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited the mall where a fire broke out on the 17th floor at about 1:45pm killing seven people and injuring 20 others.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters that Hasina got down at the mall on the way to her Dhanmondi office from the PM's Jamuna residence.

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Mutiny motive was to destabilise country

Says probes coordinator Faruk Khan; links of a few militant outfits found; Touhid, 10 others sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan yesterday said the motive for the last month's carnage at BDR Pilkhana headquarters was to destabilise the country and hinder its progress under a democratic government.

"They [mutiny plotters] thought the army would counter-attack in response to the BDR mass killings, and things would eventually lead to a civil war-like situation," he observed.

Lately assigned to coordinate probes into the February 25-26 bloodbath, Faruk was speaking to reporters at Pilkhana after over three hours long meeting with the inquiry committees.

The meeting that began at 12:45pm was the second of its kind.

The minister said, "We have some evidence that several militant organisations had links to the bloody revolt." He

however did not elaborate on the proofs.

A couple of days back, he said Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) had a hand in the vicious killings of 74 people including 52 army officers on February 25.

Meanwhile, 11 BDR personnel suspected of leading the carnage were sent to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday on completion of their remand in CID custody.

They include Deputy Assistant Directors Tauhidul Alam and Abdur Rahim, havildar Azad Ali, nayek Mohammad Firoz Ahmed, sepoy Fasiur Rahman, Sirajul Islam, Emran, Shah Alam and Shahjahan, and cook Amirul Islam.

COORDINATION MEET

At the Pilkhana meeting, the commerce minister expressed satisfaction over progress in the work of the government, army and Criminal Investigation Department's probe bodies.

He however stressed the need for more

coordination between them.

Sources said reorganising the paramilitary force under a new name was among the issues discussed.

Replying to a query, Faruk Khan said those who cannot stand the existence of Bangladesh and its progress were involved in the BDR massacre. They want to render the country a failed state.

He urged people to help arrest the border troops who have fled the headquarters with firearms and ammunition. Everyone having leads to the mutiny should report to the nearest police stations or army camps, he added.

Queried how many jawans might be still at large, he replied, "Not many."

The minister said investigators have made some significant progress through interrogation of those arrested in connection with the BDR killings.

So far, 236 border guards have been

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A farewell in forests

Rare langur rescued, left in centre for care

INAM AHMED

She clung tight to his neck. With her big round eyes, she gave us a cursory glance and then nibbled at the grape she was holding so delicately with her long, beautiful fingers. Then she saw the apple in my hand and immediately abandoned her grape to reach out.

She felt the apple around and explained her joy in a sharp trilling voice. She did not like the cameras much and hid her face in the chest of Dr Anwar Hossain, the zoologist, and trilled. She was wondering why we were there, and why so many people. She

found safety in the warmth of the human body. Probably she felt it much like her lost mother from whom she was separated some 10 days ago.

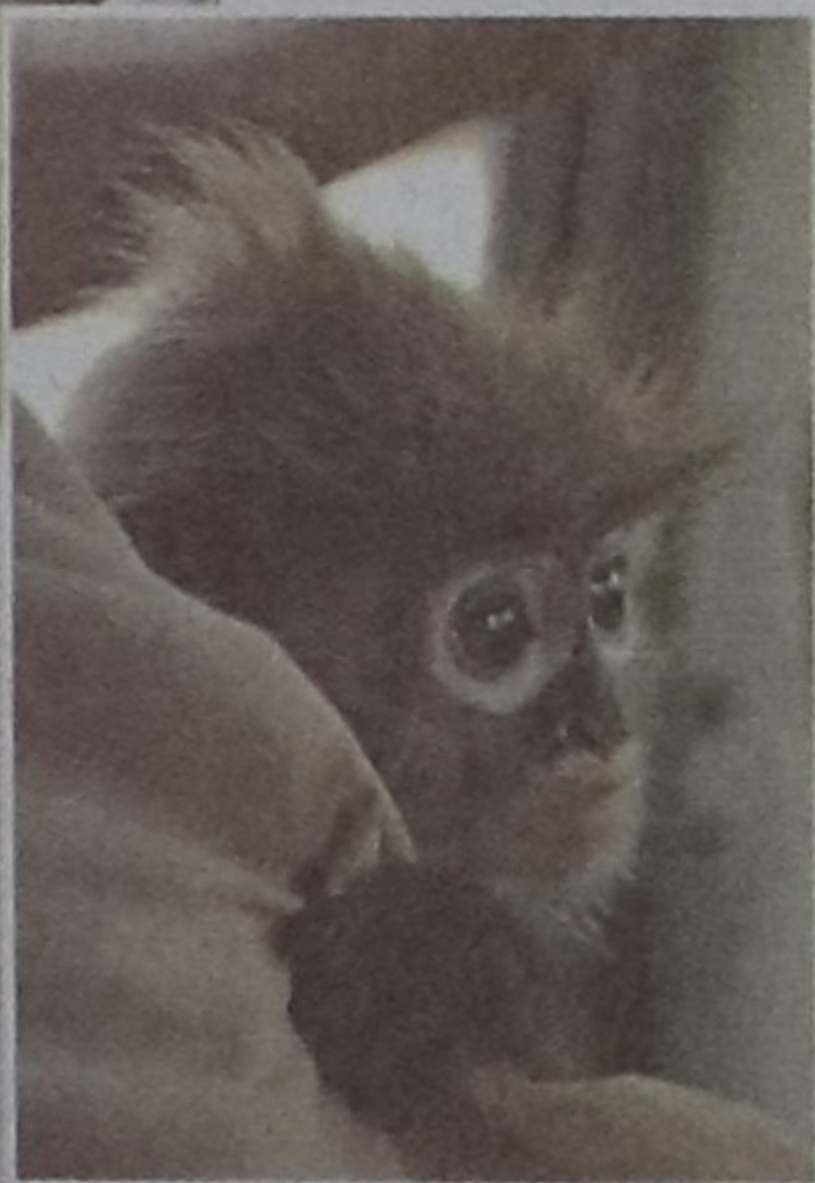
And where is her mother? Nobody knows. Probably she was killed and eaten up by the Tipra people. Probably the mother just left her behind, which is unusual for a primate, when people chased them. Nobody can tell that exactly.

The Phayre's Langur, locally known as Chasmapora Banor (spectacled monkey) for the white marks round its eyes set in the jet black coat, was rescued by some locals

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN
A rare wild monkey sits in its new home at the Forest Department's rescue centre after it was rescued from Srimongol. Inset, a closer view of the white circles around its eyes - which gives it the local name of Chasmapora Banor.



Rajshahi colleges, institutes shut

33 BCL men sued over killing of Shibir GS

ABU KALAM, RU

All higher educational institutions in the city, including Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet), Rajshahi New Degree College, City College, Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute and Institute of Health Technology, were closed since the yesterday following violent clashes at Rajshahi University.

Earlier on Friday, RU was closed for an indefinite period following sporadic clashes between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) that left university unit ICS general secretary Sharifuzzaman Noman killed and at least 100 people injured.

Rajshahi Medical College and Rajshahi College were also shut down on Friday following the RU clash.

Sources said, Ruet authorities at an emergency meeting also asked its male students to vacate their halls by 5:30 pm yesterday while the female students by 10:00 am today.

Besides, the authorities of other higher educational institutions yesterday held separate emergency meetings and also asked its students to vacate their dormitories.

Sources said, the examinations of the Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute will be held as per the schedule.

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Students queue at Rajshahi Railway Station yesterday as they leave their hostels after the authorities shut down Rajshahi University and several other educational institutions for an indefinite period following violent clashes on RU campus Friday. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Major reshuffle in police admin

CID, SB chiefs, DMP commissioner among 56 top officials transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major reshuffle in the police department, a total of 56 senior officials with ranks from additional inspector general to superintendent of police (SP) were transferred yesterday.

They include four additional inspector generals and a metropolitan police commissioner.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Naim Ahmed, also additional IG, was made the rector of Police Staff College, said a home ministry notification.

Deputy Inspector General of Chittagong Range AKM Shahidul Huq has replaced Naim.

Another Additional IG Zaved Patwary, who was the chief of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was made the chief of the Special Branch (SB) while SB chief Additional IG Baharul Alam was transferred to the Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Additional IG Syed Shah Zaman Raj from PHQ was made CID chief.

DIG Mohammad Sadiqur Rahman of Armed Police Battalion

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

RESTRICTION BY KL IMMIGRATION Workers on leave too face trouble

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Malaysian immigration authorities are restricting entry of not only fresh Bangladeshi jobseekers but also those who came home on vacation with valid work permit to return to workplace.

Some of these workers who visited Bangladesh after one or two years phoned from the Kuala Lumpur airport and complained they were kept at the immigration depot, according to sources close to the trade in Malaysia.

"But at one point their cellphones went off," says a representative of a recruiting agent in Malaysia. The number of those, however, could not be known.

Meanwhile, of the 532 jobseekers who arrived in the Kuala Lumpur airport, only those with job contract in construction and plantation sectors were allowed for employment.

Those with contract in services or manufacturing sectors were not being allowed, they say.

Labour and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Amidst Flames of fury; keep the hope intact...

We are shocked at the damage on the architectural masterpiece, the finest shopping mall of the country - Bashundhara city.

We are engaged in a solemn prayer for the recovery...

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জনগণের আস্থা আর ভালবাসাকে পোড়াতে পারেনি
শতাব্দীর ভয়াবহ এই অগ্নিকাণ্ড
দেশের অর্থনীতির উন্নয়নে বসুন্ধরার কার্যক্রম
কোনভাবেই বাধাগ্রস্ত হবে না

শতাব্দীর ভয়াবহতম অগ্নিকাণ্ডে বসুন্ধরা কর্পোরেট অফিস ভবনের বেশ কিছু অংশ ভস্মীভূত হলেও এই সর্বগ্রাসী আগুন পুড়ে আরো নীরটে ঝাঁটি হয়েছে বসুন্ধরার প্রতি দেশবাসীর অকুণ্ঠ আস্থা আর ভালবাসা। শুক্রবার (১৩ই মার্চ ২০০৯ইং) দুপুর থেকে সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত গোটা দেশবাসী বিশ্বের অন্যতম স্থাপনা শৈলীতে নির্মিত ভবনটির জন্য তাদের সমস্ত অনুভূতি ও অনুরাগ ঢেলে দিয়েছিলেন, জীবনের ঝুঁকি নিয়ে অগ্নি নির্বাপন ও নিরাপত্তার জন্য ছুটে এসেছিলেন। মহান আল্লাহ তা'লার রহমতে কর্পোরেট অফিস ভবনের ১৫-১৯ তলা ব্যতীত অন্যান্য স্থাপনাসহ বসুন্ধরা সিটি সম্পূর্ণ অক্ষত রয়েছে।

ভয়াবহ অগ্নিকাণ্ড নির্বাপনে আমাদের সাহসী ৭ (সাত) জন কর্মী প্রাণ বিসর্জন দিয়েছেন (ইন্না লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন) ও অসংখ্য কর্মী আহত হয়েছেন। আমরা প্রয়াত সহকর্মীগণের আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

অগ্নিকাণ্ড নিয়ন্ত্রণ, নির্বাপন ও মানুষের জীবন রক্ষার জন্য গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের মহামান্য রাষ্ট্রপতি, বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, মাননীয় একাধিক মন্ত্রী ও প্রতিমন্ত্রী বর্গ, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, র‍্যাব, সেনাবাহিনী, নৌ-বাহিনী, বিমান বাহিনী, ওয়াসা, দমকল বাহিনী ও মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এবং এফবিসিসিআই-এর প্রেসিডেন্ট মহোদয় সহ সর্বস্তরের কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী ও জনগণের তাত্ক্ষণিক সহযোগিতা, কঠোর পরিশ্রম, মমত্ববোধ ও দেশাত্মবোধে আমরা অভিভূত ও কৃতজ্ঞ।

উল্লেখিত বিষয়ে তাত্ক্ষণিক বস্তুনিষ্ঠ সংবাদ প্রকাশনা ও পরিবেশনার জন্য আমরা দেশ ও বিদেশের সকল প্রিন্ট ও ইলেকট্রনিক মিডিয়ার সাংবাদিক ও কর্মীদের আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি।

অনাকাঙ্ক্ষিত ও আকস্মিক এই দুর্ঘটনায় বসুন্ধরা গ্রুপ ও বসুন্ধরা সিটি মলের সাথে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য আমরা আন্তরিক দুঃখ প্রকাশ করছি।

বসুন্ধরা গ্রুপ
দেশ ও মানুষের কল্যাণে

