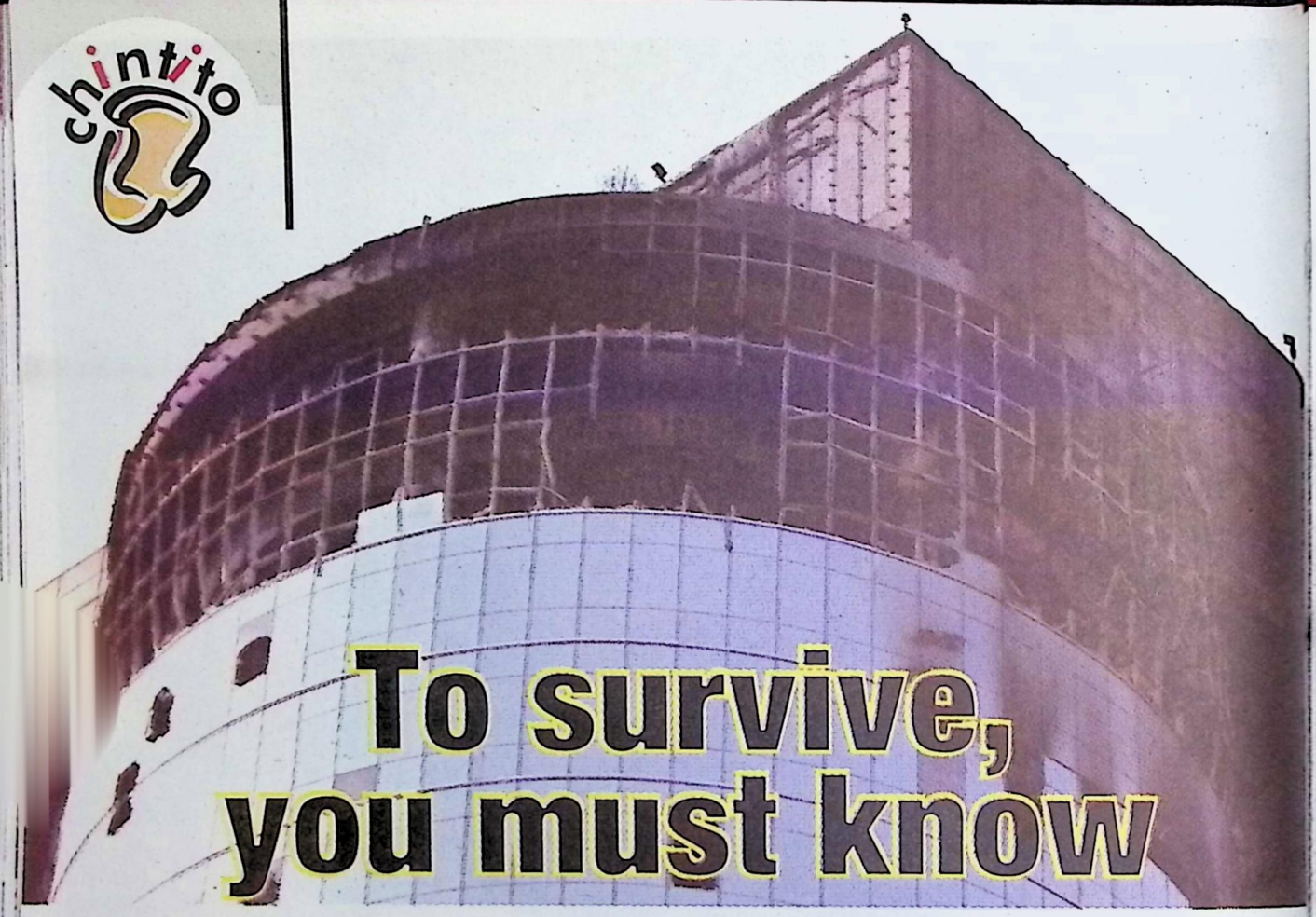


To survive, you must know

CHINTITO

Last Friday. 2:57PM. Basundhara City was capped with two floors of charcoal. There was very little sign of any flame from the road where a few hundred people had gathered. More were gathering on hearing about the fire.

Information later gathered confirmed that the mega shopping centre's control room had spotted the fire at 1.34PM. Such sophistication and they could not prevent the fire from starting.

That reminds me of the security personnel in my domestic premises. After discovering my *priyo* bicycle missing, I called him up over telephone. Such sophistication! He informed me nonchalantly that my bike was stolen at 12.39PM. You call that efficiency or what?

Back to the BC. Around 4.00PM. Some more floors atop the building lit up in a large flame. Thousands who had gathered by then rent the air merry (?) with spontaneous applause. They had come to see a 'show' and they have seen one. The mobile companies will benefit more from their talk time.

The crowd, surprised as one may be, may have clapped for any reason.

They were happy that their trip to the fire site and wait was not futile; they have been witness to a fire, a big fire. Perhaps it will be included in their visiting card. Otherwise, why should tens of thousands throng the place hindering fire-fighting?

They were happy they were outside of the towering inferno, and not inside. None of the shops inside were owned by them.

They were happy the building belonged to some rich people.

The building was used by rich people.

Those who shopped there were rich.

And those who toasted the large flame with cheer were not, or not that rich.

Such is the dissection in the society.

Alas! A fire can victimise anyone, poor or rich, young or old, boat or sheaf of paddy

People in this city and elsewhere have died in slum fires.

Thankfully, the opposition has not yet blamed the government, or vice versa.

We also learnt that since independence only two, repeat two, fire stations have been added to the then existing eleven in the capital of (they say) over one crore people.

The city has been growing laterally and vertically.

More buildings have become air-conditioned and therefore enclosed by fixed glass that can entrap fire.

Many of the tall 15-20 storied buildings in Dhaka have been constructed with less money than would have been