otherwise required. They have managed with one staircase. In Bangla we call them *makaal fawl*. From outside fit-faat, inside they are Sadarghat. Why of all places, Sadarghat? Perhaps I will delve on that matter some other day.

Seriously speaking, every day we enter many premises without realising, or even thinking for a second, that we may be held hostage by fire that very day. The seven who died in the Basundhara fire incident came to office routinely last Friday; never to return to their loved ones. What about the children who did not want their father to go to office ever? Duty bound, he escaped from them to go to work. Every life, and death, has such a story.

Grievous mistakes have been made in our buildings by greed (for instance, not wanting to sacrifice square foot for alternate staircase/s), by lack of knowledge (for instance, not knowing even professionally that two staircases is not the solution in each and every building, one may need more than two), by collaboration between parties and professionals concerned (or unconcerned).

It is not scientific thinking to assume that the fire services shall find out the errors in all our buildings. As one commentator on television said, we must assume responsibility of safety at the level of each residence, each apartment building, each office premises, each mercantile building, each school, each university, each factory, every hospital, each slum, each hut, each shopping centre, each shop, every cinema hall, each auditorium, each restaurant.... Let the self inspection begin now and today.

Find out if you can prevent the start of a fire where you work, where you live, where you study, where you entertain. Are all the electromechanical connections in order? Older buildings are more vulnerable.

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Find out if you have enough precautionary measures. Are the doors able to contain fire when you shut them behind you, as you flee?

Find out if you can escape from a fire. Is there the alternate means of leaving a place on fire? Public and unknown places are more hazardous.

Find out if you can attack a fire in the very first few seconds. For that you will need fire detection and alarm system. A complex building may require automation.

If there is ONE staircase in your university building, make an application to the authorities now so that they install an alternate staircase at a suitable place tomorrow, if need be outside the building with steel elements, if need be by making a hole in the floor slab.

If there is NO fire detection and alarm system in your 20-storied air-conditioned glass-encased building, ask for one now. If there is, find out if it works.

If you have not had a fire drill in your factory ever, have one today, so that everyone knows what to do and no one panics when fire strikes. It can, anywhere, at any time.

If you do not see a fire extinguisher in a shopping centre, ask why. Get one for your CNG-driven car today. If you see extinguishers, find out if the material inside is up to date. You may be surprised.

What about those who cannot walk away from a fire, let alone run? Have we ever thought how we shall evacuate patients from a hospital that has caught fire up in the sky?

If you mean business, talk about fire.

If you want to survive, it is not enough that you know. Make sure everyone else does.

P.S. I took the help of a professional to learn the above for our benefit. Why don't you?

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