DHAKA SATURDAY JUNE 5, 2010

Moments of shock

FROM PAGE 1 "We are completely ruined. We have nothing left," wailed Kakoli, who lost twelve of her family members including her mother, brother, two uncles,

aunt, three brothers-in-law, a sister-in-law and a niece. Her father passed away long ago. Now she is so much in shock that she cannot even remember who she lost in the Nimtoli

"Had the rain poured last night, it could douse the fire," sighed Raj, relative of a victim, as he watched Kakoli pass. He was standing by the bodies of his elder brother Taj and his

Raj had also lost his two paternal uncles, two aunts and two sisters-in-law. After all the effort he made in finding his relatives' bodies, he lost the ability to cry.

"My brother tried to get out braking the grills of a window of his shop. But he died before he could make the escape,' said Raj with his silent tearless cry. He said Taj managed to break eight of a total of 15 iron

Taj used to run a decorator shop and it was near the building from where the fire broke

rods of the window.

Raj's sister is admitted in Dhaka Medical College Hospital with severe burn

The list of casualty will not end with this burial," said Raj while he and his other relative were putting the bodies of their relatives on a pick-up van for Azimpur graveyard. He started sobbing as these words came out.

Just beside the pick-up van, another anxious relative of a victim Nargis was pushing her way through the crowd towards DMCH. She lost her seven-year-old son Shrabon and her husband sustained serious burn injuries.

Unlike others, Nargis was trying hard to contain her grief. Silently in tears she had to walk fast along with her mother-in-law.

In the morgue, there lie seven unidentified bodies.

These bodies were burnt beyond recognition.

Probably, that's why Ghulam Hossain was running madly holding a photograph of his mother whom he could

"This is my mother. This lady in white Sari," Ghulam was saying as he showed the photograph to the reporters. He lost his mother, brother, sister and two nephews. He, however, found the bodies of his nephews.

The words of consolation fall way short to these bereaved families. The only consolation was there when two members of separate victim families had eye contact between themselves. They sobbed intermittently looking at each other's faces.

Grenade

FROM PAGE 16 Saikat's accomplice, however, managed to flee.

The injured are Oliur Rahman, constable of Gendaria Police Station; two pedestrians, Habib, 12, and Kamal, 25; and rickshaw puller Masum, 26.

Deputy Commissioner of Wari Zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Towfig Mahbub told The Daily Star that Saikat hurled the grenade at three policemen when they tried to stop his rickshaw at the check post around 6:00pm.

The grenade exploded near pedestrians injuring one policeman, two pedestrians and a rickshaw puller, he said. Policemen caught Saikat instantly, he added. His cohort on the rickshaw managed to

Saikat was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with minor injuries, and he was brought to Gendaria Police Station around 8:30pm, he said.

The DC said the police could not extract anything from Saikat during preliminary interrogation but suspected that he was a militant.

Gendaria police said they also interrogated the rickshaw puller who told them that the two hired the rickshaw for Babubazar from Dholaipar.

Wrong fire-fighting one of the main reasons for

such a large number of casual-

is very densely populated.

ties in Nimtoli, was that the area

tion, and strict enforcement of

building construction rules is a

must for avoiding casualties in

of allowing industries and

warehouses in residential areas

must stop, and the government

must enforce the principle

Service and Civil Defence Brig

Gen Abu Nayeem Mohammad

Shahidullah echoed the profes-

sor, adding that Thursday's

because there was a warehouse

of highly flammable chemicals

on the ground floor of the

residential building that caught

spewed out on the street in

front as well, making it very

difficult for the firefighters to

approach the building, he said.

a major reason for such a high

number of casualties, he added.

unpreparedness to fight fire in

dense neighbourhoods with

narrow streets, he said the

technology available for fire

fighting in such places is rela-

The burning chemicals were

About the fire department's

The burning chemicals

Director General of Fire

strictly.

the fire first.

tively new.

He said planned urbanisa-

Prof Mehdi said the practice

"Every building should have its own fire-fighting system. That is the primary life saving apparatus in any incident of fire. Fire brigade's jobs are to rescue trapped people, contain spreading, and douse the fire,'

said Prof Nizamuddin of Buet. Every building should also have fire escape, he added. "Motor cycle brigades for fire-fighting, like the ones in Malaysia, could be useful for places like Nimtoli," he said

adding, but in that case the neighbourhoods must have fire hydrants. Officials of the fire brigade said the department is not yet

equipped to fight fire in dense blaze became so formidable neighbourhoods with narrow "Most of the roads are very

narrow in Old Dhaka, where our vehicles cannot go," Abdur Rashid said. Due to unplanned urbanisation some areas in newer parts

of the city also have narrow roads like Kazipara, Shewrapara, Taltala, Kafrul, Tejgaon, Begunbari, Pirerbagh, Badda, Shajahanpur, and Sabujbagh, said another fire department official.

About the Nimtoli incident Rashid said they could go near the spot only through one side because the road on that side was wide enough, on all other sides they had to train their hoses from far due to narrow

Asked how they fight fire in

The shrinking number of

ponds and other water bodies

in the city is also making

firefighters' work increasingly

35 years back, Dhaka City had

26 water reservoirs for the

firefighters, and on top of that

there were many ponds and

canals. But due to a lack of

awareness among government

departments concerned, and

the population in general, most

firefighters had a hard time

finding a natural source of

water after water in their trucks

reservoir of a nearby mosque

temporarily, and later they had

to bring more water from the

pond in Shahidullah Hall of

Dhaka University, about half a

Rashid said Dhaka City

Corporation (DCC) should

install fire hydrants at different

kilometre away from Nimtoli.

Finally they used the water

the years, they added.

Fire service officials said just

difficult.

'We've been asking for light and portable fire-fighting equipment, and formation o The web of wires that frefire-fighting teams on twoquently hang low over neighwheelers, for years now. Those bourhood streets are also an equipment will finally arrive obstacle for fire trucks to reach next year," he said adding that fire spots, he said. the demand for fire hydrants on

city streets however has been areas like Old Dhaka now, he age old. said they first try to reach the The fire department sent an official request to DCC to install spot with fire trucks, if the roads are too narrow for the fire hydrants in the city six trucks, they use nearby surface months ago, but the city corpolevel natural water reservoirs to ration told the department that pump water into the blaze from it is the job of Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), he

> Then the department sent an official letter to Wasa requesting the same, but Wasa has yet to respond, he added.

UK, China

is with deep shock that I came to know the news of the fire in Dhaka which had caused death

of numerous people". Medvedev conveyed his of those have been filled up over sincere condolences to the relatives and friends of the

On Thursday night the deceased and wished fast recovery of the injured. Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Yang Jiechi, in his message to Foreign Minister

Dipu Moni said, "I am profoundly shocked to learn that a serious fire broke out in Dhaka, and claimed so many lives and injured so many people." He expressed his deepest

condolence for the victims and most sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and injured persons.

build water reservoirs and Meanwhile, acting British High Commissioner in Dhaka parts of the city for easy access in a message said, "We are very to water during incidents of fire. saddened by this tragic inci-Eminent urban planning expert also the honorary chairdent, my thoughts and prayers are all with those who have man of the Centre for Urban been affected". Studies, Prof Nazru Islam, said

BDR protests BSF work on Padua border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Indian Border Security Force's attempt at constructing a concrete structure triggers tension as Bangladesh Rifles protests by hoisting red flags on the Tamabil and Padua borders in Sylhet on Thursday.

The border guards of both sides sat at a flag meeting on Padua border, about 7 kilometers off Tamabil on Friday Second-in-command of 21

Battalion of BDR Major Mamun and second-incommand of Battalion -1 of BSF at Shillong SG Shukla led their respective sides in the one hour meeting. Sources said Indian BSF guards brought some con-

struction raw materials near

border pillar 1275/1P and

started building a concrete structure, close to the Tamabil land port 55km away from the city at about 4:00pm Thursday, prompting BDR to protest. Major Mamun said the BDR had to hoist red flags as a sign of protest as any construction within 150 yards of the border line is prohibited. The Indian

BSF had already moved within

120 yards of the border. Red flag

is the ultimate signal before

firing which compelled BSF to halt the construction work. "We also asked them not to create obstacles for Bangladeshi nationals working on the farmlands, by the Padua borders, as our troops are still alert" Mamun said. Some Indian nationals protected by the BSF were attempting to grab those farmlands, he

Fire death

FROM PAGE 1

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, ministers, lawmakers, leaders of other political parties and senior officials visited the victims at DMCH yesterday.

Hasina said her government will give the affected families compensation and do everything necessary for their reha-Earlier, DC Dhaka

announced the administration will pay Tk 20,000 for burial of each of the bodies. It will also ensure treatment facilities for the wounded. At the scene, fire service had

called off rescue efforts around 5:00am. But on repeated pleas from locals, they resumed the operation and retrieved six more bodies.

Locals fear more bodies might be trapped in rubble.

Meanwhile, there is still ambiguity over how the fire broke out. Officials would not say anything in this regard until a probe is done.

Locals and fire-fighters said the blaze started in a five-storey building, where an engagement function (Panchini) was going

On the ground floor of that building, cooks had been preparing foods since early after-

For long exposure to intense heat from stoves, chemicals stored in adjacent room caught fire round about 8:45pm. Soon flames engulfed the buildings and shops.

Sparks from electric wires and gas leaks are believed to have added to the ferocity of the

Some said explosion of two transformers had started the fire, while some others said it began at a bakery and then

spread to the transformers. Brig Gen Abu Nayeem Md Shahidullah, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said there are four probable

causes of the fire. "It [The blaze] might have been started from an oil-fired oven or from the chemical godown or transformer blasts or a

tea stall in front of the building, he added. There is however no doubt the chemicals swelled the flames, allowing the occupants

of the buildings little time to flee the raging inferno. Raj, brother of Taj who died on the ground floor, said the godown had two truckloads of

chemicals two days ago. Shakil, a bank employee who was going home through Nimtoli, said, "Hearing cries for help, I stopped my bike. But as flames came rushing towards

me, I sped off." Besides heavy casualties, the fire caused extensive damage to property and valuables Particularly, the shops were

completely wrecked. Of those who died in the shops, most were burnt alive and those who were inside the buildings died of suffocation, said witnesses and hospital staff.

Throughout the day yesterday, hundreds of people from across the city crowded into Nimtoli. While most were there to see at firsthand the ruins, many were searching for dear ones. Immediately after the disas-

ter struck, electricity and gas supplies were cut off and it remained that way till at 9:00pm. Meanwhile, no case was filed in connection with the incident.

Abdul Mannan, officer-incharge of Bangshal Police Station, last night told The Daily Starthey would file a case after a preliminary probe.

A family weighed

NEWS

FROM PAGE 16

daughter Samira, he wanted to know about her condition.

"Where is my daughter...how is she? Please bring her to me," Shuvo asked repeatedly whenever he woke up from sleep as doctors gave him sedatives to reduce pain.

While he was totally oblivious to his great loss, his son Sunny was completing Samira's burial at Azimpur graveyard around 3:30pm vesterday.

Sunny and Shuvo's another son Shakil were left unharmed by the blaze as they were outside.

the condition of his wife Shahida who got major portion of her body burnt. Shakil was attending his mother at Combined Medical Hospital CMH). When the fire broke out at Nawab Katra Road, Shuvo, an

employee of Dhaka City

Corporation, was along with his daughter and wife on the first floor of one of the eight buildings that were gutted by the fire. Shuvo pushed his wife and other necessary things to treat daughter under a cot when theinjured. flames started engulfing their

under a table, said his niece Parul Akhter. They were unconscious when their little girl was burnt

flat and he himself took shelter

After regaining sense at the hospital, Shuvo enquired about his daughter and wife. He was informed that they had received minor injuries and were at a relative's house.

On the same corridor lies Mamun, another ill-fated father who did not know about his seven-year-old daughter's death in the fire. He is a fruit seller at Nimtoli.

He was groaning in pain due to burns in his chest and head. While visiting the burn unit

in the afternoon, this correspondent found 12 victims lying on the corridor. Several victims alleged that doctors

were not available. Burn unit head Dr Shahidul Bari said over two hundred victims received treatment since Thursday night, and around 26 were undergoing treatment at that time.

Nation mourns

FROM PAGE 1 souls and quick recovery of the injured.

The government will give compensation of Tk 20,000 to the families of the victims who died in the blaze, and it has taken responsibility for the treatment of the injured. It will also arrange for the

rehabilitation of all the victims Shuvo is not even aware of of the Nimtoli fire. Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina announced the deci-

sions yesterday after visiting

the injured at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Following a directive by the premier, 14 people with severe burns were shifted to

Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday. CMH supplied DMCH with emergency medicines and

A three-member enquiry committee led by the additional home affairs secretary has been formed to probe the incident, and it has to submit a report within a week.

The government postponed the state programmes that had been chalked out for World Environment Day today.

The premier yesterday cancelled all her scheduled programmes. She was monitoring the situation throughout Thursday night and Friday, and coordinating all the activities of the government ministries and different departments including army, police and fire brigade, her Deputy Press Secretary Mahbubul Hoque Shakil told The Daily Star.

"We will help the affected families earn their livelihood," the premier told reporters at DMCH.

She also declared that burn units would be set up at every hospital of the country.

after burying his elder brother

He was wailing while his rela-

tives were trying to take him

graveyard, this correspondent

met Sabuj, an elder brother of a

At the main entrance of the

away from the spot.

Graveside scenes

FROM PAGE 16

number of dead bodies turning up together here," said Mohammad Ashraf, who has been digging graves for the last 36 years at the graveyard.

A total of 30 grave-diggers started digging up over a hundred graves at 4:00 am in the morning and continued before noon as per the direction of Dhaka City Corporation authorities.

The bodies started coming at the graveyard from noon and the grave-diggers started burying them immediately

amid heavy downpour. Before sunset, as many as 46 dead bodies were buried at the northwest corner of the graveyard, several staffs of the grave-

yard told The Daily Star. "I never saw burial of such huge number of people here after the Liberation War in 1971," said Mona Mia, who has been digging graves there for

last 40 years. "It was unbearable. I can't describe the total scenario to you," Mona replied in a choked

"What will I say? The condition of my mind is not good," said another grave-digger

"Everybody was crying. We dug the graves in several rows on a spot," he added.

A youth wearing white Pajama and Panjabi was not willing to leave the premises

heavily. many as 42 bodies were buried,

At about 4:00pm, when as a group of grave-diggers sat in a corner of the new graves leaving their equipment aside. They were looking much tired than they really were.

"I never saw such number of dead bodies at a time here after the war of independence," said Abdul Mannan, who prayed for the salvation of the departed souls on behalf of their fami-

dear ones.

Around 10 namaz-ejanazas were held before laying them to eternal rest.

Johra, a resident of Madhya

Begunbari, said she lives in a

small room in a three-storey

tin-built house for Tk 1,500

with her three children and

that if a bed is placed, there is

no room left for anything else.

She said the tin-built house has

around 200 such rooms with

three common bathrooms

one hour to use the bathroom

house is over 1,000," she said.

"We have to wait around

Sheuli, another resident of a

Fish trader Joj Mia said he

knows that it is very risky to live

in those houses built with tin

similar tin-built house, said

which seven people live.

and bamboos on a canal.

one female and two male.

She said the room is so small

husband.

The committee will start their work tomorrow and they will identify risky buildings in

the report of the committee," he said.

demolished. The other members of the committee are representatives

of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Fires Service and Civil Defence, Buet, Department of Public Works and Dhaka City Corporation, he said. Residents of these houses

are mostly poor people who

Begunbari for over one year, said he has no other option but to live there since he would not be able to afford anything

elsewhere for Tk 1,600. Landlords get Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,200 for a room that is tiny even for a small family. They get Tk 2,500 to Tk 3,000 for a small room of a building and Tk 3,500

to Tk 4,000 for comparatively

larger rooms, he said.

fire victim. As soon as the correspondent asked him about his presence there, he broke into tears. "My younger brother was buried here," he could not

continue anymore. The narrow roads inside the graveyard became crowded as locals and relatives of the victims rushed there to lay their near and

dear ones to eternal rest. The heart-rending cry of relatives filled the air of the area

Many people helped the staff of the graveyard to finish the funeral of their near and

Rajuk plans

Begunbari area, he said. "We will take action as per

The most risky buildings will be identified first and

cannot afford the rent of comparatively safer houses or Mokbul Hossain, a rickshaw puller who has been living in

> A fire broke out at Begunbari on January 8 last. Now the landowner is building another tin house.

Asked why they build tin houses, Shahnaj Begum said Rajuk does not give approval of plans to construct buildings there and they build the tin

houses to keep the land in their

possession.

BNP-Jamaat **FROM PAGE 16**

including hartal. A delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami with its chief Motiur

Rahman Nizami will meet Khaleda Zia, also the leader of opposition in parliament. Both the parties are going

to sit for discussion for the first time after the 2008 election debacle. But curiosity arises among

BNP activists whether Jamaat

raises the issue of war crimes

trial and how BNP leadership

reacts to this. Jamaat leaders have given a hint that curiosity also prevails among their party members about how the party will deal if BNP seeks direct support of them to make the anti-government

movement successful.

"It is the responsibility of all to address this [trial of war criminals] issue as it would be harmful for the country if the government moves forward in this regard," Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat told The Daily Star, adding that an overall political situation will come into their discussion.

Asked whether they would support BNP's hartal programme, he said, "The government forced the opposition to announce antigovernment movement and we consider it positively, but we will take our decision through proper discussion."

tion of Jamaat into antigovernment campaign. A senior Jamaat leader also said they would not place the issue of war crimes

Some BNP leaders said

the party leadership has no

plan to seek direct participa-

trial on the meeting. "It's a beginning and there is a long time to go. We want to get support from all but the time has not come yet for other parties' direct participation into our antigovernment programmes," a senior BNP leader said seek-

ing anonymity.

He said the party leadership is very much concerned about the war crimes trial issue but they don't want to take any decision right now as they think the government itself will provoke a lot of controversies and the trial of war criminals will finally plunge into a controversial political issue.

BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said BNP has already expressed its opinion about the government's move as to war crimes trial and there is nothing left to discuss the issue.

It's one life

FROM PAGER 1

next month," he said.

can really happen," he said. "I wasn't ready to come now. I had a travel plan for the

"It's one life that comes and goes. I had only one sister. She brought two children to the world and left the world, along with them.'

"We had been very close to each other and shared almost everything. Now I have nobody to share with."

Azad said the death was the biggest blow to his 75-year-old "What sin have we commit-

Azad tried to rationalise the cruel things that happened to his life and said his sister was

not the only one who died. She was among many. "It was like seeing your own death up Azad is the youngest among five brothers, and Shilpi was seven years behind him. He comes to Bangladesh

twice a year and stays for up to

three weeks. The last time he

talked to his sister was four

days back. Eight-year-old niece Adita was one of the most emotional points in his life. "Last time l talked to her, she just wanted chocolates.

Azad said he did not forget to buy chocolates for her. Even if he knew she was no longer as the number of residents of a alive, he was not ready to come to terms with the reality. He came to the burnt-out site because he believed he would they pay Tk 1,700 for a room in find his loved ones. "Chocolates are in my car."

> What to do with the chocolates now? "I will give them to her -- at

Azimpur (where Adita was buried yesterday)." Azad broke down in tears. The family Azad's sister had been married to lost many

of its members. Shilpi's sisters-in-law -wives of her husband's two brothers -- also died in the fire. Shilpi's husband and brothers-in-law are alive, but all the children are dead.

Building tilts

FROM PAGE 16 without approval in the capital," he said.

Zahidul Haq, who runs a drug store near the building, said locals raised alarm in the morning and a fire brigade team from Tejgaon went to the scene and asked the inhabitants to evacuate.

Md Sirarj Mian is the owner of the building on 1.5 katha land. The first three floors of the building on the marshy land of Hatirjheel were constructed between 2005 and 2006. Sirari then added four floors during the last few months. Construction of the sixth floor was ongoing.

Md Akbar, Sirarj's brotherin-law, who is overseeing the construction work, said Sirari constructed the building with just a mason and some labourers and no engineers.

He said law enforcers in plain clothes arrested Sirari around noon.

However, Sub-Inspector Abdul Kuddus, duty officer of Tejgaon Industrial Zone Police Station, and Sub-Inspector Shahidullah, duty officer of Detective Branch, said they knew nothing about the arrest of the building owner.

The Rajuk director said a criminal case has been filed against the building owner with Tejgaon Industrial Zone Police Station. Police have been asked to

diately. Rajuk served a demolition notice on the building owner long ago but he did not pay heed, said the director.

"We left a notice again for

the owner asking him to imme-

diately demolish the build-

ing," he said, adding, "Otherwise we will pull it down next Ground floor of the build ing, at East Begunbari, is used commercially while the rest of

resident who lives with her son

and daughter, said, "I rented a

flat in the building just three

days ago and I will move out if

23-player list. the building is residential. Others like Sweden striker Razia Sultana, a third-floor

Zlatan Ibrahimoic or Russia winger Andrei Arshavin didn't even get that close, for the simple reason that their teams failed to qualify.

Naoto Kan

of rallying his party and reclaiming its mandate for change before elections next

Wednesday after squandering the public's high hopes with broken campaign promises and financial scandals. "My task is to rebuild this

nation," said Kan, who was Hatoyama's finance minister. The 63-year-old with a reputation for confronting Japan's powerful bureaucrats must contend with a daunting list of problems.

Kan's first task will be to form a Cabinet. He said he would announce the members "early next week" after thinking about the posts over the week-"We will work together as

one in the face of the tough

political situation and the upcoming upper house elections and fight together unified," he told party members. "Our first priority is to regain the trust of the people." Kan, the country's sixth prime minister in four years,

linking money and politics. He also stressed the need for fiscal discipline while trying to spur economic growth. Chosen Friday morning as new chief of the Democratic Party of Japan, Kan was voted into office a few hours later by

pledged to confront problems

parliament. Kan received 313 votes out of 477, with Liberal Democratic Party head Sadakazu Tanigaki getting 116. The rest went to candidates of smaller parties. The upper house approved Kan immediately afterward.

powerful chamber of Japan's

While his political philosophy is hard to neatly categorise, analysts and fellow lawmakers agree that his personal traits and background as a civic activist and proactive Cabinet minister set him apart from "He has a record of acting on the basis of his beliefs and not

backing down," said Tobias Harris, a political analyst who once worked as an aide to a Democratic lawmaker in Japan. "Those are good signs for a prime minister, and I think those are qualities that Hatoyama did not have." With his ordinary upbringing, Kan represents a break

with the past several prime ministers, including Hatoyama, whose fathers or Tigers

FROM PAGE 16 in the first session before

Kevin Pietersen's 64 and then

one each.

recovery through Ian Bell (78*) and Matt Prior (18*) made sure the hosts wrested back con-For the visitors, Shafiul Islam bowled impressively to

take two wickets while Shakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak and Shahadat Hossain picked up

where to move.' At least 25 students of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, located close to Begunbari,

the building has tilted to one side yesterday morning and he along with other students were planning to move out. Drogba

FROM PAGE 16 Simon Rolfes, Heiko Westermann and Christian

were among the residents.

Md Raihan, one of the

students living on the fifth

floor, said he came to know that

Traesch. England had an injury setback ahead of Ferdinand's agony, as former captain David Beckham's chances of making the squad for the June 11-July 11 tournament ended in a ruptured Achilles tendon while playing for AC Milan in March.

Apart from the injured, other major players didn't make the cut for other rea-Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy failed to get a recall

after retiring from Oranje in

2008 and Brazil coach Carlos Dunga overlooked the prominent trio of Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Adriano. There was no place on the evacuate the residents imme-France squad for striker Karim Benzema and Patrick Vieira, and veterans Luca Toni and

Francesco Totti were also not

good enough to represent title

holders Italy. There were raised eyebrows in the host country of South Africa when coach Carlos Alberto Parreira overlooked the nation's best scorer Benni McCarthy in his final

t is risky but I still do not know

grandfathers served as prime

ministers. The son of a busi-

nessman, Kan graduated from

the Tokyo Institute of

Technology's science depart-Kan succeeds Yukio Hatoyama, who stepped down He began his political career as a civic activist in the 1970s and ran for office three times before winning a lower house seat in 1980 with the nowdefunct Socialist Democratic

Federation. Kan, along with Hatoyama, was one of several members in 1996 to found what eventually became the Democratic Party

Japanese salaryman's family,' Kan said Thursday. "I've had no special connections. If I can take on a major role starting from such an ordinary background, that would be a very positive thing for Japanese politics. In a written candidate's

Î grew up in a typical

statement vesterday, Kan identified economic recovery as the biggest challenge facing Japan, whose economy will almost certainly be overtaken in size by China this year. While exports and factory output are

rising, unemployment and deflation are worsening. "I will tackle and pull Japan out of deflation through comprehensive measures from the

government and the Bank of Japan," he said in the statement. Runa's dream the lower house, the more

> and joy, Jamil and Runa were dreaming of a new life. But their dreams turned into a nightmare when a fierce fire broke out in the area.

> > The flames allegedly

She lost eight members of

sparked from makeshift burn-

ers installed for preparing dishes for the function. Yesterday, Runa's hands were coloured with henna, but tears were rolling down her

her family and relatives. Her mother Fatema, 55, aunts Afroza, 33, and Sajeda, 35, cousins Jyotsna, Anika, 12 Anik and Sayem and also Jyotsna's son Mukit died in the worst fire incident the capital has ever seen. Groom Jamil, 28, lost his

mother Shahzadi, 58, aunts Wahida, Waqar Fatema, 52 Fatema Begum, 50, brother Shimul Hossain, 26, Shimul's three-year old son Kumail and relatives Hasan Ali Sirazi Nusrat Begum, and Afroza Begum. Runa and her elder sister

Ratna had gone to a local

beauty parlour half an hour

before the blaze started. Their brother Faisal too survived as he was on the street to welcome the guests. Jamil was at his home. Runa's cousin Alamgir, who also accompanied Runa, said,

"As we saw the fire plumes

from the beauty parlour at Sat Rawza, half a mile away her residence, Runa made a phone call to Faisal who said their house caught fire. "We started running but could not reach the house. The

blaze had engulfed the entire area.