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**MORE THAN A
TRAGEDY**

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A national mourning day will be observed today in memory of the people killed in a garment factory fire in Ashulia and flyover collapse in Chittagong on Saturday. The government has also announced a one-day closure at all readymade garment factories across the country today.

Grief-struck

Worst-ever factory fire toll climbs to 111; workers forced to work even after alarm bell rang; safety compliances below par

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The blaze that killed 111 workers at Tazreen Fashions Ltd in Ashulia morphed into the nation's worst garment tragedy and shed the spotlight once again on poor safety standards.

At least 55 bodies were charred beyond recognition as the fire ripped through the eight-storey factory at Nishchintapur on Saturday for about 11 hours.

Relatives of the victims searched for their lost ones amid scenes of rescuers pulling dead bodies from the debris. The

shocked relatives said most of the deaths could have been avoided had the supervisors allowed the workers to escape just after the fire alarm went off at 6:45pm.

The supervisors not only prevented the workers from leaving their stations but also locked the gates on different floors, said many survivors.

The workers alleged that they had found locked two of the three staircases that go down to the factory's ground floor. Maj Muhammad Mahboob, director of Fire Service and Civil Defence (operations

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A woman cries her heart out at the sight of the body of a relative killed in the Nishchintapur tragedy. The photo was taken on Sunday at the playground of a local school where the bodies of Saturday's factory fire victims were being laid down.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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An agonising wait outside

SOHEL PARVEZ

"I am going to die... Please pray for me!"

These are Lipi's last words to her husband from the burning factory in Ashulia, where fire killed at least 111 workers Saturday night.

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The saviour

KAILASH SARKAR

One man's quick thinking, courage and care for others saved many from the Tazreen Fashions fire that left 111 dead and around 100 injured.

It was Khairul Hasan, 38, without

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Units without 2 exits to be shut

Says labour minister; PM says Ashulia incident pre-planned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in parliament yesterday that the Ashulia garment factory fire was "pre-planned" and urged the people, garment owners and workers to remain alert to foil any subversive activities in future.

Meanwhile, Labour Minister Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju said the government would shut down garment factories which had no or only one fire and emergency exit.

"Now it's been proved that it's not a

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WHEN DEATH IS MERE NUMBERS

Around 33 major fire incidents at garment factories claimed at least 500 lives between 1990 and 2012. Listed below are some of the disasters since 2000.

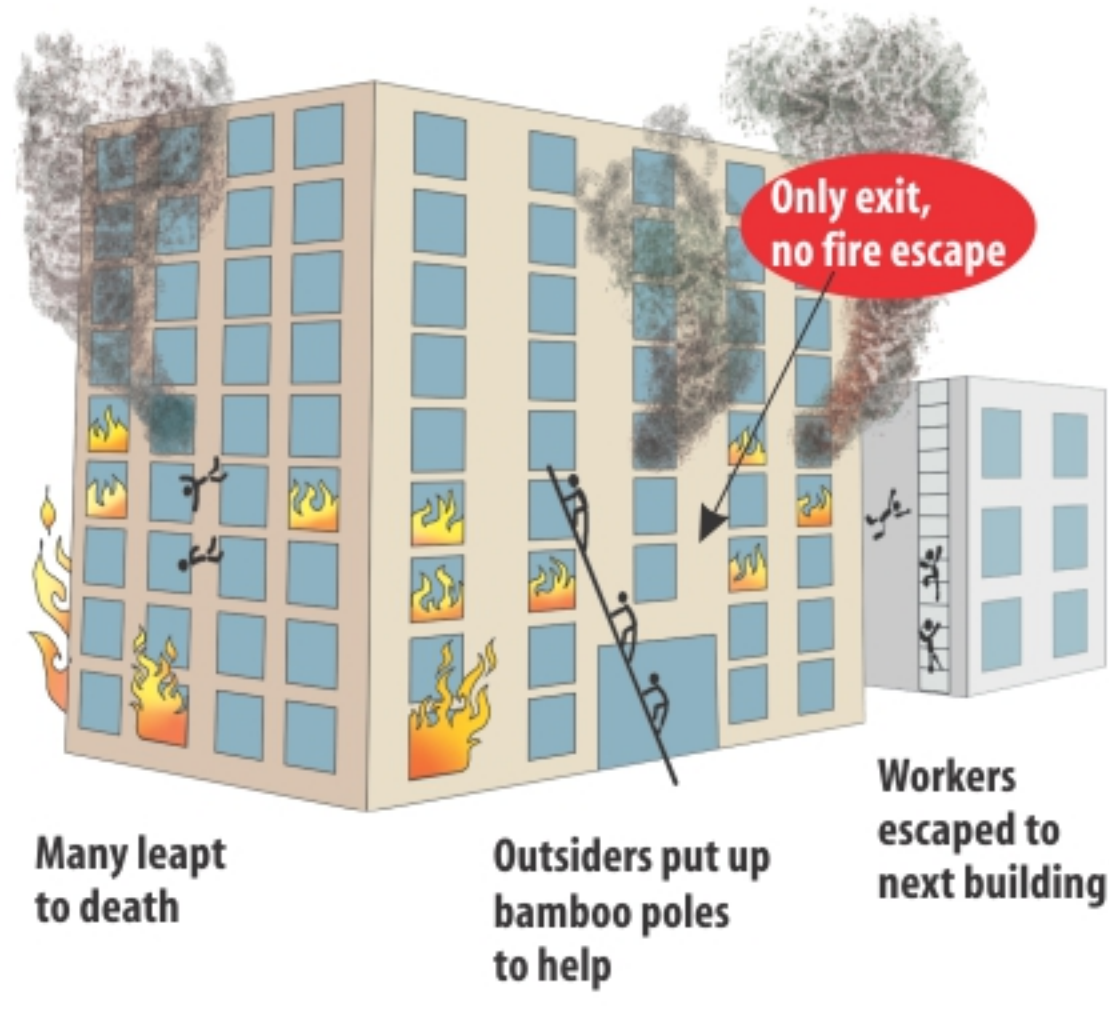
● **25 November 2000**
46 killed at Chowdhury Knitwear & Garments factory in Narsingdi

● **1 August 2001**
26 killed at a factory in the capital's Kafrul

● **8 August 2001**
24 killed in a stampede resulting from a fire alarm at Maico Sweater in Mirpur, Dhaka

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Authorities' negligence leads to so many deaths



No fire-fighting equipment used by factory



Suffocated to death: 31
Burnt to death: 69
Death from fall: 11
Source: Fire Service

● Around **1800 workers** populated floors 2 to 5 of the eight-storey building

Saturday

6:30 pm: Fire noticed on ground-floor

6:45 pm: Fire alarm rings. Production Manager stops workers from fleeing

7:00 pm: Workers defy manager to flee. Smoke prevents safe fleeing

7:15 pm: Workers start fleeing by breaking windows

8:00 pm: Fire service reaches spot

Sunday

7:00 am: Fire comes under control

Death trap

ARUN DEVNATH

It did not look like a work place -- rather a set-up for confinement.

The factory of Tazreen Fashions Ltd, spreading across 131,750 sq ft, had no staircase mounted to the outside of the building -- for emergency exit.

From outside, it appears each of the 16,145 sq ft floors of the eight-storey building has adequate sources of ventilation by way of glass windows.

But it turns out the windows were securely bolted with iron frames from inside -- leaving no

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Home minister's legal notice, our reply

On behalf of Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, Legum Consultants has sent a legal notice to The Daily Star, protesting a report headlined "A strange invitation" published in this newspaper on November 13. Following is the notice along with our reply:

Legum Consultants
Advocates, Barrister and Law Consultants
Legal Notice
[Registered with A/D]
November 20, 2012

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