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BUILDING CONSTRUCTION HC verdict overlooked

M RAHMAN

Despite a High Court order on Rajuk and municipal corporations to ensure construction of structures in line with approved designs and use of quality materials, they confine their role to approving designs only.

Following a writ petition, the HC on November 3, 2011 asked the government to set up a designated agency within a year to enforce the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), a guideline for construction of buildings.

For the interim period, the HC bench designated the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) and municipal corporations to enforce the BNBC and asked them to submit a report to the court every three months.

Three rights bodies -- Safety and Rights Society, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, and Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation -- had filed the writ petition on January 27, 2008 as public interest litigation.

Tamim Hossain, lawyer for the petitioners, told The Daily Star that the government was yet to form any agency, while Rajuk or municipal corporations had not submitted any quarterly report to the HC.

On the pretext that it lacks sufficient manpower, Rajuk has shirked its responsibility for ensuring the use of quality materials, leading to construction of thousands of unsafe structures in many areas.

Union parishads and municipalities have been approving design plans for high-rises without having any

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Relatives of victims paste photos of their loved ones, who have been missing since the Rana Plaza disaster, on a wall of Adhar Chandra High School hoping that someone would identify them as alive or deceased.

PHOTO:
PALASH KHAN

Tragedy exaggerated?

Garment-makers blame media; want punishment to building owners, engineers; silent over factory owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday demanded punishment of the owners and engineers of Rana Plaza, which collapsed on Wednesday morning.

"The ones involved in construction work should be punished," SM Mannan Kochi, vice-president of BGMEA, said at a press briefing following an extra-ordinary general

meeting (EGM) called by the BGMEA and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA).

In the aftermath of the building collapse that have so far killed 346 and injured 2,429, BGMEA and BKMEA asked all factory owners to check their buildings' structural designs and load capacity immediately and submit a report to the BGMEA, according to Kochi.

"We will cancel the licence should any one fail to submit the report," he said.

There was, however, no mention of any punishment for the factory owners, who forced the workers back to the production lines despite cracks surfacing on the building the previous day.

A major part of the meeting, it was learnt, involved discussing the role of

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UN asked to intervene

Rights body not happy with Bangladesh affairs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

An international rights body yesterday called on the United Nations to press Bangladesh for concrete commitments in several matters, including workers' rights, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Human Rights Watch said the UN Human Rights Council should urge Bangladeshi government representatives to ensure a stronger system of workplace inspections and the right of workers to form trade unions.

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Dream comes to abrupt end

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Monica Sultana always dreamt of standing on her own two feet. And she was the only one for her poor old grandmother to depend on.

But the 15-year-old girl is now among the ill-fated garment workers killed in the country's worst ever building collapse in Savar.

Monica lost her father when she was a child, and her mother deserted her to get married again. She was brought up by her widowed granny Anwara.

Despite abject poverty, Anwara tried her best to educate Monica and give her a decent life. The girl had to drop out of school when she was in class IX and went to

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The rescue team takes a man -- who was buried under the rubble of Rana Plaza for 103 hours -- to the hospital yesterday.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

Cheap for retailers, costly for workers

REUTERS

The factory collapse in Bangladesh that killed over 300 people this week is a stark reminder of the risks in the global retail industry's search for cheap production.

But there have been few signs that safety issues and other questionable labour conditions are sending shockwaves through the major Western retailers, their shareholders or the people who buy the clothes in the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Despite a series of accidents that have killed hundreds of people in recent months, dozens of major retailers and apparel makers continue to operate in Bangladesh.

About 18 months before the previous big tragedy in Bangladesh - a fire in November in a textile factory that killed 112 people - shareholders at Wal-Mart Stores Inc had the opportunity to weigh in on the safety question. By a nearly 50-to-1 margin, they rejected a proposal to require suppliers to report annually on safety issues at their factories.

In arguing against the proposal, Wal-Mart's management made its reasoning clear: Having suppliers compile such reports "could ultimately lead to higher costs for Walmart and higher prices for our customers. This would not be in the best

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Half of US people fear attacks

Finds Gallup poll

PTI, Washington

Half of the Americans feel that a terrorist attack in the United States could be

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PRAYER TIMING April 28		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
4:20	4:55	
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:29	6:34
Esha	8:00	8:30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

North Korea to put US citizen on trial

AFP, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday that it would put a US citizen on trial for trying to overthrow the communist regime, in the face of soaring tensions between Pyongyang and the West.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Pae Jun-Ho had admitted to the charges and would soon face "judgment".

The announcement follows a months-long standoff on the Korean peninsula stoked by the North's nuclear test in February, which prompted the UN

Security Council to impose fresh sanctions on the isolated nation.


Pae, who is believed to be a Korean-American tour operator, was arrested in November as he entered the northeastern port city of Rason.

"He admitted that he committed crimes aimed to topple the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) with hostility toward it. His crimes were proved by evidence.

"He will soon be taken to the Supreme Court of the DPRK to face judgment,"

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The Daily Star



Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Don't you think the collapse of Rana Plaza in Savar shows the urgent need to improve protections for workers safety in Bangladesh?

Yes

97%

No

3%

TOTAL VOTES: 348

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think all garments factory owners will take lesson from the Tazreen and Savar tragedy to be more humane towards RMG workers?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT
www.thedailystar.net

YOU MAY ALSO VOTE AT
facebook.com/dailystarnews



Protesters outside a Primark outlet in London yesterday demand it take responsibility for the collapse of Rana Plaza, which housed RMG suppliers of Primark and others.