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RANA PLAZA Shop owners turn paupers

HELEMUL ALAM and BELAL HOSSAIN BIPLAB

The collapse of nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar has not only cost several hundred lives but also led many businesses in the building to bankruptcy.

The condition of 142 small and medium shop owners of the building is so bad that if they do not receive any compensation or easy loans soon, they will have to come down to the street.

Rana Plaza had housed 147 shops, including a Brac Bank branch, on the ground and first floors. These shops used to sell clothes, computer accessories, cosmetics and food items.

Each of the shops, ranging between 122 and 130 square feet, had been sold at Tk 11,500 per sq-ft on the ground floor and Tk 10,500 per sq-ft on the first floor.

"I have incurred a loss of around Tk 20 lakh due to the collapse. Now if I don't restart the business, I won't be able to manage even one meal for a day for the family," said Mahbubur Rahman Apu, owner of Progressive Computer.

Sharif Khan, who used to run a business in a rented shop at Rana Plaza, said he had fallen under a huge debt, as he, like most others, used to pay suppliers after sale.

He said he and 15 other sellers of computer accessories had moved in to the building around two years ago.

Businessman Abul Kalam Azad requested the government to create scopes so that the affected businesses could get low-interest bank loans to restart their businesses.

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People throng Jurain Graveyard in the capital on Wednesday as 32 unidentified victims of the Rana Plaza disaster are laid to rest.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Savar mayor suspended for negligence
UNO made OSD

STAR REPORT

Savar municipality Mayor Md Refatullah has been suspended for irregularities in approving the design of the nine-storey Rana Plaza that collapsed on April 24.

He has also been charged with negligence and failure to take proper action after several cracks had developed in the building, according to a circular issued by the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives yesterday.

The ministry also issued a show-cause notice on the mayor,

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INDUSTRIAL DISASTERS Slow legal process delays justice Culprits go unpunished

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

In 2005, at least 64 workers were killed in a building collapse at Spectrum Garments at Savar. The owners of the factory -- Shahriar Sayeed Hasan and Abul Hashem Fakir -- were sent to jail. But eventually they got out on bail in a month. A writ petition filed against them is still pending for more than seven years. They are now doing business under different names.

The latest one -- collapse of the nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar that had housed five garment factories -- came with a massive shock, taking death toll to 442 so far. The growing number of accidents and casualties in garment factories are heavily affecting the country's image abroad, according to an economist.

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