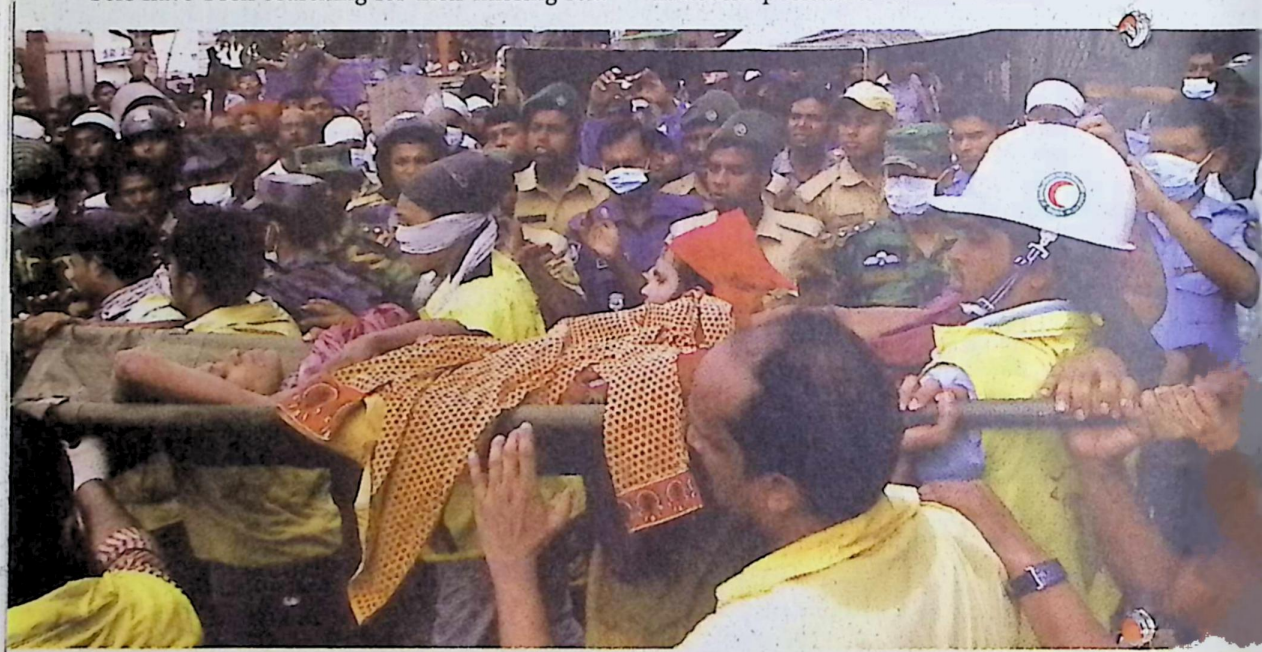
(BNBC) of 1993 should be implemented in the construction of all buildings. The number of well trained local volunteers must be increased. There must be a structure that can conduct search and rescue operations on its own. Although people have helped a lot, they often crowded the place interfering with the rescue mission. Training and research institutes for capacity building of those responsible for rescue operations must be developed. Thirty seven universities are now offering degrees in disaster management."

Lack of proper planning and preparedness has been a problem in the search and rescue operation at Savar. A central database with the details of the victims is yet to be developed. Many family members have been searching for their missing relatives without much success. Lack of coordination has affected the procurement of relief materials. There was at, one point, a surplus of blood which, unless preserved properly, would be of no use. Experts have said a comprehensive database could be easily made using smart apps on smart phones. Having two control rooms-one run by the army and another by the district administration instead of one hampered with the systematic flow of data. Dr Munaj Ahmed Noor, professor of Civil Engineering at BUET and an internationally recognised expert on urban safety and disaster risk management says, "We could have contacted INSARAG (International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) and sought their advice. There must be a self-sufficient unit in the fire service or the army called search and rescue unit. The agencies responsible for the rescue operation took a lot of time in deciding whether to use heavy equipment or not. The use of heavy equipment does not only mean lifting the roof and taking it away or things like that. If we are supplying oxygen to an area where there are sparks, fire will break out. They should have neutralised the area first. It shows sheer lack of experience. People without training are likely to get overwhelmed and confused in such situations. And they are likely to make mistakes. The rescue operation concentrated mainly on cutting through concrete and rescuing. But it takes a long time and after reaching a certain point we may not be able to cut anymore. Debris can be removed by using the method of shoring (the process of supporting a structure in order to prevent collapse).But then again, those on the ground are in a better position to make that call."



Experts say that there should be self-sufficient units in the Army or the Fire Service to deal with such disasters. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Man-made disasters are created over time. Negligence, carelessness, violation of safety codes, lack of supervision, greed and unjust business deals—all contributed to creating conditions for causing the needless tragedy at Savar. It is important to understand what went wrong and how such tragic accidents could be prevented from happening in the future. Such disasters need to be managed in a series of phases: establishing strategies to mitigate hazards; preparing for and responding to emergencies; and recovering from effects. Training programmes, workshops, seminars, simulation and drills should be organised to enhance preparedness. Partnership with foreign governments and international bodies need to be built.

While it is easy to criticize the army or the fire service, the fact is they often have to clean up after the havoc wreaked by corrupt building owners