

Waiting for mother

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

As five-year-old Kamrul opens his eyes in the morning, he begins nagging his father and grandmother to take him to the site of the Rana Plaza collapse, where he hopes to see his mother.

Since the nine-storey building crumbled on April 24, Kamrul has been told that his mother Kamona Begum, who worked as a sewing operator at a garment factory on the fourth floor, is there at the site and will be found soon.

"She used to bring him [Kamrul] something every day on her way back home," Kamrul's grandmother Morsheda Begum, 55, says, gazing at the place surrounded by a barbed-wire fence.

On the day of the incident, Morsheda, a cleaner, was working on the third floor. She was lucky to be rescued within hours of the collapse with minor injuries.

ries to her feet and chest. But the family did not find Kamona, not even her remains.

"Kamrul believes his mother can still be found here and throws a tantrum if I don't take him to this place," says Morsheda.

She and her son Mohammad Imran have looked for her everywhere, and now the hope of even getting the body is gone, she sighs.

Imran is dazed and lost and no longer goes out with his rickshaw, she said, describing how the collapse had plunged the family into uncertainty.

Since Kamona's body was not found, they could not claim any compensation given for dead victims. Morsheda got a month's salary, most of which was spent to pay the current month's dues. Besides, having a child to look after and with her right ankle hurting, she cannot work

any longer.

Though people, who are recuperating at hospitals, are getting some monetary help from organisations and individuals, Morsheda received nothing. She went home empty-handed two days after she had been admitted to Savar Combined Military Hospital.

Morsheda had to be there in the hospital for a few more days but taking care of Kamrul was more important and so she got herself released.

Recently, her chest pain has returned and because of that when she speaks she takes brief pauses in between.

"We got nothing -- neither body nor salary nor compensation," Morsheda says, turning towards home with Kamrul, who is still looking over his shoulder at the place where his mother disappeared along with the building.



Morsheda Begum gazing the site of Rana Plaza disaster cordoned off by barbwire fences. She lost her daughter-in-law there and her five-year-old grandson throws a tantrum if they do not visit the site to look for his mother regularly.

PHOTO: STAR

Laurels for business heroes

FROM PAGE 1
in 2012 from two years ago and credit disbursement reached Tk 2,799 crore from Tk 1,561 crore over the same period.

Accepting the trophy, Selim RF Hussain, managing director of the company, said: "We didn't want to restrict ourselves to norms. We always want to add value to our customers, clients and all other stakeholders."

"Our USP (universal selling point) is being able to say yes or no quickly. We want to be trusted and have people's faith in us."

He has been leading the company for the last few years to bring down its non-performing loans to 2.09 percent while doubling the number of branches to 26.

His firm always worked to meet the need of the customers, which in turn yielded benefit for the company.

The Enterprise of the Year award went to DBL Group, one of the leading composite garment factories.

Its journey began in 1991 with a garment factory to become an enterprise that saw an annual turnover of over \$243 million in 2012, riding on quality products at competitive prices, timely delivery and a committed workforce of 15,700 people.

Mohammed Abdul Jabbar, managing director of the company, led the group from the front adding 19 ventures to the feather of the group in two decades.

Group Vice-chairman MA Rahim Feroz accepted the award.

Schoolteacher-turned entrepreneur Masuda Islam won the accolade as the Outstanding Woman in Business for her hard work and achievement that created 26 jobs.

She now leads Protina BD Foods, which sells frozen snacks, sweets, bakery and vermicelli and supplies the items to the capital's big superstores. Her venture now has an asset of Tk 1 crore.

Delighted to receive the trophy, Masuda said: "I started the business as part of my effort to give unadulterated food to my family. Then I thought why can't I do the same for the whole country?"

She urged the government to take steps to convince the people responsible to be helpful in setting up small and medium enterprises, especially those led by women.

"We are not small in numbers. We are contributing to the economy. We make profit but do not take it out of the country. We spend the money to raise our children so they can become assets of the country."

Finance Minister AMA Muhith handed the crests to the winners as chief guest.

Speaking at the event, the minister said businesses should try to achieve excellence and all of these awardees have shown that they were striving for excellence.

"If we can now respond to the labour standards and working conditions and improve the safety of our factories, we will not only be able to retain our place, but also be able to overcome a giant like China. This is where our focus should now come -- to the role of the business community."

Bangladesh must turn the current crisis into an opportunity, he said.

Desmond Quiah, country manager of DHL Express, said his company was proud to join The Daily Star in recognising the outstanding achievers in the business and corporate world of Bangladesh.

"It is also our privilege to honour the excellence in business. The winners are leading from front and have taken Bangladesh to the world, opening newer global horizon for the country," he said.

The ceremony started with one minute's silence in the memory of those killed in the Rana Plaza collapse in Savar on April 24.

A musical group per-

formed a score to pay tributes to Pandit Ravi Shankar who organised a concert in Madison Square Garden in New York in 1971 for Bangladesh.

The group performed as over 300 businesspeople, diplomats, bureaucrats, politicians, entrepreneurs, celebrities, civil society members and academics gathered at the ceremony.

Another group sang the famous song, "Bangladesh," by legendary musician George Harrison, Shankar's friend.

Seen as a morale boost to the recipients, the awards aim to acknowledge the country's best businesses and the people behind them.

The awards were launched in 2000 as the country's business has had no dedicated awards, government or private, to recognise the continuing and outstanding achievements of businesses.

Double murder

FROM PAGE 16

Ahsan Habib Sozib, brother of victim Razib, said Razib was looking for a job and had been giving private tuition to make ends meet. His mobile phone was missing, the brother said.

A relative of other victim Bashar said Bashar had started living in the flat since May 1 and his mobile phone was missing as well.

In another incident, police recovered the decomposed body of one Md Sabbir from the top floor of an under-construction building near his home in the capital's Kamrangirchar area.

A sub-inspector of Kamrangirchar Police Station said the victim had been missing for five days.

The sub-inspector said police found a pack of playing cards next to the corpse and suspected Sabbir might have been killed over a gambling feud.

Indian economy grows at slowest rate in a decade

AFP, New Delhi

India's economy grew by 5.0 percent in 2012/2013, its slowest annual rate in a decade, data showed yesterday in another blow to the corruption-hit government ahead of national elections due by next year.

Low business confidence, slumping investment, high inflation and weak export demand from Western countries are blamed for the poor performance of the once-booming South Asian economy.

In the fourth quarter to the end of March, gross domestic product grew by 4.8 percent year-on-year, slightly higher than the previous quarter when it expanded by 4.5 percent, according to the data from the statistics ministry.

Despite government efforts to talk up the economy after a burst of pro-market reforms at the end of last year, most independent analysts see continuing slack demand and few quick fixes.

"Growth momentum remains weak and the recovery subdued," Siddhartha Sanyal, chief India economist with Barclays Capital, told AFP.

In 2011/12, the economy grew by 6.2 percent, a sharp slowdown from the previous year when growth hit 9.3 percent.

Global ratings agency Standard and Poor's warned earlier this month that India faces at least "a one-in-three" chance of losing its prized sovereign grade rating amid new threats to economic growth and reforms.

Tougher agitation

FROM PAGE 1
opposition party as its plans to intensify the one-point movement to topple the government failed to gain momentum.

Some policymakers blame it on the party's strategy to depend on Hefajat-e Islam for taking the anti-government movement into the home stretch. The Hefajat men have upset the BNP high-ups as they failed to come up with tougher programmes at the end of long march and Dhaka siege on April 6 and May 5.

At Monday's meeting, the BNP chief told the alliance leaders that the failure of the recent programmes had encouraged the government to go tough on the opposition. "So, we will have to intensify the agitation in

future," a meeting source quoted Khaleda as saying.

The opposition efforts to wage the "final round of agitation", however, will have to face the unofficial ban on rallies and meetings in the capital imposed by the government on May 19 for an indefinite period.

"We want to utilise the days properly before Ramadan begins," Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, a member of the BNP standing committee, told The Daily Star this week.

Queried about the agitation, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, another standing committee member, said, "We are already in a movement and we will intensify it in the coming days to force the government to give in to our demand."

Hamadullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Labour Party, a component of the 18-party alliance, said the meeting discussed elaborately on how to rev up the agitation before Ramadan.

"The top leaders of the 18-party will sit again soon to firm up the programmes," he mentioned.

Talking to The Daily Star, some BNP leaders, however, expressed doubt whether the party has the organisational strength required to step up street agitation.

They said if the BNP failed to force the government to accept its demand, the government would go for the parliamentary polls. In that case, the BNP will have no other option but to boycott the polls.

Thousands marooned

FROM PAGE 16
Our Bagerhat correspondent reports, 1500 to 2000 people were marooned by water due to heavy rain and unusual high tide.

Seedbeds on 300 hectares of land went under water, which would hamper the production of Aus paddy, according to local agriculture division.

Some shrimp enclosures and water bodies were washed away in the district due to heavy downpour.

Around five thousand people of Nijhum Dwip and Hatiya -- two islands under Noakhali district -- were marooned due to torrential rain and high tide, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

A limited number of water vessels including launch, speedboats also started plying the route around 11:00am, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

Thousands of passengers on Dhaka-Chittagong highway suffered a 36-km tailback at Daudkandi in Comilla yesterday due to rainwater that submerged different parts of the road.

Several areas of the highway were waterlogged due to the heavy downpour since

Thursday, disrupting vehicular movements, reports a correspondent from Daudkandi.

Several thousand vehicles were stuck in the tailback on both sides of the highway since 6:00am, said Md Shahinul Islam, a sub-inspector of Daudkandi highway police outpost.

Meantime, ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi river route resumed yesterday morning around 14 hours after remaining suspended due to inclement weather in the Padma.

The ferry services on Paturia-Doulatdia river route also resumed yesterday morning after being suspended for around 10 hours due to the high tide and heavy rain.

Around 11,523 hectares of croplands had been affected by the recent rain and high tide in the district, our Jhalkathi correspondent quoted Sahajalal, assistant agriculture officer of the district agriculture office, as saying.

Venezuela's Maduro angry at Colombia's 'betrayal'

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro accused his Colombian counterpart Juan Manuel Santos of betrayal Thursday after he met with Venezuela's opposition leader.

Maduro said he was putting relations with neighboring Colombia under review after Santos met with Henrique Capriles at the presidential palace on Wednesday.

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