



Sumaiya lost an eye in the Tazreen Fashions fire a year ago and now a tumour has been discovered in her brain. She doesn't know how she would pay for her treatment. Right, Mizanur plays with the picture of his mother, killed in the November 24 blaze at the Ashulia-based factory.

PHOTOS:
PALASH KHAN

Losses immeasurable for victims, not for owner

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eleven months, claiming that he would have exported about \$40-50 lakh worth of merchandise a month had the fire incident not taken place.

These numbers, however, mean nothing to two-year-old Masum Rana and 18-month-old Mizanur Rahman, two cousins who lost their mothers in the fire.

All that is left for Masum of his mother are her photographs, in which he can recognise her.

"His mother Mahfuza Begum used to wave at him from the third floor of the building during her breaks," said his grandmother Zobeda Khatun, showing the workers' rented quarters right behind the factory building, where Masum lived with her mother.

Unlike the owner, she could not quantify her losses, which meant losing her two daughters-in-law.

"The next day we found the body of Mitu, Mizanur's mother, in the school field where all the bodies were kept. My son identified her from her sandals and locket," she said.

Mitu's husband Saddam Hossain said his family had received Tk 1 lakh from the BGMEA, Tk 6 lakh from the Prime Minister's Office and some amounts from a non-governmental organisation.

While Mizanur received at least Tk 7 lakh for losing the most beloved person in his life, Masum did not receive a penny. His family did not even get to know of a grave where he can go to shed a tear when he grows up.

"We did not find her body. We gave samples of Masum and his grandfather's blood at the DNA lab but the samples did not match the DNA of any of the unidentified bodies," said Saddam.

Documentary proof of her employment at Tazreen in Nishchintapur was burnt in the fire, which is why the authorities refused to compensate for her death, he added.

As for Sumaiya, another victim of the fire, no compensation can restore her eyesight or face. While fleeing the fire, she severely hurt her right eye on an object.

A cancerous tumour was detected in her head eight months later. The treatment, primarily funded by individual donors, left her skin and bones and in pain.

There are many more victims who could not measure their losses in terms of money. Among them are Mirazul Islam, who jumped from the fourth floor and broke his left hand, Reba Khatun, who still walks with a limp, and Anisa Begum, who received spinal injuries and received nothing more than her wage arrears.

They do not even hope that those responsible for the fire, which killed 112

of their colleagues, will be punished.

Two cases have been filed in connection with the fire so far.

One was filed by police with the Ashulia Police Station against 15 office staff of Tazreen, but not Delwar, for murder by negligence. Seven of them have been arrested so far, said a Criminal Investigation Department official involved in the case.

The other case, filed against Delwar and 30 others on May 29 by the brother of a missing victim, is yet to see any arrests.

In its probe report submitted to the home ministry in December last year, the five-member committee said it had found "unpardonable neglect" on the part of the owner in the devastating fire. It recommended that Delwar be tried under Section 304 (A) of the Penal Code, which hands down only five years in prison as the maximum punishment.

Delwar and his wife had constructed the building like a brick kiln on a faulty plan and illegally used the walkway on the ground floor as a godown, the report said.

Yet Delwar continues to escape justice. Mitu's husband Saddam said, "There is no justice for the poor. He [Delwar] will not be tried no matter who comes to power."

Additional reporting from Rashad Ahmad, Savar correspondent.

15 dead in latest bout of Iraq bloodshed

AFP, Kirkuk

Twin suicide bombings at a Shiite mosque in north Iraq were the deadliest in attacks nationwide that killed 15 people yesterday, amid a surge in bloodshed authorities have failed to quell.

The violence, which has killed more than 200 people in the past week alone, has forced Iraq to appeal for international help in combating militancy just months ahead of its first general election in four years.

Officials have also voiced concern over a resurgent Al-Qaeda emboldened by the civil war in neighbouring Syria which has provided

the jihadist network's front groups in Iraq with increased room to plan operations.

Attacks on Saturday struck mostly in the north, although Baghdad was also hit.

The deadliest violence was in Tuz Khurmatu, where a suicide car bombing followed by a suicide attack targeting a Shiite mosque killed at least 10 people and wounded 45, according to a police colonel and town mayor Shallah Abdul.

The initial blast was at 5:30 pm (1430 GMT) near the Imam Ali mosque, which is in the middle of a crowded market and near offices of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the party of ailing Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

It's a murder

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Latvia has begun three days of national mourning for Thursday's tragedy, the deadliest disaster since the former Soviet republic gained independence in 1991.

"This case must be treated as the murder of many unprotected people," President Berzins told public LTV broadcaster.

He said an investigation should be held at "maximum speed".

The BBC's Damien McGuinness, reporting from Riga, said it was an extraordinary interview by the president.

Andris called for independent investigators from abroad to carry out the probe, implying powerful business interests within Latvia are too closely entwined with politics to ensure a fair and honest investigation, the BBC correspondent noted.

Rescue teams have been working round the

clock at the Maxima supermarket, digging in the wreckage of the single-storey concrete and glass building to see if anyone is still trapped inside.

They have been periodically turning off all their equipment and asking the families of missing people to phone their relatives so they can pinpoint the ring tones in the debris.

There was a temporary halt to the rescue effort yesterday morning for consultations with engineers amid fears the remainder of the roof could collapse.

Many people have been laying flowers and lighting candles in commemoration of the dead.

Thirteen firefighters were among some 40 wounded, and 29 people were in hospital as of yesterday morning, the fire and rescue service said.

The initial collapse happened just before 18:00 (16:00 GMT) on Thursday, when the Maxima

store was busy with customers.

About 20 minutes later another part of the roof caved in, trapping rescue workers who were trying to reach survivors.

Witnesses said customers tried to run out after the first part of the roof collapsed but the supermarket's electronic doors closed, trapping them inside.

A rooftop garden with children's playground was being built on the top of the building. There is speculation it may have been unable to support the large amount of building materials and soil that was believed to be on the roof at the time.

Local media said the building, rented by the Maxima chain, had been awarded a national architecture prize when it was completed in 2011.

But the inquiry will now investigate whether building regulations were broken.

UN climate talks

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since the talks opened on November 11 over who should do what to curb the march of planet warming.

In particular, they clashed over sharing responsibility for curbing climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions, and about funding for vulnerable countries.

By Friday afternoon, the talks had seemed on the brink of collapse and observers warned of an impending deadlock as sleep-deprived negotiators just could not see eye to eye.

The belligerent negotiations, gathering more than 190 countries, were to have closed at 1700 GMT on Friday.

Twenty-four hours later, exhausted and stubble-bearded delegates applauded as their text, providing an outline for the road to a 2015 deal, was finally passed after an hour-long emergency huddle in the Warsaw National Stadium hosting the UN parley.

Notably, negotiators replaced the word "commitments" for nationally-determined emissions cuts, with "contributions".

Emerging economies like China and India had objected to any reference to "commitments" that would be equally binding to rich and poor states and did not take into account historical greenhouse gas emissions.

The issue is a fundamental one that has bedevilled the UN climate process since its inception 18 years ago.

Developing nations, their growth largely powered by fossil fuel combustion, blame the West's long emissions history for the peril facing the planet, and insist their wealthier counterparts carry a larger responsibility to fix the problem.

"Only developed countries should have commitments," Chinese negotiator Su Wei told fellow negotiators. Emerging economies could merely be expected to "enhance action", he said.

The West, though, insists emerging economies must do their fair share, given that China is now the world's biggest emitter of CO2, with India in fourth place after the United States and Europe.

The 2015 deal will be the first to bind all the world's nations to curbing atmosphere-

polluting greenhouse gas emissions from burning coal, oil and gas.

The aim is to limit average global warming to 2.0 degrees Celsius over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

On current emissions trends, scientists warn the Earth could face warming of 4.0 C or higher -- a recipe for catastrophic storms, droughts, floods and land-gobbling sea-level rise that would hit poor countries disproportionately hard.

The new pact, to be inked in Paris, will enter into effect in 2020.

Another bone of contention in the talks is finance.

Developing countries want wealthy states to show how they intend keeping a pledge to bolster public funding for climate aid to \$100 billion (74 billion euros) by 2020 -- up from \$10 billion a year in the period 2010-12.

They are also demanding more immediate-term help, with China and the Group of 77 developing countries making a last-minute demand for pledges of \$70 billion per year on the table by 2016.

"This is the minimum to have clarity and a clear roadmap to achieving the \$100 billion per year" said Su Wei.

Still grappling with the global economic crisis, the developed world is wary of committing to a detailed long- or short-term funding plan.

Delegates also compromised on the finance text, which "urges" developed nations to mobilise public funds "at increasing levels" from the 2010-12 period.

They finally also concluded a deal on creating a "loss and damage" mechanism that will "address" future climate harm that vulnerable countries say is no longer avoidable.

Rich nations had feared this would amount to signing a blank cheque for never-ending liability.

But parties finally managed to agree to the establishment of a "Warsaw international mechanism", whose structure, mandate and effectiveness must be reviewed in three years' time.

Ashraf, Fakhrul 'talk in secret'

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false and baseless news are doing so to create confusion," added Fakhrul.

The sources said the long-awaited one-to-one meeting was held at BNP lawmaker Ashraf Uddin Nizan's Gulshan residence between 7:00pm and 8:00pm. It lasted nearly 45 minutes.

The BNP acting secretary general had given his counterpart a written statement containing the opposition's demands, sources close to Syed Ashraf told The Daily Star.

After the meeting, Fakhrul went straight to the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office and briefed her about the parley.

The media was not informed in advance about the meeting neither by the two leaders nor their parties.

On November 21, the AL general secretary phoned Fakhrul to fix a meeting with him. In reply, the BNP leader requested him to delay the announcement of the polls schedule by the Election Commission, BNP insiders said.

As Ashraf declined to take any measures to

that end, Fakhrul proposed to sit behind closed doors without informing the media.

Fakhrul yesterday called his counterpart and set the time and venue for their meeting.

Sources close to Fakhrul said the BNP acting secretary general went to meet Ashraf in the car of BNP assistant office secretary Abdul Latif Jony.

The meeting took place two days after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, while exchanging pleasantries on the Armed Forces Day programme at Senakunjo, called upon Fakhrul to sit with Ashraf to find ways to end the deadlock.

On November 19, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia met President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban and requested him to take measures to convince the ruling party to sit in a dialogue with the opposition to resolve the crisis over polls-time government.

The political situation has lately worsened with the AL and BNP sticking to their stances. While the ruling party and its allies want the election to be held under an all-party adminis-

acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan said, "Awami League activists attacked the homes of religious minorities and passed the blame on us. No one could prove such a charge against us."

Jamaat is the parent organisation of Islami

Chhatra Shibir.

However, witnesses, police and newsmen have found Jamaat-Shibir men guilty of launching attacks on religious minorities. National dailies have recently reported many such incidents.

Shibir men on rampage

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Cops fired teargas shells and rubber bullets to disperse the troublemakers. A police was injured in the clash.

Meanwhile, in a statement yesterday, Jamaat

Compensation

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calculation all the years of wages a worker would have been able to earn had she or he been alive. And as for the injured, it should be an aggregate of the earnings lost due to inability to work," said secretary of the forum Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed.

On November 24, 2012, a devastating fire in Tazreen Fashions Ltd at Nishchintapur of Ashulia, Savar killed 112 workers and injured scores others.

Yesterday morning, labour rights activists under the banner Sramik Nirapatta Forum (Workers' Safety Forum) congregated at Jurain cemetery to remind how the garment industry's nonchalance killed so many workers.

They demanded that the international retailers, who were outsourcing garment products from Tazreen, and the factory owner compensate the victim families immediately, as it has already been delayed by a year.

The activists also decried Sear's and

Walmart's refusal to compensate, and vowed to bring the owner of Tazreen Fashions to book.

The Bangladesh Council of IndustriALL, a global union fighting for workers' safety, pressed similar demands in a human chain in front of the Press Club in the capital yesterday.

"Walmart must agree to compensate the victims," demanded the activists.

Walmart also did not show up at the IndustriALL meeting held in Geneva in September.