

No help for the helpless yet

Pallabi slum dwellers yet to get any aid; 4,844 families passing days in uncertainty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Monowara Begum, 35, was doing well for herself. A resident of Elias Mollah Slum in the capital's Pallabi area, she had seven rooms to her name, using three to house her family and renting out the remainder.

On March 12, when a fire broke, the flames consumed not just her house but perhaps also her hopes and dreams.

"I need a minimum of Tk two lakhs to rebuild the seven rooms, but I don't even have the money to build one," she said.

Today, Monowara lives with her family in a makeshift house. Her roof is an old tarpaulin which she got from a local mosque.

Monowara's tale is one of the many that can be found in the charred remains of 4,844 shanties, each housing a family, that were gutted in the fire.

The victims, mostly people from low income groups, including garment workers, rickshaw-pullers, small shopkeepers and housemaids, are yet to receive any financial help or support to rebuild their homes.

Most of the residents of Elias Mollah Slum, who lost their homes and valuables in the devastating fire on March 12 in Pallabi area, are still living

under the open sky.

"The district administration has provided 30kgs rice per family," Haji Razzab Hossain, the councillor of ward No 6 (Pallabi) told The Daily Star.

Locals said only one non-government organisation (NGO), Shakti, has given them some emergency utensils while some other NGOs collected the list of victims, but are yet to provide any support.

This correspondent repeatedly visited the spot for a week and talked with the victims of over 50 families.

Most of them said that they are not getting any financial support.

Monowara went to some people for loan, but didn't get anything. She is now struggling to bear the expenses of her three sons and a daughter. Her husband is a day-labourer who is also struggling to support the family.

Some of the worst sufferers are also students who lost their books in the fire.

Local lawmaker Elias Uddin Mollah, MP of Dhaka-16 constituency, told The Daily Star that they have enlisted the names of victims from the 4,844 families who lost their homes on March 12 fire.

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Some victims of the March 12 fire at a Pallabi slum in the capital now living in a makeshift shelter there. Inset, several other victims rebuilding shanties that were destroyed in the fire. The photos were taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Of a taxi driver and Iraq invasion

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University student.

Later on February 7, 2003, Downing Street apologized for the failure to acknowledge that much of the dossier was plagiarized from the university student's paper. It was later found out the plagiarism was done by mid-level officials in Blair's communication chief Alastair Campbell's Downing Street office.

However, Blair convinced the House of Commons with this dossier that invasion of Iraq was a must. The media was misled to sensationalise Blair's "revelation" with headlines like "Missiles fly in 45 minutes" by The Times of London, and "Brits 45 mins from doom" by The Sun.

This is the document that finally helped Blair and Bush to invade Iraq. And this is the document that later became the centre of the heated accusations against Blair that he had "sexed up" the

WMD report.

The subsequent whole range of events include resignation of BBC's top bosses who first challenged the authenticity of

produces that serves to meet their own goal.

HOW THE 45-MINUTE REPORT ORIGINATED

Downing Street ordered the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to prepare a paper in February of 2002 on "WMD countries of concern" mainly North Korea, Iran, Libya and Iraq ahead of a planned meeting between Blair and Bush that April, the Chilcot report reveals.

The dossier was "designed to make the case and secure Parliamentary and public support for the government's position" that urgent action was needed, Sir Chilcot in his report said.

Jack Straw first had a look at the first draft on March 8 and was disappointed as it didn't put enough emphasis on Iraq.

He said: "Good, but should not Iraq be FIRST and also have more text?"

"The paper has to show why there is an EXCEPTIONAL threat from Iraq. It does not quite do this yet".

So, On March 18 he decided a special paper just on Iraq should be prepared. But on March 22, publication of this paper was postponed after "Mr. Straw was

commanders talking about Saddam's weapons.

"In the end it turned out that the information was not credible, it had originated from an émigré taxi driver on the Iraqi-Jordanian border, who had remembered an overheard a conversation in the back of his cab a full two years earlier," The defence committee report said.

But six years before Holloway's disclosure, an investigation by Lord Brian Hutton found that the WMD claim came from Lt Col al-Dabbagh, the son-in-law of a retired Iraqi brigadier general.

The Telegraph later was able to trace Dabbagh, a man full of braggadocio, and his version of how he came to know the existence of the WMD sounded completely hollow.

"Saddam's people are doing this all the time," he told The Telegraph reporter in December 2003. "That is why it is so difficult to find the weapons of mass destruction. I am sure the weapons are hidden in Iraq just like I see you know."

Dabbagh was dismissed from service after the war. Asked why he was dis-

which could reach British military bases in Cyprus, as well as Israel and Nato members Greece and Turkey. He has also been seeking to buy uranium from Africa for use in nuclear weapons.

In the foreword to the dossier, Tony Blair justified the Iraq invasion by saying, "The document discloses that his military planning allows for some of the WMDs to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them."

So Blair and Bush pushed forward based on this report to invade Iraq. With his fiery oratory power, Blair convinced his people that Iraq posed a clear and present danger and future threat and that Saddam must be eliminated.

But six years down the line, Adam Holloway's defence committee report revealed how Downing Street had sexed up the dodgy dossier with the insertion of the misleading claim that Saddam had been poised to launch WMD.

The Lord Hutton inquiry in 2004 maintained important cautions about the lacking of the intelligence information had been removed from the dossier.

The defence committee report also corroborated the Hutton inquiry findings and claimed MI6 had reservations about some of the information in the dossier but its views were brushed aside by Downing Street.

"Under pressure from Downing Street to find anything to back up the WMD case, British intelligence was squeezing their agents in Iraq for information. One agent did come up with something: the '45 minutes' or something about missiles allegedly discussed in a high level Iraqi political meeting.

"But the provenance of this information was never questioned in detail until after the Iraq invasion, when it became apparent that something was wrong. In the end it turned out that the information was not credible, it had originated from an émigré taxi driver on the Iraqi-Jordanian border, who had remembered an overheard conversation in the back of his cab a full two years earlier," the defence committee said.

"Indeed, in the intelligence analyst's footnote to the report, it was flagged up that part of the report probably describing some missiles that the Iraqi government allegedly possessed was demonstrably untrue. They verifiably did not exist.

"The footnote said it in black and white ink. Despite this glaring factual inaccuracy, which under normal circumstances would have caused the reliability of the intelligence to be seriously questioned, the report was treated as reliable and went on to become one of the central planks of the dodgy dossier," the defence committee report concluded.

After the invasion another inquiry headed by Lord Butler in 2004 also said the 45-minute claim should never have been included because it fell on the "outer limits of the intelligence available."

He also found the intelligence available was "insufficiently robust" to prove Iraq was in breach of the United Nations' resolutions.

He also said the sources were highly doubtful and some of the human intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were "seriously flawed" and "open to doubt".

In his view, the Joint Intelligence Committee should not have included the "45 minute" claim in the dossier without stating what exactly it referred to.

US, EU expel

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Russia's Foreign Ministry called the actions a "provocative gesture" and promised to respond.

Moscow has denied being behind the attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the southern English city of Salisbury on March 4.

The staff expelled by the United States included 12 intelligence officers from Russia's mission to United Nations headquarters in New York. Trump also ordered the closure of the Russian consulate in Seattle.

"To the Russian government we say: when you attack our friends, you will face serious consequences," a senior US administration official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

EU leaders last week said evidence of Russian involvement in the attack presented by British Prime Minister Theresa May was a solid basis for further action.

Germany and France made good on those threats by announcing expulsions and in a coordinated move, other states across the EU followed suit, along with Canada and Ukraine.

Skripal's poisoning, alleged to have employed the Soviet-era military-grade nerve agent Novichok, is the first known offensive use of a nerve toxin in Europe since World War Two.

"In solidarity with our British partners, we have today notified the Russian authorities of our decision to expel four Russian personnel with diplomatic status from French territory within one week," said French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

RESPONSE WILL BE SYMMETRICAL
European Council President Donald Tusk said 14 EU countries in all were expelling Russian diplomats and warned that further measures could be taken in

the coming weeks and months.

Russia said it would respond in kind. "The response will be symmetrical. We will work on it in the coming days and will respond to every country in turn," the RIA news agency cited an unnamed Foreign Ministry source as saying.

The Kremlin has accused Britain of whipping up an anti-Russia campaign and sought to cast doubt on the British analysis that Moscow was responsible. The two countries have already expelled 23 diplomats each in tit-for-tat moves.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested that the EU's expression of support for Britain was misguided given that it would be leaving the bloc next year.

"Britain is leaving the European family. No one cancelled Brexit, and the divorce process is in full swing," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova wrote on Facebook.

"Therefore a country which is leaving the European Union is exploiting the solidarity factor and is foisting on those countries that remain a worsening of relations with Russia."

Skripal, 66, and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a public bench in a shopping centre, and remain in hospital in critical condition.

A British court has said they may have suffered brain damage, while a policeman who went to help them has also indicated that he has suffered lasting damage to his health.

British Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson hailed the support Britain had received during a visit yesterday to Estonia, where Britain has troops as part of a Nato mission to deter any Russian aggression following its seizure of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014.

Injured Shahin dies

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know that he survived and was injured.

Seriously burnt Shahin was flown back to Dhaka on March 18 and admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Reema was at her husband's bedside almost all the time waiting for the day the doctors would release him and she would take him home.

That was not to be. Shahin's condition drastically deteriorated yesterday and he was moved to the intensive care unit. Things worsened and he was put on life support around noon.

The store manager of Sadarghat breathed his last at 4:45pm.

About 32 percent of his body, including his respiratory track, back, and hands and legs, had been burnt when flight BS211 caught fire on impact at Tribhuvan International Airport.

Resident surgeon Partha Shanker Paul of the burn unit said survival chances of patients who have had their respiratory tracks burnt were not very high.

With this, the death toll of the crash is now 50, with 27 Bangladeshis.

The body of the passionate traveler will be taken to his Shidhirganj home in Narayanganj for burial.



Shahin Bepari

A total of seven survivors were brought to Dhaka and all were admitted to DMCH.

Of them, Kabir Hossain, who was on life support, was flown to Singapore early yesterday. Two more Bangladeshi survivors are in Singapore

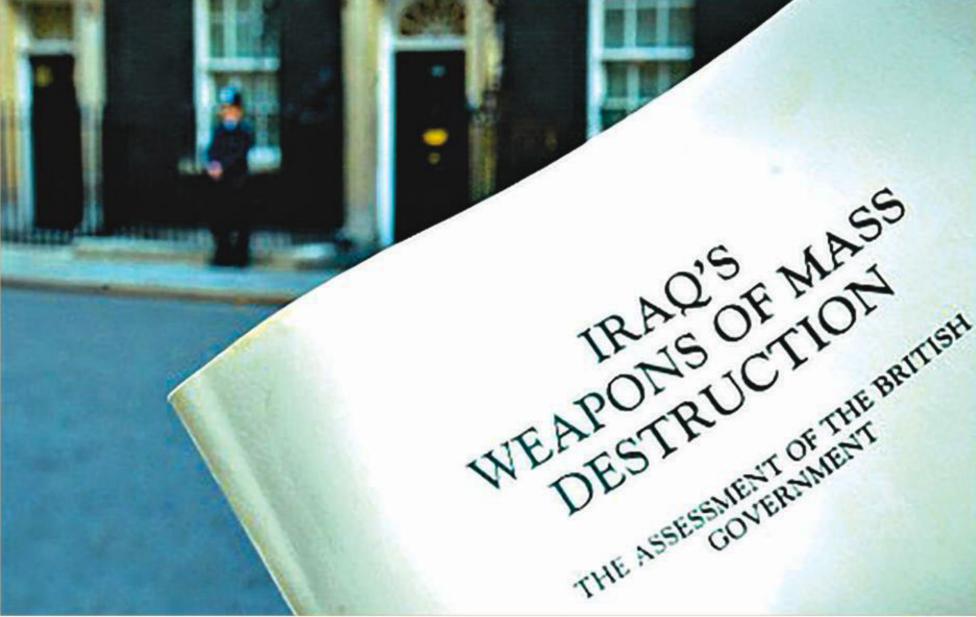
for treatment. The five others being treated under a 14-member medical board in DMCH are stable.

23 killed as truck ploughs into party in Mozambique

AFP, Maputo

Mozambique police said yesterday that a pick-up truck ploughed into a crowd of party-goers at the weekend killing 23 people, many of whom were teenagers. The speeding vehicle ignored orders from traffic police, hit an obstacle and veered into the local carnival in the working-class Luis Cabral neighbourhood of Maputo in the early hours of Sunday morning.

"The driver was speeding when he did not obey the signal from a traffic police officer," Maputo police spokesman Orlando Mudumane told reporters in the capital.



the report to the suicide of Dr David Kelly, a British biological warfare expert who first doubted the authenticity of the dossier.

The dossier referred to by The Guardian as a "journalistic cut-and-paste job rather than a high-grade intelligence analysis" became the centre of attention by the media worldwide as US secretary of state Colin Powell used it as a centre point of his address in the UN Security Council in February 5, 2003 to gather support for Iraq invasion.

The analysis of the dossier and its origin is important because it shows how the British intelligence dropped all caution in picking its intelligence and how callously it failed to check on any information and source.

But the most shameful fact is that the dossier was "sexed up" to give it an authentic and authoritative feel at 10 Downing Street, the office of the British prime minister, by Tony Blair himself along with Jack Straw and his chief spin doctor Alastair Campbell.

Today in hindsight, one may suspect any intelligence report that the US or UK

advised that the evidence would not convince public opinion that there was an imminent threat from Iraq," the Chilcot report said.

Downing Street then decided to coordinate a "public dossier" on Iraq, which turned into the "45 minutes to doom" September 2002 dossier.

HOW 45-MIN REPORT INFORMATION WAS GATHERED

There are two stories about who the source of the report was that ultimately became the cornerstone for Iraq invasion.

The most damning claim is that it came from an Iraqi taxi driver. The other story is it came from a mid-ranking Iraqi military officer.

Whatever the source, it was much after the war that it was deemed unreliable and the information complete lie as no WMD was found.

Adam Holloway, a defence specialist and a member of the Commons Defence Committee, said in a committee report on December 8, 2009 that the British intelligence MI6 had obtained information indirectly from a taxi driver who had overheard two Iraqi military

missed, he gave the comical reply: "I don't know why they did this to me. My name was passed to the US six months before the war as someone who was helping them."

How unreliable Dabbagh was as a source was revealed by The Washington Post which contacted him in February 2004. Dabbagh showed the Post reporter a tracing-paper map on which he had drawn what he claimed were air defence installations and deployments of unconventional weapons in the western Iraqi desert.

"The 45 minutes, it's from me," he bragged.

However, Dabbagh as the source of the claim was proven false when the Commons Defence Committee report by Holloway came to light.

WHAT THE 45-MIN REPORT SAID

So, based on such unverifiable and unreliable sources and hearsays, the infamous dossier, made public on September 24, said Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons are on standby for use within 45 minutes.

It said, the Iraqi leader has 20 missiles