

Somebody

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Fire Prevention and Extinguishing Rules 2003 and Bangladesh National Building Code, installing separate hydrant points in different areas and raising awareness from an early age through textbooks.

Yesterday, the HC said the administration had the responsibility to implement the recommendations.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader said the country's image had been damaged by the incident.

Owners of many buildings in Old Dhaka live in the posh neighbourhoods of Gulshan and Banani and lease their own buildings to be used as chemical godowns for handsome amounts, the court said, adding that the city corporation authorities turn a blind eye to the issue.

Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar told the court that the government was sincere in solving the problems.

It is not possible for the prime minister to run the country alone although she has many achievements.

The PM had adopted two daughters after the Nimtoli tragedy, it mentioned.

The HC bench fixed today for resuming the hearing on the petitions.

Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, Amit Das Gupta and Eunus Ali Akond represented the petitioners.

Four separate writ petitions were filed with the HC on Sunday in connection with the Chawkbazar fire, with different prayers including compensation for the affected families and punishment for those responsible.

Eunus Ali Akond filed one of the writ petitions seeking HC directives on the government to compensate each of the families with Tk 30 lakh.

He also sought an HC order on the government to form a judicial inquiry commission to find out the cause behind the fire, identify those responsible for the blaze and take punitive actions against them.

Meanwhile, three other SC lawyers and an Old Dhaka resident have filed three separate writ petitions with the HC in connection with the same incident.

Among them, ZI Khan Panna, Nur Mohammad Azmi, Khandker Md Sayedul Kawser submitted two writ petitions praying to the HC to direct the government to relocate the chemical warehouses from Old Dhaka as per recommendations of the committee formed by the government in 2010.

Old Dhaka resident Zabed Miah submitted a writ petition requesting a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why they should not be directed to move the chemical warehouses and gas cylinders kept for commercial uses from the area.

Caring more

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widespread payment of poverty wages is denying the workers making our clothes the opportunity for decent lives," the report said.

Even if overtime income is considered, over 98 percent workers in Bangladesh and 52 percent in Vietnam earn below a living wage compared against Global Living Wage Coalition benchmarks, it added.

Oxfam, an international confederation of 20 NGOs, has labelled the findings an indictment on the fashion industry.

According to the report, 76 percent workers interviewed in Bangladesh have no running water inside their home, and more than 40 percent in Vietnam reported worrying about having to use well or rain water.

In Bangladesh, one in three workers are separated from their children, with nearly 80 percent of those cases due to a lack of adequate income.

"More than 82 percent of the workers and 100 percent of the supervisors interviewed in Bangladesh told us that management can terminate any worker at any time. In Vietnam, more than one in four workers are in constant fear of losing their job," the report stated.

Aggressive price negotiation by brands has an impact on manufacturers' ability to pay wages to their workers. Intense competition for business pushes the owners and managers of garment factories in developing countries to engage in a "race to the bottom" on prices, said the report.

It recommended that the fashion brands should get the basics right on human rights, make a credible commitment to living wages, and develop and publish a living wage roadmap.

Bangladesh exports garment products to Australia worth over \$500 million a year, according to statistics of Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh.



Locals form a human chain in front of Hajj Wahed Mansion in the capital's Churihatta yesterday, demanding removal of chemical warehouses from the area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

All hail the local heroes

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"I helped fire service men till 4:00am. I even fractured my hand when a brick fell from a two-storey building. I had to take treatment at hospital," he said.

Imon lost his cousin in the fire.

Elsewhere, Bakul Gazi, 60, caretaker of an adjacent apartment, defied his age and engaged in voluntary work during the disastrous incident.

"First, I was afraid because the fire was massive," Bakul said.

Later, he gathered the courage to try

to douse the spreading flames by getting on a two-storey building and spraying water from there using a hose pipe.

The scene was repeated as many people carried long pipes from water source to the fire, climbing up poles to fight the spreading fire.

Also among the first responders was Abdul Gani, owner of a stationery shop located near the mosque.

Gani said he and 10 to 12 other people poured water at a warehouse that stored flammable objects.

The building was just beside Hajj Wahed Mansion and it would have been engulfed in the flames as well if water was not poured there, he said.

Russell, 21, a butcher, said they had three drums of water for their meat shop which people used to douse the flame.

Rana, 18, a worker at a plastic shop, said over 100 locals rushed to the spot and tried to control the fire at the initial stage.

The first fire officials to reach the spot were from Lalbagh and Palashi

fire stations.

Palashi Senior Station Officer Saiful Islam said, "When we arrived there, we initially had trouble finding water sources.

"As the locals had gathered, we also faced some difficulty negotiating the crowded streets."

When this correspondent visited the spot soon after the fire, he saw locals clearing the streets for the fire service vehicles.

This helped fire-trucks reach the spot sooner.

A man with dubious past

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But in his Facebook account, the youth introduced himself as Mahibi Jahan, working in British Airways as an IT Business Analyst, according to his father.

The profile shows that he was living in Glasgow and visited some countries including Greece, Cyprus, India and the UAE. It mentioned that he graduated from public administration department of Dhaka University.

His family members said these are all lies.

The youth told the family that he had married film actress Shimla and posted many photos with her on social media.

Shimla, now staying in Mumbai for the shooting of a film, told The Daily Star last night that she divorced Polash after knowing his "real background" and that he was "mentally imbalanced".

They got married on March 3, 2018, she said, adding, "I divorced him on November 6 in the same year."

Asked if she found him involved in any criminal activities, she said, "Never ever."

Polash also produced and acted in a film titled "Kobor".

In the credit line, he was called Mahibi Jahan. "Everyone knew him as Mahi. He did a small role in the movie," said an actress of the film.

General Officer Commanding Maj Gen SM Matiur Rahman of 24th

Infantry Division, in a briefing after the commando operation, said the suspected hijacker identified himself as Mahadi during the mediation.

'ALL SPENT ON HIM'

Last night police took Piyaar to Chattogram to identify his son's body, police said around 10:00am.

Earlier, Piyaar said he became confirmed that the slain youth was Polash after law enforcers came to him with the photograph of his son.

Polash passed Dakhil exams in 2011 from Tahirpur Dakhil Madrasa and then he got admitted to Sonargaon Degree College but could not complete his education. Then he left for Dhaka.

Piyaar Jahan lived abroad -- first in Kuwait and then in Saudi Arabia -- since the 1990s. After seven years, he came back to Bangladesh and opened a grocery store in the area.

Piyaar said he was not aware where his son resided in Dhaka and what was his job. From the locals, he learnt that Polash was involved in acting and singing.

Polash used to visit his home in Narayanganj rarely, only when he needed money.

"Whatever money I have earned abroad, all was spent on him. He took Tk 50 thousand to Tk 2 lakh each time he visited. If we refused, he used to vandalise furniture and even beat up his sisters..."

"He was our only son. So his mother gave him the money," the father said, adding they learnt that Polash became involved in the media.

"This time he came home around 20 days back and stayed for longer than usual; usually he never stayed that long. He then started going to mosque and even called Azan," the father said.

He told his parents that he would visit Dubai and left home on Friday. Before that he had come home twice -- a month and a week before the last Eid-ul-Azha when film actress Shimla accompanied him.

During his visit the week before the Eid, Polash told his family that he had married Shimla and the family members reacted to this angrily. "So Polash and Shimla went back to Dhaka the same day," Piyaar added.

"He had duped Shimla into marrying him by giving a fake identity. He told Shimla that his parents lived in London and he was on a visit to Bangladesh and he will go to the UK again after two to three months. Thus he lied to Shimla."

Earlier in 2012, Polash had an affair with a girl and left home together. Later the girl's father sued him in a kidnapping case. He had been in jail for 15 to 20 days, he added.

Four years later, Polash entered into a relationship with a girl through Facebook and married her. Later, they got divorced, he added.

Polash has three sisters and their mother Renu Akhtar is a homemaker by profession.

Renu had suffered a stroke and returned home from hospital on Sunday. She was shell-shocked at such news about her son.

NO ONE CLAIMED BODY

No one has claimed the body of Polash till yesterday.

Piyaar yesterday expressed his unwillingness to receive the body. "I have no intention to receive my son's body," the father told The Daily Star.

Md Omar Faroque, caretaker of the Chittagong Medical College Hospital morgue, said after postmortem, it was kept in the mortuary. None came to claim the body, he said.

The body bore a single bullet hole suggesting that he was shot from the front, police said.

There is a bullet mark on the right side of the abdomen, said Zahidul Islam, assistant commissioner (Patenga zone) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, citing the inquest report.

There is no hole in the back, suggesting that the alleged hijacker was shot only once from the front, he said, adding that the body was handed over to them. "No evidence or anything else has been handed over to us."

[Shariful Islam, Muntakim Saad and our Narayanganj correspondent Sanad Saha prepared this report]

Another fire

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semi-government, non-government and autonomous organisations and Bangladesh missions abroad kept the national flag at half-mast, as per the announcement of the Cabinet Division on Sunday.

Locals and businessmen in Chawkbazar were seen wearing black badges and hoisting black flags in front of their shops to mourn the deaths.

"We are still frightened; still feeling the disastrous night", said Jahangir Alam, a garment factory worker who lives in the area.

Meanwhile, owners of the shops in the ground floor of Hajj Wahed Mansion were seen collecting remains from their destroyed shops.

"My brother Syed Khabir Uddin Nahid owned this shop. He died immediately after the fire broke out. The amount of our damages is worth around Tk7 lakh," said Md Mizanur Rahman, brother of the deceased owner of Aiman Plastic Center.

Mahabub, son of Shamsul Haque who died in the fire, was seen searching their shop Madina Decorator, but found nothing to recover.

No victim of the fire has received compensation till now, said Abdul Qader, owner of a damaged shop Mukta Plastic. His nephew, Siddique died in the fire, he claimed.

Officials of fire service and law enforcing agencies were also seen enlisting the remains in the damaged shops taken by the owners or their representatives, in presence of Abdus Shahid, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defense.

Relatives of the missing people in the fire also came carrying the photos of their missing dear ones.

Electricians from Dhaka South City Corporation were seen busy in re-installing the street lights in the area.

Curious people, including school students, and representatives from different non-government organisations were also seen visiting the spot.

Schindler

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final stages of the Holocaust once lived and tell the history of the region and its people.

Descendent of the original owners of the enamel and tinware factory, Daniel Low-Beer, 49, said the restoration would allow others to understand the building's famous past.

Alongside his work for the World Health Organisation, Low-Beer also runs the Ark Foundation.

He told The Sunday Telegraph: "It is very moving to be here and be a part of the foundation that can tell this history."

"It's an opportunity to make a little piece of history here both in keeping an important memory alive and also working with the local population to improve their lives."

The now derelict factory was the location that more than 100 Jewish workers were transported to after Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party, learned that his enamelware factory in Poland was to be closed down in 1939.

Schindler, who had a change of heart after realising the extent of the Nazi brutality, managed to convince officials to allow him to acquire a factory in the village of Brnĕnec and it was here that he moved his Jewish workforce.

As the Nazi's took over the Czech region, Low-Beer's family, who were Jewish, had to abandon the region and their factory.

The factory was then taken over by the Nazi's before it was acquired by Schindler himself.

Low Beers added: "The factory was stolen by the Nazi's and then stolen by Schindler, but he used it for good and saved 1,200 Jews."

For years the historic factory has remained abandoned but new plans will now see the building pay homage to the man who saved the lives of more than 1,000 Jews through his famous list.

The new development will also retain some of the original features that existed while the Jews took shelter there during the Second World War.

Relocation to be done in 6 months

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Bangladesh Bank and fire service. The meeting was called by the industries ministry.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday said a taskforce would launch a month-long drive on Thursday to remove warehouses of "dangerous chemicals" from Old Dhaka, including Chawkbazar.

During the nearly three-hour meeting, the industries minister said, "We will not care about the traditional rules of government for the relocation. This is a state emergency."

Pointing to non-cooperation and failure of different government agencies and divisions in taking proper actions for the relocation, he said, "Every time people will die, we will hold meetings and deliver speeches. I don't want this anymore."

Addressing the meeting participants, he then said, "Don't confine yourself to government papers only" and asked the authorities concerned to ensure a faster relocation of the warehouses.

Many of the participants suggested removal of the warehouses and facto-

ries within next three months. "But it's not possible to do so overnight. So, we have decided to complete the relocation within the next six months," Humayun said.

After the Nimtoli incident, the government took up four projects to relocate four types of industries -- chemical, plastic, printing and light electronics -- from that part of the capital.

Around nine years down the line, the implementation of those projects still remains at the preliminary stage, mainly due to problems associated with land acquisition and bureaucratic tangles.

Currently, there are some 4,000 chemical factories and warehouses in the old town, making the area vulnerable to fire, said officials concerned.

In response to a query, Md Abdul Halim, secretary to the industries ministry, told reporters that the government would take a crash programme to implement the relocation project.

Businessmen would also be engaged in the relocation, he said, claiming that many of them have

already expressed their desire to shift their businesses on their own to the special economic zones, being developed by the government.

In the meeting, leather businessmen and dyeing industries owners urged the government to relocate their business to the leather industrial site in Savar and the dyeing industries areas respectively.

The prime minister has already directed the ministry to look for 200 acres of land to relocate the chemical warehouses, he added.

Replying to a question, Halim said apart from the industries ministry, the Dhaka South City Corporation was also working to shift the warehouses. "So I am very hopeful that the relocation is possible in six months."

THE TASKFORCE

Yesterday, the DSCC held an emergency meeting at the Nagar Bhaban with the high-ups of different organisations, including businessmen. At the meeting, Mayor Sayeed Khokon declared about the taskforce formation.

"The taskforce will be of two tiers. One will comprise high-ups of differ-

ent government organisations who will give time-to-time directives to the lower tier which will execute eviction drives," said Khokon.

The DSCC have identified 15 risky wards where the dangerous chemical warehouses and factories are located. These are wards 24, 27 to 37 and 55 to 57, said its sources.

"Utility services like power, water and gas connections of the risky buildings will be cut and remain shut until the taskforce gives No Objection Certificate [NOC]," said Khokon, adding the drive from Thursday would continue till April 1.

He also asked different government intelligence departments and organisations to monitor whether anyone was storing risky chemicals at any buildings.

The DSCC mayor also called upon the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and the Department of Explosives to strongly monitor fitness of gas cylinders that are used in vehicles as well as for commercial and residential purposes.

Inspector General of Police Javed Patwary said police were very much

serious about the matter. "We will give maximum support to the taskforce.... None will be spared this time."

Expressing gratitude to the Fire Service and Civil Defence for their bravery during the fire incident, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said, "We'll have to remove flammable chemicals from the area [old Dhaka] at any cost."

Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Merchant Association General Secretary Arif Hossain said they agreed to the government's short-term, mid-term and long-term approach on relocation of risky chemicals from Old Dhaka.

He, however, urged the authorities not to harass businessmen in the name of relocation.

Acid thrown

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body was burnt.

Tanjina told this correspondent that she still had three exams left.

Prodip Kumar Roy, officer-in-charge of Ruhia Police Station, said Tanjina's family had not filed any complaint yet.