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ILLEGAL GAS, POWER CONNECTIONS

Syndicates make huge money from 3 slums

1.55 lakh people live in danger

SHAAHEEN MOLLAH and RASHIDUL HASAN

Illegal gas and power lines pose serious dangers to around 1.55 lakh people living in three slums of the capital -- Korail Bosti in Mohakhali, Bhasantek Bosti and Chalantika Bosti in Mirpur.

At least 24 syndicates operate in the slums and supply gas and electricity to slum dwellers with the help of some unscrupulous staffers of the city's utility service providers.

They earn an estimated Tk 2.88 crore per month in exchange of this "service", and a big chunk of the money is allegedly spent to "manage" police as well as those employees in Titas and Desco.

Installed by the syndicates, numerous supply lines are spread across the slums like spider webs and a small fire can cause a massive disaster.

"Several deadly fires took place in the slums, thanks to defective supply lines of gas and power," said Shakil Newaz Bhuiyan, immediate-past director (operations) of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

He recalled two incidents at Korail -- one in December 2016 when some 526 houses were burnt to ashes and another in January 2017 that gutted around 4,996 houses.

In both cases, firefighters failed to douse the blaze because of gas explosions, fire service sources said.

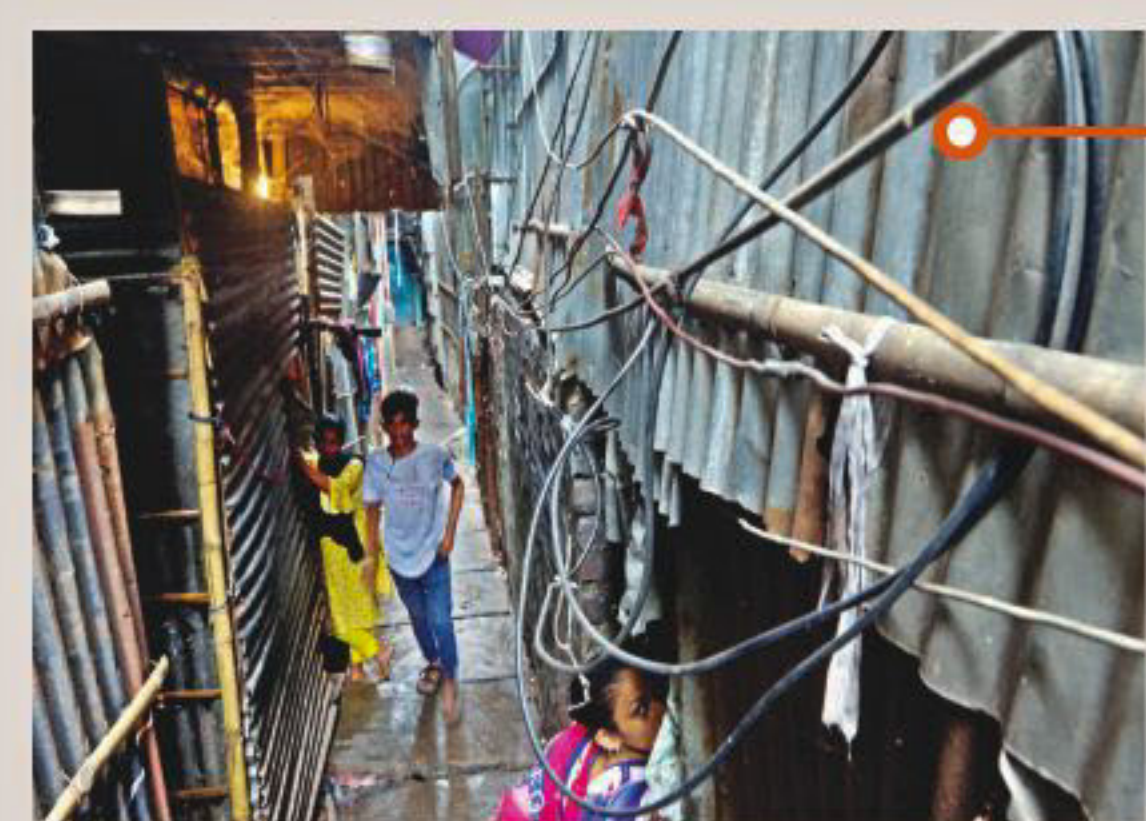
In the latest incident, a massive fire broke out at Chalantika slum on August 16, burning down more than a thousand shanties. It left at least five people injured.

Flames from burners, short-circuits, burning mosquito coils and cigarette butts and arson attacks are found to be behind most of the slum fires, officials say, adding that such a blaze intensifies within moments because of illegal gas lines.

"Fire spread across the Chalantika Bosti quickly as gas leaked from the plastic pipes connected to slum houses," Abdul Halim, assistant director, Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star.

"In no time, the fire went out of control. The illegal

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CHALANTIKA SLUM

POPULATION: 15,000 **HOUSES:** 3,000 **AREA:** 20 acres
CONNECTIONS: 1,500 gas, 3,000 electricity

GAS, POWER CONNECTION RATES (MONTHLY):

- Tk 1,500 for double burner and 800 for single burner for each household
- A family pays Tk 150 for a light bulb, Tk 150 for an electric fan and Tk 150 for a TV
- Around Tk 10.5 lakh is collected from gas consumers and Tk 15 lakh from electricity consumers
- One syndicate involved



KORAIL SLUM

POPULATION: Over 1.10 lakh **HOUSES:** 30,000 **AREA:** 90 acres
CONNECTIONS: 15,000 gas, 20,000 electricity

GAS, POWER CONNECTION RATES (MONTHLY):

- Tk 800 for double burner, Tk 600 for single burner for each household; Tk 1,500 for each hotel and shop
- A family pays Tk 170 for a light bulb, Tk 170 for an electric fan, Tk 170 for a TV
- Each shop owner pays Tk 900 for using a light bulb, Tk 600 for a refrigerator
- Around Tk 2.5 crore is collected each month from gas, electricity consumers
- 20 syndicates involved



BHASANTEK SLUM

POPULATION: Around 30,000 **HOUSES:** 4,750 **AREA:** 40 acres
CONNECTIONS: 1,500 gas, 4,750 electricity

GAS, POWER CONNECTION RATES (MONTHLY):

- Tk 1,000 for double burner and 600 for single burner for each household
- A family pays Tk 150 for using a light bulb, Tk 150 for an electric fan and Tk 150 for a TV
- Around Tk 34.25 lakh collected a month from gas and electricity consumers
- Three syndicates involved



Make sure evil forces don't return to power

Hasina tells people

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the people to remain cautious so that the country does not go under the control of the evil forces who were involved in the August 15 massacre.

"I urge the people to remain cautious so that the country never again falls into the hands of the Hyenas who were behind the brutal assassination of August 15," she said.

The PM was addressing a discussion at the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday. The Dhaka south and north units of Awami League organised the event marking the National Mourning Day.

Hasina said the people of Bangladesh had lost their hope of living, dignifying

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3 madrasa students found dead

Bodies recovered from Imam's room

STAR REPORT

An imam found the bodies of his six-year-old son and two other boys in his room at a mosque in Chandpur's Matlab yesterday.

Abdullah Al Noman, 6, Ibrahim, 8, and Rifat Hossain, 10, were madrasa students.

Police termed the deaths mysterious, saying the room at Purba Kaladi Jame Masjid, where the bodies were found, was locked from inside and there were no injury marks on their bodies or evidence of any of them taking poison or sedatives.

Jamal Uddin, imam of Purba Kaladi Jame Masjid, told police that his son Noman was in his room when he left it for Juma prayers. He saw Ibrahim and Rifat entering the room around 12:00pm, said Zihadul Kabir, superintendent of police in Chandpur.

After the prayers, Jamal tried to enter his room around 2:30pm and found the door locked from inside.

With the help of a local man, he broke into the room and found the boys lying on the floor, the SP said.

Seeing their lifeless bodies, they called police.

Doctors pronounced them dead after police reached there and sent the bodies to a hospital.

Rifat and Ibrahim were students of nearby Matlab Dakshin Bhangapur Madrasa. Rifat also worked as the muezzin of the

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INT'L DAY OF THE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

'I couldn't find him anywhere'

Says Raisa whose father went missing 6yrs ago; families of victims of enforced disappearance wait for their loved ones



Little Inam hardly has any memories of his father Ismail Hossain, missing since August 2011. He joins a programme at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ever since her son went missing four years ago, Shahida Begum, 65, has knocked at every possible door -- local police, Rab, political leaders.

And every time, she returned home dejected as no one could help her find her son, Sazzad Hossain Sabuj, a Swetchhasebak League leader from Kushtia. But she still waits.

Sazzad, 44, along with two others, was detained by law enforcers from a resort in Gazipur on August 21, 2015, and has never returned home, Shahida said at a discussion in the capital

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Extortionists kill 14-yr-old in Rangpur

They stab him, then push him in front of speeding bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Alleged extortionists killed a fifth grader by stabbing him and then shoving him in front of a speeding bus in Rangpur city on Thursday night.

Abdur Rashid, 14, was the son of vegetable seller Shahidar Rahman of Satgara Mistripara area in the city.

His aunt Nazma Begum, who claims to be present at the scene, said, "Local extortionist Mozaffar Rahman and his associates Monti, Joy, Belal and several others beat him up on the street and stabbed him before shoving him in front of a speeding bus."

She had tried in vain to save her nephew, she added.

Locals rushed him to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where he died around 4:20am yesterday, around seven hours after he was attacked.

Quoting family members, police said Mozaffar had been demanding Tk 500 from Rashid's elder brother Mohan, 30, for the last few days.

When Mohan, an auto-rickshaw puller, didn't agree to give him the money,



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DENGUE PATIENTS August sees more than 19-yr total

50,974 cases recorded in 30 days

HELEMUL ALAM

The number of dengue patients this month surpassed the combined total of such patients in the last 19 years with experts warning about further spread of the virus in the next two months.

A total of 50,974 people were infected with dengue in August alone against 50,166 from 2000 to 2018, Ayesha Akther, assistant director of the DGHS control room, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) recorded only 1,796 cases of dengue in August last year, she said, adding that the number had never crossed 11,000 annually since the first dengue outbreak in the country in 2000.

According to the DGHS, 1,024 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country within 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, raising the tally of such patients to 69,435.

Experts have warned that there may be further spread of dengue in the next two months as the weather conditions during that period could be suitable for breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

The DGHS data show that the country saw the highest number of dengue cases in September in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

Considering this, experts urged the authorities concerned as well as people to take all-out measures to check the spread of the disease.

Kinkar Ghosh, epidemiologist at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, said that if there is intermittent rain next month, there is a chance of an increase in dengue cases.

Prof Sanya Tahmina, line director of Communicable Disease Control of the DGHS, said the authorities concerned must continue drives to wipe out breeding grounds of Aedes as more than 1,000 dengue cases are recorded every day.

She said they would have to strengthen efforts next month when the

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A heartbroken Nasrin Akhter speaks of the torment she has been enduring since her elder son Ishrak Ahmed went missing from the city's Dhanmondi area about two years ago. The photo was taken at a programme, marking the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

9th Death Anniversary

Today is the 9th anniversary of death of Late Alhaj Ghashuddin Ahmed. On this day of remembrance, we the family members, directors, officers and employees of Popular Jute Exchange Limited as well as other sister concerns fondly recall the memories of his industrious & benevolent life, and pray for the salvation and eternal peace for his departed soul.

Late Alhaj Ghashuddin Ahmed

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