

Left under the open sky

Kalyanpur Natun Bazar slum residents devastated by fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the fire broke out at Kalyanpur Natun Bazar slum on Sunday night, Josna Begum (37) was frantically trying to save her belongings. However, she could only take a bed and a dressing table out to a nearby road on the first try. When she came back, she saw the fire engulfing her house.

Her other belongings that didn't burn, were stolen. This correspondent found a devastated Josna sitting in front of her gutted house yesterday, staring at the ashes of all of everything she acquired over 20 years of savings and hard work.

Talking to this correspondent, Josna said she came to this slum 20 years ago from Bhola and got married to rickshaw-puller Rafiqul Islam. They are a family of six, including their four children.

"We are now living under the open sky, with our hands empty," said Josna.

Tenth-grader Mahim Hossain, another resident of the slum, bought a set of old textbooks after schools reopened.

"All my books have now turned into ashes," said Mahim.

The fire originated around 8:45pm on Sunday at the Natun Bazar slum. At least 14 units of firefighters put out the blaze around 11:15pm.

The cause of the fire could not be known immediately. Slum-dwellers said they witnessed such incidents several times in other parts of the same slum before. They

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People through the capital's Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday to buy tickets. The queues before the counters grew longer as the online ticket sale remains suspended for five days until Friday to facilitate smooth handover of the ticketing service to a new vendor.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

There are ways other than hiking gas prices

Speakers tell BERC hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will not have to hike gas prices if the local production is increased, taxes at import level are remitted, and unnecessary expenditure in the energy sector is reduced.

The suggestions came up in a hearing organised by Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on the proposal for gas price hike by Petrobangla and GTCL (Gas Transmission Company Limited) yesterday.

Taking part in the hearing, Prof Shamsul Alam, energy adviser of Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said they had sought information from state-owned energy production and distribution companies, but got no response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase local production
- Remit taxes at import level
- Reduce unnecessary expenditure
- Rely less on LNG

He said the state-owned gas fields have the capacity to produce 1,145 mmcf/d (million cubic feet per day) whereas they produce 841 mmcf/d. Why they do not produce as per their capacity has not been clarified.

"The same thing is happening regarding IOCs [international oil companies]. They have a combined capacity of producing 2,760 mmcf/d, while they make 2,286 mmcf/d. The authorities do not have any reasonable explanation behind the production decline," he said.

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PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 22



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-55	12-45	4-45	6-16	7-45
Jamaat	5-30	1-15	5-00	6-20	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

'Make sure you look poor, needy'

Gang loots valuables from hospital patients, luring them with govt, zakat aid; 5 held

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It's an organised gang that mostly operates in government hospitals. It targets those that come for treatment from outside Dhaka, feed them sedatives, and loot their valuables as the victims fall unconscious.

Members of the gang first introduce themselves as locals and offer the victims help with their medical treatment.

For the next step, they cozy up to the victims with sincere offerings of help, like arranging government aid, funding from corporations or from zakat funds to bear medical costs.

The victims would then be asked to put all their money and other valuables inside a bag "to look poor and needy" -- which was explained as a requirement to obtain the aid money.

From there, the victims would then be taken to less crowded places and offered tea or juice, with sedatives mixed in. As soon as they drink it, the victims fall asleep or lose consciousness, which is when the gang members loot them and flee.

All of this was revealed after Cyber and Special Crime Division of police's Detective Branch (DB) arrested five gang members from Narayanganj in a special drive on Saturday.

The arrestees are ringleader Rubel Molla (32), Md Saiful (48), Abdur Rahman (50), Md Ismail (25), and Enayet Hossain (28).

Police also seized a cell phone, a pair of gold

earrings and a silver chain from them.

Mohidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (financial crime investigation) of Detective Branch's cyber and special crime division, told The Daily Star yesterday that the arrestees used to target patients and their attendants at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation.

Of the arrestees, Rubel used to build relationship with the victims, while Abdur, Ismail and Enayet scouted targets at hospitals and even bus, train or rail stations. Meanwhile, Saiful sold the looted valuables, said additional deputy commissioner Mohidul.

"The arrestees have been doing this for the last 3-4 years," he said. Rubel, Ismail and Enayet already had cases filed against them, the investigators found.

A theft case was found registered against Rubel with Shahbagh Police Station; two cases -- over attempt to robbery and violating law and order -- were found against Ismail; while a narcotics case was filed against Enayet with Jatrabari Police Station.

Detectives said a rickshaw-puller named Azizul, who used to carry passengers to the hospitals, is another mainstay of the syndicate.

"We have obtained some information on Azizul, who is currently on the run. We are now conducting drives to arrest him," said Junaed Alam Sharker, ADC of cyber and special crime division of DB.

The gang cozies up to the victims with offerings of help, like arranging government aid, funding from corporations or from zakat funds to bear medical costs. The victims would then be asked to put all their money and other valuables inside a bag "to look poor and needy" -- which is explained as a requirement to obtain the aid money.

'They don't really listen to us'

Says ACC chairman on recommendations made to ministries, govt offices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ministries and government offices do not fully comply with the recommendations of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) made to curb grafts, opined ACC Chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah yesterday.

He also said ACC has requested the cabinet division to ensure implementation of these recommendations.

The ACC chairperson said this while revealing its Annual Reports for the years 2020 and 2021 at a press conference at the commission's Segunbagicha headquarters.

At the session, ACC Commissioner Mozammel Haque Khan, however, said they cannot put pressure on government organisations as that

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Six projects nominated for WSIS awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six projects from Bangladesh that are providing service through Information and Communication Technology got nominated for World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) awards.

The projects are Development of National ICT Infra Network for Bangladesh Government (Info-Sarker); Digital Land Tax; Konekt, an adolescents' education, soft skills, and counselling platform; Digital Flood Forecasting System; Food For Nation; and Fighting against Misinformation, Disinformation and Mal-information through Community Radio in Bangladesh.

A total of 360 projects from different countries, under 18 categories, have been nominated for the awards.



Right down the stairs of this footbridge in front of Shulitola High School on the capital's Bongshal Road, a garbage dump has been created, taking up parts of the road and pavement. What's more, signs around the place specifically ask people not to dump waste there. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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