

Jerrycan hazard was warned

Al-Razi Chemicals shipment caught fire at Cambodia port 2 months ago

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

In the last week of May, the Hathazari-based Al-Razi Chemical Complex was warned of the hazards of storing hydrogen peroxide in jerrycans. But the company was not stirred to action.

Then, a few days later, on the evening of June 4, a huge fire broke out at the BM Inland Container Depot, a Dutch-Bangladesh joint venture, in the town of Sitakunda, 20 miles north of the country's main port in Chattogram.

As many as 33 jerrycans of Al-Razi's hydrogen peroxide were stored in the container depot. Hydrogen peroxide is not a flammable substance but it can cause a fire to intensify.

Which is exactly what transpired when the fire came in contact with the jerrycans. There were multiple explosions that aggravated the blaze to such a degree that it took three days and at least 45 lives to bring under control.

But this was not the first incident of fire linked with Al-Razi's cavalier storage of the powerful oxidising agent hydrogen peroxide, which set off an inspection by Maersk (Cambodia) in May.

An export consignment of Al-Razi shipped on April 6 from the Chattogram port for Hung Hsing Garment (Cambodia) Co. caught fire while the vessel was waiting for Sihanoukville Port clearance.

The ship's floor was fully burnt and the roof damaged. And the root cause was the storage of the 102 tonnes of hydrogen peroxide in the unapproved jerrycans, according to the inspection report by K2A Management, a certified cargo inspection outfit based in Phnom Penh.

The Daily Star has a copy of the report dated May 23. The jerrycans could not sustain the pressure built inside by the nature of the chemical and exploded, causing a fire in the vessel, the report said.

There were 3,400 jerrycans on board, with each container containing about 30 kilograms of hydrogen peroxides- 50 percent.

The inspection report was forwarded to Al-Razi and the other concerned authorities in the last week of May, according to Mohammed Chowdhury, officer (operations) of Maersk Bangladesh.

As per rules, the concerned organisation is informed after an accident.

"The Al Razi Chemical Complex was also notified after the Cambodian accident. We have also provided them with the inspection report," Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Mujibur Rahman, a director of Al-Razi Chemical Complex, refused to comment on the inspection report.

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"No shipping company was willing to transport the chemicals in plastic jars after the accident in Cambodia."

An employee of BM container depot



A fire, reportedly generated from the power car, engulfs a carriage of Sylhet-bound Parabat Express in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila. Two fire engines managed to bring the blaze under control after one and a half hours of frantic efforts, but by that time three carriages were gutted.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No scope for debate over broadcast of digital content

Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no scope for any debate over the broadcast of digital contents on online platforms by newspapers, said the Editors' Council in a statement yesterday.

The statement -- signed by Council President Mahfuz Anam and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud -- comes in response to Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud's recent remarks on the matter.

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Relieve us of this nightmare

Plead those accused in DSA cases; telecom minister apologises to the victims of misuse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruma Sarkar, an assistant professor of Bangla at Begum Badrunnesa Government Women's College, is still reeling from the trauma of her arrest in a Digital Security Act case about nine months ago.

"As a single mother, my biggest challenge is raising my two children. After breaking the door of my house, they arrested me in front of my children," she said at a conference at the capital's National Museum yesterday.

The teacher said her life has not become normal. "I am yet to rejoin work. My children still cannot resume school. I want relief from this pain. Please, withdraw the case against me."

The conference organised by Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee was titled "Victims of Digital Security Act and Real Culprits". Ruma was picked up by Rapid Action Battalion on October 19 last

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EARTHQUAKE RESILIENCE

No updated data on city buildings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If there is anything that some of the most major fires have pointed out, it is that very few buildings in the capital are built following the National Building Code.

But unlike large fires, there has, thankfully, been very little chance to test out just what this non-adherence to the code would mean in the event of a major earthquake.

The line has been said so many times that it has become a trope -- the level of unplanned urbanisation in Dhaka is such that a large earthquake would crush the city.

But there is little data on this vulnerability.

The last data regarding the vulnerability of the city is from 2010 when Stanford University evaluated the earthquake risk of cities around the world and assigned an index.

Dhaka was ranked to be among the world's 20 cities most vulnerable to earthquakes.

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EARTHQUAKE AWARENESS DAY 2022

EARTHQUAKES DON'T KILL PEOPLE. BUILDINGS DO.

- Susan Hough and Lucile Jones, U.S. Geological Survey



Bangladesh is in a Risk Zone: On Earthquake Awareness Day let's vow to build safer structures

Today is 12th June 2022. On this day in 1897, this region was hit by the worst earthquake in history, causing immense damage to life and property in Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar. BSRM commemorates this day every year through various programs aimed at raising earthquake disaster awareness.

Bangladesh has already witnessed thousands of small and large-scale earthquakes. The epicentre of the 1897 earthquake was near Bangladesh in present-day Meghalaya. It affected an area of more than 6 lac 50 thousand sq. km from Delhi to Myanmar. This severely damaged all brick buildings in an area of more than 8 lac sq. km, as well as railways, roads and bridges.

In 2015, the devastating earthquake in Nepal proved once again that more deaths are caused not by earthquakes, but due to collapsing buildings made with substandard construction materials. A lack of proper preparation before construction, not following proper rules, using substandard materials and incorrect or faulty building designs are some reasons behind buildings collapsing during earthquakes.

Every year small and moderate earthquakes are felt in Bangladesh. Therefore, some rules must be followed when constructing multi-storied buildings -- proper land survey and soil tests must be carried out and the best materials used as per the rules of the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) before construction can begin. One of the most important aspects is choosing the right kind of steel. The BNBC rule is to use rods that have the best 'Tensile vs. Yielding' ratio.

To reduce damages and loss of life during earthquakes, take precautions and build your home using BSRM's tough steel, made as per the rules and regulations of the BNBC, BDS ISO 6935-2:2016 & 'American Concrete Institute ACI 318-19'-Chapter-18 (Earthquake-Resistant). BSRM rods have a 'Tensile and Yield Strength' ratio of 1.25 or higher which ensures the toughness of those structures.

On Earthquake Awareness Day, we vow - let us use quality materials when constructing buildings to escape the horrors of buildings collapsing during earthquakes.

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