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19 KITCHEN MARKET BUILDINGS

RISKY yet in use

Concern over public safety as Dhaka city corporations fail to shift shops to new buildings

DIPAN NANDY

If you take a look at the Rayer Bazar Dhaka City Corporation Market, you will see that the age-old building is on the verge of falling apart.

The structure was labelled risky by the city corporation 16 years ago, but the kitchen market is still there. And thousands of people buy and sell goods there every day, putting their lives in danger.

Over the last two decades, a total of 19 kitchen market buildings were identified as risky in the capital. But millions of people still frequent those.

"I have no choice. I have to run my business. I know that I could get killed if the building caves in. Had the government offered us an alternative, we would have moved out," said grocery store owner Rashim Mia.

Shariatullah, a private employee, who buys his essentials from the market, said, "It looks like the city corporation cannot do more than just label the building as risky and put up signboards. They are not bothered to do anything else."

Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the association of the shop owners at the market, said Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) continues to issue and renew trade licences for the shops housed in the building.

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Only the bare rods remain as the plasters have fallen off at a building of Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital. Four such buildings in the area are labelled by the city corporation as risky, but tens of thousands of people buy and sell goods at these buildings every day. Inset, Rayerbazar kitchen market is also in a sorry state.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, DIPAN NANDY



RISKY KITCHEN MARKET BUILDINGS

DNCC	DSCC
Mohammadpur Town Hall Pucca Market	Bangabandhu Hawkers Market
Mohammadpur Kitchen Market	Khilgaon Railway Kitchen Market
Gulshan North Kitchen Market	Azimpur Graveyard Market
Gulshan South Pucca Market	Nawab Yusuf Market
Rayerbazar Market	Azimpur Orphanage Market
Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market	Dhakshwari Market
Karwan Bazar Number-1 Bhaban Market	Nimtoli Market
Karwan Bazar Number-2 Bhaban Market	Kaptan Bazar Roadside Market
Karwan Bazar Wholesale Godown Market	Thatari Bazar Market
	Number-2 Palashi Market

Govt agencies must be held accountable

Experts say building owners alone not responsible; lax monitoring key factor behind frequent fire, blasts

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After every fire and blast incidents, all fingers are pointed at the building and factory owners. Experts, however, say the government agencies responsible for looking after the safety of establishments should be held equally accountable for their failure to monitor those.

They say that holding government officials responsible for such incidents is crucial to improving the situation.

There are enough rules and regulations to ensure safety of establishments, but fires and blasts are taking place one after another due to a serious lack of enforcement of the rules and regulations, and monitoring by government agencies, the experts observed.

This is ultimately causing serious harm to the people's lives and properties.

There are 54 agencies under 11 ministries to

ensure governance in the capital, and if they do not carry out their duties properly, the city would remain vulnerable to such disasters, experts warned.

"After an incident, we only blame the owners of a building or a factory. But the government agencies must be held responsible," Mehedi Ahmed Ansari, professor of civil engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Ansari, who worked for many probe committees formed after fire and blast incidents, said he didn't see a single incident of a government agency being held responsible.

"But in developed countries, it is the government agencies who are held accountable for their failure to prevent such incidents."

The Dhaka city's vulnerability to fires and blasts came to the fore once again after three

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SIDDIKBAZAR BUILDING

3 designs seized, only 1 had approval

Owners built basement, two top floor without Rajuk permission

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The owner of the ill-fated seven-storey building in Siddikbazar constructed its basement and the two top floors without approval from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha, detectives have said.

Tuesday's explosion that claimed at least 22 lives and left 100 injured took place in that unapproved basement, they added.

There was approval for three shops on the ground floor and flats on the remaining four, detective branch officers said yesterday.

But the owner of the building, known as Queen Sanitary Market, rented out the basement, ground floor and first floor to be used as sanitaryware shops. Another floor was used as office space and the rest as residential units.

"We seized three designs for construction of the building from the owner. Only one was approved by Rajuk," Mashiur Rahman, DB deputy commissioner (Lalbagh), told The Daily Star yesterday.

In 1983, the owner, Mohammad Rezaur Rahman, who died in 2011, got the layout for the five-story building approved by the Rajuk, he said.

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Bangladesh Business Summit begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Business Summit (BBS) is all set to kick off today with the aim of showcasing the country's economic potential before the global audience.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the three-day summit this morning at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) in Dhaka. She will also inaugurate the Best of Bangladesh Expo on the same day, said a press release.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) is organising the international summit marking its 50th founding anniversary.

The foreign ministry, commerce ministry, and the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority are partnering with FBCCI -- the country's apex trade body -- for the summit.

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Workers moving an iron pole to prop up a beam of the seven-storey building on North South Road in the capital's Siddikbazar yesterday. A massive blast at the building on Tuesday killed at least 22 people and injured over 100 others.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

16 hurt as roof collapses at construction site

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

At least 16 workers were injured as the roof of an under-construction 10-storey building of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment collapsed in Dhaka's Savar yesterday afternoon, fire service officials said.

The injured were sent to Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib Memorial KPJ Specialised Hospital for treatment.

Yakub Ali, 22, Khairul Islam, 27, and Rashedul Islam, 24, were admitted to the hospital with serious injuries while the rest were sent home after first aid.

"Rashedul Islam was moved to the Intensive Care Unit," said Manzurul Haque, the hospital's on-duty doctor.

Jahirul Islam, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence at the Dhaka EPZ, told The Daily Star that the incident took place around 4:30pm when the construction work was going on at Ganakbari in Savar.

Almost the entire roof of the 10th floor collapsed, leaving the 16 injured, the official said.

Debashish Paul, director general of the establishment, said, "The building is being constructed under a project of the medical institute of our establishment."

He said he was trying to know the details of the incident.