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BANGABAZAR
AT A GLANCE

TOTAL SHOPS
2,931

TOTAL AREA
21,250 sq ft

1965

Shops set up near then Fulbaria railway station, yet to be clothing hub

1975

Municipal admin proposes building market, but railway refuses to transfer ownership. Shopkeepers take yearly lease to run business

1985

Area's ownership transfers to city corporation

1989

City corporation builds it as "planned shopping hub"

1990

Developed as "garment market", incorporating Gulistan, Mahanagari and Adarsha Hawkers Market

1995

Around 2,220 shops gutted in fire

2017

Fire service committee finds Bangabazar's fire-extinguishing system "extremely risky"

2018

Another fire erupts, burning several shops

PLACES
THAT SAW
BLAZES THIS
YEAR

JAN 19: Kamrangirchar shoe factory

FEB 19: Gulshan building

MAR 1: Gopibagh rickshaw garage

MAR 5: Building in Science Lab area

MAR 7: Siddikbazar building; Sitakunda oxygen plant

MAR 11: Sitakunda cotton depot

MAR 13: Kunipara slum

MAR 18: Narayanganj building

MAR 27: Mohakhali Sattola slum

APR 3: Wari colony

APR 4: Bangabazar

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON,
ANISUR RAHMAN





Breaking fast
amid the fire's
aftermath

MD ABBAS, ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

During today's iftar, Bangabazar traders and firefighters were seen breaking fast amid chaos and ruins caused by the devastating fire.

Sagor Hasan, who had two shops at Bangabazar market and three shops in the adjacent Anexco Tower, recounted his overwhelming experience to The Daily Star.

"Thinking about the losses after witnessing the blaze, even I forgot to break my fast. One of my employees handed me a bottle of water and some dates and reminded me that it was iftar time," Sagor said.

Robiul Islam, another shop owner, was seen breaking his fast while loading the remaining products of his shop onto a van.

"Fearing that the fire might spread further, we have been shifting the remaining products. I, along with the staffers of my shop, broke fast while moving products," said Robiul.

Amid the chaos and urgency of the situation, almost all the staffers and shop owners were seen breaking their fast hurriedly as they worked to put out the fire and salvage whatever remained.

Several firefighters were also seen breaking their fast. Firefighter Akash and three of his colleagues were spotted taking a break from their duties to break the fast on a firefighting vehicle.

Akash said it was his second time breaking fast while on duty and said, "As I took an oath to serve the people

“

Thinking about the losses after witnessing the blaze, even I forgot to break my fast. One of my employees handed me a bottle of water and some dates and reminded me that it was iftar time.

”

SAGOR HASAN

Shop owner

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

BANGABAZAR FIRE

Crowd of onlookers
the main obstruction

Says fire service DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The crowd of onlookers was the biggest hindrance to firefighting efforts and caused a delay in bringing the devastating fire at the Bangabazar Shopping Complex under control, said Brig Gen Md Main Uddin, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

He was briefing reporters on the spot after 48 firefighting units brought the blaze under control around 12:36pm. The fire had started at 6:10am.

Apart from fire service officials, members of army, navy, air force, Border Guard Bangladesh and police took part in the rescue and firefighting operations.

Several thousand people thronged the spot soon after the fire originated around 6:10am.

Many people were seen going on Facebook Live. Many were taking selfies at the fire ravaged site. The rescue teams were not able to bring in equipment and vehicles due to the overwhelming crowd, eye-witnesses said.

Police were struggling to manage the situation.

The director general said it was sad that people attacked the fire service headquarters and injured four firefighters even as they were trying to save lives and properties.

"I am very disappointed. We work for the people. We sacrifice our lives

for the people... but they attacked us," he said while talking to reporters on the spot.

An unruly mob vandalised fire service vehicles, the building, and injured four firefighters as the fire raged at Bangabazar Shopping Complex, he said.

Two of the four firefighters – Rabiul Islam and Atikur Rahman – were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Rashed-Bin-Khaled, duty officer of fire service.

Many people were seen going on Facebook Live. Many were taking selfies at the fire-ravaged site. The rescue teams were not able to bring in equipment and vehicles due to the overwhelming crowd. Police were struggling to manage the situation.

"Fire service officials give their lives for the people of the country. In the last one year, 13 officials sacrificed their lives," said Main Uddin. "I don't understand why they decided to attack fire service officials."

In the last one year, a total of 29 fire service officials were also injured in the line of duty.

The fire service DG also said they will form a five-member committee to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

No alternative to
free, fair election

Say eminent citizens at webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday said a participatory, free and fair national election is needed to come out of the current political crisis.

While speaking at a webinar organised by Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), they also said a discussion among political parties is needed to have a political settlement for free, fair and competitive elections.

Shujan held the webinar, titled "Competitive Elections, Constitutional Framework and the Future of Democracy in Bangladesh".

Former Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Sakhawat Hussain said if any of the two major political parties do not participate in the election, it will not be participatory.

"So, such a situation should be created that both parties participate in it. And for this, the government has to take initiative," he added.

Shujan President Hafizuddin Khan said in the last 50 years, there was no fair election under a partisan government.

"It seems to be the same this time. That's why we want a non-party election-time government," he added.

Justice MA Matin said the current crisis the country is faced with is both constitutional and political.

"However, the centre of the crisis is politics and it should be resolved by reforming the constitution," he added.

Ridwanul Hoque, a professorial fellow at Charles Darwin University in Australia, said, "Representative, fair and free elections are the way out of the current crisis."

He too called for a non-party caretaker government to oversee the election.

Ali Riaz, a distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University said, "The crisis is not a constitutional crisis, it is a crisis of whether there will be a participatory multi-party democracy or not."

Dhaka University Professor Asif Nazrul said the future of not only democracy but also of the existence of the nation is depending on the next election.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

DELIMITATION OF
CONSTITUENCIES

EC to start
hearing
complaints
from May 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will start hearing complaints over the country's draft delimitation of constituencies from May 3.

The hearing will be held in four phases until May 14, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said yesterday.

EC on February 26, published the draft of delimitation of 300 parliamentary seats ahead of the 12th parliamentary elections. It said that if anyone had any objection to the draft published by the EC, they can file it by March 19.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER
TIMING

APRIL 5

Fazr

Zohr

Asr

Maghrib

Esha

AZAN 4:29

12:45

4:45

6:20

7:45

JAMAAT 4:39

1:15

5:00

6:30

8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN

APRIL

SEHRI

IFTAR

13

05

6:20

14

06

4:24

6:20

15

07

4:23

6:21