

At least 44 killed in building blaze

Women, children among the dead; 22 in critical condition; dozens rescued from 7-storey structure on Bailey Road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 44 people were killed and 22 others critically injured in a fire at a seven-storey building on Bailey Road in the capital last night.

The fire was first noticed on the ground floor of Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall around 9:50pm and it soon spread to the upper floors, witnesses said.

Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen told reporters early today that 33 people were pronounced dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and 10 others at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

At least three children and 26 women were among the dead, said sources at the two facilities.

One other person was brought dead to the Central Police Hospital.

Firefighters brought the flames under control after two hours of frantic efforts. Many were rescued, said Brig Gen Main

Uddin, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

There were cooking gas tanks on almost every floor of the building, he said, adding that either a stove or a gas tank could have caused the fire.

He said many of the victims died of asphyxiation because of the smoke.

Thirteen fire engines and a team of Border Guard Bangladesh worked at the scene, said Talha Bin Zaim, a spokesperson of fire service.

There were only two lifts and a staircase in the building with no emergency exit, said a top fire service official.

As the fire spread, people jumped out of even third floor windows while many were seen crying for help on the sixth floor and the rooftop.

Bachchu Miah, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost, said 10 people injured after jumping off the building were brought to the hospital.

The injured are Imran, 13, Shakil, 24,



Firefighters working to douse the blaze that broke out at a seven-storey building on Bailey Road in the capital last night. Inset, with the help of a crane, rescuers bring down women and children who got trapped inside the building.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



'GAS CYLINDERS WERE SCATTERED ALONG STAIRCASE' - PAGE 2

Automated fuel pricing at last Electricity tariff hike to take effect from Feb

| RESIDENTIAL UNIT | NOW (TK/UNIT) | NEW PRICE (TK/UNIT) |
|------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 0-50 | 4.35 | 4.63 |
| 0-75 | 4.85 | 5.26 |
| 76-200 | 6.63 | 7.20 |
| 201-300 | 6.95 | 7.59 |
| 301-400 | 7.34 | 8.02 |
| 401-600 | 11.51 | 12.67 |
| 600+ | 13.26 | 14.61 |

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government has at last introduced the automated fuel pricing mechanism that will see the domestic fuel prices adjust in line with the prices in the international market every month.

The prices of fuel oils will be calculated based on the international market price, the exchange rate, customs duties, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation's profit

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BPL's foreign players' payment: A murky business?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Around 80 foreign players have featured in the ongoing 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), with their contracts ranging from 20,000 to 80,000 dollars, but the payment process of these players is cloudy with conflicting statements coming from parties involved.

While the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) claimed that the franchises complete the payment of foreign players themselves, the franchises presented a different version, saying the board plays an active role in the process.

Majority of the foreign players, who were either roped in from the players' draft or were directly signed by franchises, are paid in dollars while a few accept payment in taka and then convert it to their currency of choice.

At a time when there is a huge crisis of foreign reserves at the central bank, with the government taking restrictive measures to

ensure that the least amount of foreign currency leaves the country, it is worth asking how the foreign players are paid, and more importantly, through which channel.

KM Rifatuzzaman, managing director of Akhtar Group and owner of Chattogram Challengers, claimed that all foreign players' payments are done via BCB.

"The responsibility for all player payments rests with the BCB. The franchises will deal with BCB in Bangladeshi currency," Rifatuzzaman told The Daily Star, adding that the same system is followed every year.

"You can't actually do it [paying in dollars directly]. It happened even when there was no dollar crisis. So ultimately we are paying the BCB in taka and BCB forwards it to their agents' account, not even the players' account," the Chattogram Challengers official added.

Asked if the BCB ever claimed it was having

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MEETING WITH PM Cops want more power, benefits

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Police officers want postings at the Anti-Corruption Commission, National Security Intelligence, Department of Narcotics Control, Department of Immigration and Passports, BRTA, and BIWTA.

Top police officers yesterday made this and many other demands during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They also demanded empowering the inspector general of police (IGP) to grant officers up to the rank of superintendents of police (SPs) leave for foreign trips and an additional one month's basic salary every year because cops get fewer holidays.

The IGP should also have the authority to dispose of departmental cases against assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) and additional SPs, they said at the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office on the third day of Police Week 2024.

The two aforesaid responsibilities currently lie with the home ministry.

They also demanded that the IGP be made a technocrat member of the Superior Selection Board that decides which officer gets promotion, more police members on metro trains for safety, and subsidised food items, known as ration, for around 60,000 cops who retired before 2020.

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New cabinet members likely to take oath today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to strengthen her cabinet today with the addition of at least seven new members.

The oath-taking ceremony is expected to take place at 7:30pm at the Bangabhaban, said sources in the government and ruling Awami League.

Majority of the new appointments would be state ministers and deputy ministers while one or two could be made full ministers this time.

Four to five lawmakers from the reserved seats for women may join the cabinet, they said.

A couple may find place in the cabinet as technocrat ministers.

Sources within the AL said none of the new cabinet members have

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Palestinians receive medical care at Kamal Edwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

104 Palestinians massacred at Gaza aid point

Israeli forces open fire on people gathered for food aid

AFP, Palestinian Territories

Israeli forces shot dead 104 people when a crowd rushed towards aid trucks yesterday, the health ministry in Gaza said, in one of the worst single incidents of a nearly five-month war.

More than 750 people were also hurt in the incident, the ministry said. It came after aid agencies had intensified warnings over Gaza's humanitarian situation, with famine threatening particularly in Gaza's north.

Looting of aid trucks had previously occurred in northern Gaza, where residents have taken to eating animal fodder and even leaves to try to stave off hunger.

Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said hundreds were killed and wounded from "bullets of the occupation forces that targeted a gathering of citizens" at Gaza City's

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- Mediators hopeful of a Ramadan truce
- Hamas, Fattah meet in Moscow to talk about post-war future

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