



DEATHLY EMBERS

Death came draped in smoke

SHAHEEN MOLLA and ZYMA ISLAM

Around 11:30pm, there were murmurs of one death. By then, the fire had been burning for over an hour.

Even past midnight, Brig Gen Md Main Uddin, director general of the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, said three dead bodies were recovered and 68 people were rescued.

Once the flame, which began at 9:50pm, was doused, the real picture began to emerge – marking this fire as the worst since the 2021 Hashem Foods Factory fire in Rugganj.

The first body to reach Dhaka Medical College Hospital was that of a child, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH police outpost.

Then a steady stream of ambulances followed, carrying injured people – some alive, some whose state could not be ascertained yet, some who seemed to be fighting death.

But then around 1:30am, an enormous white container truck pulled over. Once the doors opened, everyone was shocked to see it full of bodies.

Hospital staffers waited with stretchers in case such an instance occurred. With their stretchers full, they whisked the bodies away one by one.

Scores of people, who had been desperately searching for their loved ones for hours at the hospital, ran towards them while Ansar men tried to control the situation.



Sheuli Das weeps as she holds onto the ambulance carrying the bodies of her niece Poppy Roy and two grandchildren, after they died in a fire on Bailey Road in the capital on Thursday night. Right, onlookers gather in front of the charred seven-storey building. Bottom left, Kabir Khan breaks down at the sight of his two daughters lying dead on stretchers (not in the photo). Bottom right, relatives crowd the emergency unit of DMCH as they frantically look for their loved ones who were in the building at the time of the fire. PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

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It was a bomb waiting to go off

Warnings unheeded; no permission for restaurants; two owners, a manager of eateries detained

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY, MUNTAKIM SAAD and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall on the capital's Bailey Road had all the catalysts needed to set off a blaze.

Firefighters gave owners of the seven-storey building two warnings about the danger, but they still did not make safety arrangements.

There was no emergency exit. Neither was there permission for the seven restaurants.

"These buildings require approval of eight government agencies. Each of the agencies should be accused of murder

by negligence," eminent architect Iqbal Habib told reporters in front of the fire-ravaged building yesterday.

As the inferno ripped through the building late at night on Thursday, some of the cooking gas tanks must have leaked and caused the flames to spread rapidly, investigators say.

Forty-six people including children lost their lives. Thirteen others are fighting for life with burn injuries.

The building, constructed by a developer firm, was handed to the owners in 2013. Defying the conditions set by the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha

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Short circuit or gas leak might be the cause

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

An electric short circuit or a leaky gas pipe at a ground floor cafe was most likely the cause of the fire at the Bailey Road building late at night on Thursday, said investigators.

On the ground floor, plastic pipes were used for gas transmission, which is illegal, said a member of a probe committee formed by the fire service after visiting the seven-storey Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall.

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Tragedies recur as inaction persists

HELEMUL ALAM and SHARIFUL ISLAM

After deadly fires like the one on Thursday that claimed 46 lives, authorities momentarily wake up from their slumber to prevent recurrences, but any such initiative loses steam as they fail to take concerted action.

Then there is the inevitable recurrence and the cycle is repeated.

The building on Bailey Road where the fire broke out on Thursday night housed seven eateries.

But according to Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha's (Rajuk) Chief Town Planner Ashraf Islam, approval was given to use the first six

floors as office spaces, and the top floor for residential purposes.

Some of those restaurants at Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall were operating for several years but Rajuk, which can shut restaurants and hand out penalties, never took any action.

The eateries were running without adhering to fire safety rules. They stored gas cylinders on the stairwell, which intensified the inferno. The inaction of the authorities yet again allowed a fire to escalate to a calamitous scale.

Fire Service and Civil Defence twice issued notices to one of the owners to implement a fire safety

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BAILEY ROAD FIRE PM deploras absence of fire exit

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday bemoaned that there was no fire exit in the multi-storey building that caught fire on Bailey Road leaving dozens dead.

She urged all to follow the rules and regulations while constructing any buildings.

"We always request our architects, at least when they design houses or buildings, keep a small open balcony, a fire exit or a ventilation. But the architects don't design properly, and the owners don't want to leave an inch of space," she said while addressing a programme marking "National Insurance Day-2024" at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

The event was jointly organised by the ministry of finance and the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority aiming to promote the idea of insurance by enhancing public awareness.

Hasina said 46 people died in the Bailey Road fire. "What could be more painful than this?"

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This stretch of the busy Bangshal road in Old Dhaka has been dug up for work on the drainage system. With no safety measures in place, pedestrians are at risk of accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Seven new faces take oath as state ministers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven new faces, including four women, were inducted in the council of ministers yesterday, 52 days after the Awami League formed the government for the fourth straight term.

With them, the number of members in the council of ministers is now 44. Eight of them are women, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Of the five cabinets led by Hasina, the existing cabinet has the highest number of female members.

The last cabinet had five female members including the prime minister. Besides, a minister, two state ministers, and one deputy minister were in the council of ministers.

The first, second, and third cabinets led by Hasina comprised four, six, and five female members respectively.

The seven new faces, who are lawmakers, were made state ministers to different ministries.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered their oaths of office at the Bangabhaban at 7:30pm.

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