



FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH-RISE Owners exploit legal loopholes

HELEMUL ALAM

Many building owners do not comply with fire safety regulations, taking advantage of conflicting legal definitions of high-rise buildings, according to urban experts.

As per Building Construction Rules 2008 and Bangladesh National Building Code, a building with over 10 storeys or taller than 33 metres is a high-rise.

However, the fire prevention act defines any structure with over six storeys as high-rise. Owners are supposed to take no objection certificate (NOC) from the Fire Service and Civil Defence if the building has over six storeys.

"But many owners do not bother taking the NOC because as per the building construction rules, it is not obligatory when the structure has fewer than 10 storeys," says Adil Mohammad Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners.

In the absence of a uniformed definition, many seven- to 10-storey buildings, especially the residential ones, do not have two stairways and fire safety equipment, he adds.

The owners simply get approval from Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) which does not recognise these buildings as high-rise. Rajuk does not make it mandatory for these buildings to have multiple stairways and other safety measures, Adil says.

Fire safety has been a widely talked-about issue since last week's deadly fire on Bailey Road that claimed 46 lives. The building that went up in flames had just one stairway and lacked fire safety equipment.

Having a uniformed definition of high-rise is crucial as it dictates whether a building must have multiple stairways, emergency lift, sprinklers, fire-rated doors, adequate extinguishers, and water reservoirs.

"Many lives could have been saved had there been a uniformed rule and regular monitoring," says Adil.

In Dhanmondi, Banani and Khilgaon areas of the capital, many buildings with over six storeys, which makes them high-rise as per the fire prevention act, have just one stairway in violation of the rule.

Before the enactment of the Building Construction Rules 2008, Rajuk used to recognise buildings above six storeys as high-rise.

Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (operations) at fire service, says, "I think 90 percent of the residential high-rise [above six-

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Due to the closure of the Postogola Bridge for restoration work, vehicles from the south use the Second Buriganga Bridge to enter the capital via Nawab Yousuf Road in Nayabazar, which significantly worsens traffic. But trucks are parked haphazardly and large pipes have been kept on the street making things even worse. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

Shehbaz Sharif elected Pak PM for second time

AFP, Islamabad

Shehbaz Sharif was voted in yesterday as Pakistan's prime minister for a second time, presiding over a shaky alliance that has shut out followers of jailed opposition leader Imran Khan.

Newly sworn-in lawmakers in Pakistan's National Assembly elected Sharif with 201 votes, more than three weeks after national elections marred by widespread



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Remittance hits 8-month high in Feb

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Remittance inflows soared 39 percent in February to \$2.16 billion, the highest in eight months, as expatriate Bangladeshis took advantage of the higher dollar rate offered by some banks.

Banks can offer the highest Tk 114.5 per dollar, including the Tk 2.5 government incentive, but some are offering up to Tk 123 per dollar, according to industry insiders. The official exchange rate is Tk 110.

"It is not possible to collect remittance at the official rate," said

the treasury head of a private bank on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the issue.

He went on to urge the central bank to allow the dollar to float freely in the market to increase remittance flow through the official channels.

February's inflows take the remittance receipts in the first eight months of the fiscal year to \$15.06 billion, up 7.5 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

However, the growth remains low, with analysts blaming money

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Make sure building code is followed PM asks DCs

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked all concerned, particularly the field administration, to ensure maintaining of building codes and actions against food stockpiling.

"All must keep an eye on pursuing building codes properly. The codes will have to be followed in every place of the country while constructing buildings."

The PM also directed authorities to be tough on any sort of food stockpiling and adulteration as such dishonest acts generally increase ahead of Ramadan.

She was providing a set of instructions while inaugurating the four-day DC Conference 2024 at the Shapla Hall of the Prime Minister's Office.

"We should construct buildings keeping in mind safety measures that include fire extinguishing management, cross ventilation, and rain harvesting system in line with the building codes."

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Plastic bottles discarded by tourists lay scattered near the Kotka forest office in the Sundarbans. Such bottles do not degrade for hundreds of years and harm the soil of the mangrove forest. The photo was taken recently.

BUSINESS

Non-cotton garments hold huge potential

Bangladesh has the potential to raise non-cotton garment exports to up to \$46 billion annually by 2032 if entrepreneurs invest \$18 billion to expand their manufacturing capacity as the consumption of apparel made from artificial fabrics is rising rapidly, according to a new study.

Of the sum, \$4.6 billion needs to be invested in fibre, filament and yarn manufacturing, \$9.2 billion in fabrics production, and \$4.2 billion in garment making.

STORY ON B1

INDOMITABLE MARCH

Awami League takes de facto control

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issued a statement on March 4, 1971, requesting that government and non-government offices where employees had not yet been paid remain open between 2:30pm and 4:30pm to disburse salaries during the next two days of the hartal.

Issuing these directives was the first step towards the Awami League taking on the role of a de facto government in the eastern wing.

A nationwide hartal was observed for three days into the non-cooperation movement. Six people were killed in Khulna in an army attack. In Chattogram, the death toll rose to 121 in two days.

"CAN PAKISTAN BE SAVED?" On the night of March 4, 1971, Major General Rao Farman Ali, then military adviser to the governor of East Pakistan, visited Bangabandhu



People line up to donate blood for the injured in the non-cooperation movement in Dhaka on Mar 4, 1971.

at his Dhanmondi residence and asked, "Can Pakistan be saved?"

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