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## ONE YEAR SINCE BANGABAZAR FIRE

### Construction of 10-storey complex to begin soon

DIPAN NANDY

After a year since the devastating fire at Bangabazar Market in the capital's Fulbaria, Dhaka South City Corporation is all set to construct a new 10-storey commercial building at the site.

The proposed complex, to be named Bangabazar Paikari Nagar Biponi Bitan, aims to provide a modern marketplace for the affected shop owners.

Traders at the market lost around Tk 303 crore worth of stuff in the blaze, and now they will be allotted shops in the new building where they can start anew.

Earlier, Fire Service and Civil Defence on April 2, 2019, declared the Bangabazar complex as extremely dangerous. They also issued notices in this regard 10 times, however, shop owners ignored those notices.

Meanwhile, DSCC had been looking to build a new multi-storied building in the space of Bangabazar



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**Before the fire, there were 2,961 legal shops in the four markets of Bangabazar complex. Owners of these shops will get allocations at the new building by depositing Tk 20 lakh each in the DSCC fund in four installments**



complex, but it was prevented by the shopkeepers before the fire occurred. Now the DSCC is finally going ahead with its plan.

Sources at DSCC's engineering department said construction of Bangabazar complex is expected to begin this month and end by 2028 at an estimated cost of Tk 387 crore.

The new market will comprise four blocks -- for Bangabazar hawkers' market, Gulistan hawkers' market, Mahanagar hawkers' market, and Adarsha hawkers' market -- spanning across 106.28 katha of land and accommodating a total of 3,213 shops.

Before the fire, there were 2,961 legal shops in the four markets of Bangabazar complex.

Owners of these shops will get allocations at the new building by depositing Tk 20 lakh each in the DSCC fund in four installments, and will get their shops by showing the valid allotment papers and other documents, said DSCC sources.

Rakib Hossain, owner of a shop at Bangabazar, said, "None will object to paying the necessary amount if they are guaranteed of getting a shop at the new market."

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## Now a shadow of its former self

DIPAN NANDY

Even little over a year ago, Bangabazar market used to be crowded with shoppers and traders from dawn till midnight ahead of Eid. But now, it's a shadow of its former self.

Everything changed exactly one year ago on this day. On April 4, 2023, just after Sehri, a devastating blaze gutted nearly 3,000 shops in the market, constructed with tin and wood.

The entire market turned into ashes, alongside clothes worth crores of taka, leaving the shop owners and businessmen destitute in the blink of an eye.

The market has failed to regain its previous vibrancy, even ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr and Pahela Baishakh.

The shops at the market, which used to sell clothes worth lakhs of taka daily before the incident, now barely manage to earn Tk 2,000-5,000 from sales per day.

On the other hand, customers are no longer getting products as per their requirements, unlike previously, when the market catered to customers from almost all walks of life.

Before the fire, the market used to see huge crowds ahead of Eid coming to buy clothes from morning till night, leaving the sellers hardly a chance to take a break.

A year after the fire, the scene, however, is completely different now.

Visiting the Bangabazar Market recently, this correspondent found it largely empty, with hardly any customers. Sellers at most makeshift shops were seen sitting idly with a grim face and a heavy heart. New

clothing items on display at the shops ahead of Eid were collecting dust in the absence of buyers.

"Wholesale sales have decreased significantly, by around 70 percent. Many of our wholesale buyers are no longer coming, thinking they won't find the same quality of clothes here anymore," said Mohammad Alamgir, a seller at Robin Garments.

Kamal Hossain, a businessman who lost all three of his shops in the market fire, has not yet recovered from the losses.

"We haven't been able to stand up again, even after a year. There were huge debts when the fire gutted our shops, and we have not been able to repay those yet," he said.

Sahabuddin, owner of Mim Fashion, echoed him.

Roni, another shop owner, said, "Many of us lost contacts with our wholesale customers across the country. After the fire, only a few of these customers cleared their payments, while the rest did not even contact us."

Only a few shoppers were roaming around the makeshift shops at the market, seemingly

disappointed.

"I came to buy a three-piece dress. There used to be clothes of much more quantity and variety at this market before, but not anymore, as it seems," said Rajia Aktar.

Rashidul Islam, another customer, echoed her.

Parvez Reza, who came to shop for his children, said, "The prices seem higher compared to the products available as well as the market's environment. It's difficult to buy anything if that's how things are."



### Brazilian minister to visit Bangladesh on April 7-8

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira will be visiting Bangladesh on April 7-8 to strengthen bilateral trade between the two countries.

Bangladesh and Brazil may sign at least one technical cooperation agreement and three memorandums of understanding on agriculture, sports and defence, said foreign ministry officials.

The Brazilian minister will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud.

"There will be a big business delegation along with the Brazilian foreign minister," Hasan Mahmud told reporters yesterday.

The Brazilian business delegation will meet the leadership of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and explore new areas of trade and investment, he added.

### Over 4,000 Bangla gambling ads on Facebook: Dismislab Companies use fake celeb photos for legitimacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Every year, Meta earns at least US \$1.5 million to run over 4,000 gambling ads in Bangla on Facebook, aimed at Bangladeshi users.

This was revealed by Dismislab -- a fact-checking organisation -- in a research released yesterday.

The ads have captions in Bangla and entice users to spend money in exchange for returns. They also photoshop images of celebrities or logos of prominent Bangladeshi news organisations to feign legitimacy, the report states.

"Dismislab uncovered around 50 ads on Ad Library that showcased doctored images or videos of celebrities and media logos. Among the most popular targets was cricketer Shakib Al Hasan," the report stated.

"The pages running the ads are shady, with no likes, followers, or posts, indicating they were opened to advertise gambling only," said the report.

"Many of these ads have been active for months to even a year," it added.

These pages are often run from countries like Ukraine, Germany, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, and even the US. Several have Bangladeshi admins.

"Meta's Online Gambling and Gaming Advertising Policy mandates that advertisers seeking to promote such content must obtain written permission using a

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### BAILEY ROAD INFERNO

## Rajuk finds gross violation of rules

Probe report recommends actions against building, restaurant owners

DIPAN NANDY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The owner of Green Cozy Cottage on Bailey Road, where a deadly fire claimed 46 lives on February 29, had no approvals for commercial use of the property.

They didn't even procure an occupancy certificate. Moreover, while there was an emergency exit in the approved design, the owner did not build it.

The probe body of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) -- headed by Rajuk member (development control) Mohammad Abdul Ahad -- revealed the findings in a report filed after a month-long investigation, submitted to Rajuk chairman on March 27.

Confirming the development, Ahad said, "We did not find any violation of rules for approving the building design."

He also claimed that there have been repeated violations of rules regarding use of the building.

"For instance, there was no permission to operate a restaurant in this building. We have already notified the higher authority," added Ahad.

According to the probe report, Rajuk conducted a mobile court on January 19, 2019, after the construction of Green Cozy Cottage to see whether it was constructed following guidelines.

At the time, the mobile court found some illegal portions of the building, that they immediately demolished.

"During the time of inspection, we did not find any fire exit. Then the owner was instructed to build a fire exit immediately, but it was not implemented even after the directives," Md Ashraful Islam, chief town planner of the Rajuk, also a member of the probe body, told this newspaper.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of probe report, which shows there was approval for commercial use from the ground floor to the fifth floor. Level six to eight was for residential use.

However, the committee did not find any evidence of residential use in the building.

Analysing the trade licence and other NOC (No Objection Certificates) letters of restaurants and businesses, found that only Gadget and Gear, Kacchi Bhai, Khana's, Hakka Dhaka, and Ambrosia Restaurant and Music Cafe took the required trade licences from Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

While Kacchi Bhai took NOC from the Civil Surgeon's Office and Ambrosia from the Fire Service, the six other restaurants and businesses

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**They didn't even procure an occupancy certificate. Moreover, while there was an emergency exit in the approved design, the owner did not build it.**



The seats of a bench at a bus stop in the capital's Hatirjheel seems to have disappeared amid a lack of monitoring and maintenance, making it unfit for use. However, any initiative to renovate the structure is yet to be taken, compelling passengers to stand for long hours while waiting for the bus. The photo was taken in Modhubagh area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN