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GAZI TYRES FACTORY FIRE Rescue op yet to begin

Families of 'missing' ones gather at site; experts unable to inspect risky building a day after fire doused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three days have passed since a massive fire broke out at Gazi Tyres factory in Narayanganj's Rugganj, but the fire service is yet to launch a rescue operation in the six-storey factory building.

A technical team of the Fire Service and Civil Defence went to the factory yesterday afternoon to check whether the structure was safe for conducting the operation. The team members did not enter the building as it was risky.

The team operated drones to look for victims trapped inside the building, but did not find anyone.

Officials said they will decide about the rescue operation today.

Hamidur Rahman, additional district magistrate of Narayanganj and also the chief of an investigation committee, told The Daily Star that they would bring experts and advanced equipment from the capital to carry out the rescue operation if the local fire service cannot do the job.

Hamidur said they were making a list of the people who were claimed to have been missing by their family members.

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Firefighters spraying water to cool the Gazi Auto Tyres Factory in Narayanganj's Rugganj around 12:30pm yesterday. Though they could douse the fire on Tuesday, after a 32-hour hectic effort, small fires continue to flare up due to the extreme heat. The six-storey factory, owned by former Awami League minister Golam Dastagir Gazi, was set on fire by arsonists on Sunday night. PHOTO: SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

It won't be prudent to ban AL
Says law adviser



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday said it will not be prudent to ban the Awami League as a party.

"If a political party is involved in militant and anti-state activities, if that is truly the case, then an honest investigation should be conducted and the party may be banned," he told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

As a reporter reminded him that some groups were demanding a ban on the

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Star INTERVIEW

Campus politics should focus on education

Newly appointed DU VC
Prof Niaz shares his views

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

The focus of student politics should be issues relating to academia, said Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan, the new vice-chancellor of Dhaka University.

"I believe that if politics is to be done on campus, it should be related to education. We will talk about curriculum, the relationship between the university and society and between students and teachers. These should be the main aspects of student politics," he said.

Prof Niaz was talking to The Daily Star and other media outlets yesterday, his first day as the VC. He spoke about the crucial issues of student-teacher politics as questions were raised on partisan politics polluting the campus.

Prof Niaz said a greater social consensus is required to decide whether such politics should exist on the campus. "It is difficult to decide on our own."

Asked whether he wants to make Ducsu (DU Central Students' Union) effective again, Prof Niaz said he will take measures to make the university's existing structures

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Journalist's body found floating in Hatirjheel



Rahanuma Sarah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a journalist at GTV, also known as Gazi Television, was found floating in Hatirjheel lake in the capital early yesterday.

Rahanuma Sarah, 32, was the newsroom editor of the channel.

Pedestrians pulled her out and took her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared her dead around 2:00am.

Md Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Hatirjheel Police Station, said a restaurant employee spotted her floating in the lake.

The OC said whether it is suicide or murder will be known only after getting the autopsy report.

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Floods upend lives of thousands

Extent of damage getting clear as water starts receding in many areas

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and SIFAYET ULLAH

The extent of the devastation from the floods is becoming visible as the waters are receding.

Thousands of homes have been washed away and many small businesses are destroyed.

Mohammad Mostafa, 66, a resident of Chhagalnaiya, Feni, said his paddy field on two and a half acres and stored rice were ruined.

"I don't know what we will eat when the relief effort stops," he said.

In Chhagalnaiya, hundreds of locals were running after trucks carrying relief materials yesterday.

Officials said around 80 percent of the upazila was inundated.

Due to heavy rain, the level of water increased in eight upazilas of Noakhali yesterday, reports our correspondent there.

In Lakshmipur, officials said 90 percent of the district was still flooded and over 8 lakh people were marooned.

Families, including the elderly, women and children, have been living on the sides of roads in the district.

Abul Kalam, a 62-year-old farmer of Char Kelakopa area, said he had been sleeping on a plastic sheet under the open sky for a week. There was three feet-deep water in his hut.

"Never in my life have I seen a flood lasting

this long," he said.

Around 200 others were seen in similar conditions in the area.

"I have my three cows with me. They are hungry too. We are surviving on people's handouts," he said.

In Cumilla, the level of floodwater is falling along the Gumti river.

Abdul Latif, superintendent engineer at Cumilla East Water Development Board, said the river is flowing 22cm below the danger level. But as the

embankment is broken, villages are still getting flooded in Burichang and Brahmanpara upazilas.

The disaster management ministry announced that the flood situation will improve soon.

Water levels in all rivers are falling, and heavy rain is not likely, Additional Secretary KM Ali Reza told a press briefing.

Over 58 lakh people in 11 districts were affected by the floods. The disaster has so far claimed 31 lives.

Twelve people drowned in Cumilla, six in Noakhali, two in Feni, five in Chattogram, three in Cox's Bazar, and one each in Khagrachhari, Brahmanbaria, and Lakshmipur. Two people remain missing in Moulvibazar.

The government has opened 4,003 shelters, providing refuge to over 5.4 lakh people.

"We are surviving on people's handouts. I have my three cows with me on the street. They are hungry too."

Abul Kalam, a farmer in Lakshmipur

'Don't buy any properties of S Alam Group'

BB governor says those will be sold later to refund depositors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People who deposited money in Islamic Bank and other Shariah-based banks will be given their money back after selling of S Alam Group's assets, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the central bank headquarters, Mansur urged people not to buy assets of S Alam Group.

"No one should touch the wealth of this group for the sake of the country. We want to use the assets to refund the depositors."

Mansur also urged the depositors and customers to be patient. "Don't withdraw money all at once. Then no one will get the money. Many have kept money in these banks for getting good interest. Don't be impatient now."

He added that they will not return the money by printing more money. "Because that will not be good for the nation and inflation will be 100 percent."

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Bank accounts of Salman, Sheikh Selim, Quader frozen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit yesterday asked banks to freeze the accounts of Salman F Rahman, former adviser on private industry affairs to Sheikh Hasina; and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, former lawmaker; and their family members.

The BFIU also ordered freezing the accounts of Obaidul Quader, former road transport and bridges minister; Md Akiz Uddin, a former deputy managing director of Islamic Bank and also a personal secretary to the S Alam Group chairman; and their family members.

The banks have been ordered to keep the accounts, including those of their businesses, frozen for the next 30 days, according to letters.

They were also instructed to suspend transactions between the family members for an initial period of 30 days.

The BFIU ordered the banks to provide detailed information on all the accounts by the next five working days.



Illegally parked people carriers, popularly known as legunas, occupy a portion of the street in front of Golap Shah Mazar at Gulistan. It disrupts traffic flow on one of the busiest roads in Dhaka. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Now, Israel launches deadly West Bank ops

UN says West Bank raids risk 'deepening the already catastrophic situation'

AFP, Jenin

Israel launched a large-scale military operation Wednesday in the occupied West Bank, where the army said it killed nine Palestinian fighters, while the nearly 11-month Gaza war showed no signs of abating.

The offensive has killed more than 40,000 people in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. It has also caused widespread destruction, displaced nearly all of Gaza's 2.4 million people at least once and triggered a humanitarian crisis.

In the West Bank in the early hours of yesterday, the Israeli military launched a series of coordinated raids across four cities — Jenin, Nablus, Tubas and Tulkarem.

Columns of Israeli armoured vehicles entered two refugee camps, in Tulkarem and Tubas, as well as Jenin. By midday, they were blocking entrances to the towns and camps, AFP photographers said, with soldiers firing at the camps from which gunfire and explosions were heard.

Israeli bulldozers dug up asphalt from the streets, with the army saying it was looking for roadside bombs.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Israeli forces killed nine people and wounded 15 others in the raids, revising its previous toll of 10 dead.