

# Bangladesh: After the Savar Building Collapse

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## It's people's mission

### ***Demonstrate unique efforts for humanity***

Swarms of flies began buzzing around the decomposing bodies sandwiched between slabs of rubble yesterday, a day after the nine-storey Rana Plaza collapsed in Savar. Volunteers, with bare hands, engaged themselves in all-out efforts to rescue the survivors or recover the dead.

The civilian volunteers and local residents, putting their lives at risk, continued the rescue efforts along with a small number of firefighters and military personnel since the collapse early Wednesday.

However, lack of an adequate number of basic equipment like torches, hammers and metal cutters made their attempts harder at every step. They needed oxygen cylinders with masks, torches, protective eyeglasses, bullhorns, rubber gloves and air-fresheners to carry out the operation.

The firefighters bored holes at several points on the ninth floor that has come down almost to the height of a two-storey building, searching for survivors and dead bodies.

Confusion, mess, rush of crowds and absence of central coordination were what characterised the entire site of the disaster and the rescue efforts.

Red Crescent, different voluntary and medical organisations and private individuals provided drinking water, dry food, clothes and whatever electric equipment was available to the help of the rescuers and the trapped.

Md Yunus, a local electrician who dared to enter the narrow space between the ceilings in search for survivors and dead bodies, said, "There are still innumerable bodies under the debris."

Brig Gen Mohammad Siddiqui Alam Sikder, who is supervising the rescue operation, said, "Army men are making holes on collapsed ceilings and sending voluntary rescuers inside, as they know the building's positions well."

Lt Col Md Moin Uddin, commanding officer of the Third Engineering Battalion of Savar Cantonment, said there were only two vibrating cutter machines and a fork lifter that could be applied to remove

debris only after survivors were safely taken out.

Massive intervention with heavy equipment at the very outset would bring about further disaster, he said, adding that around 1,600 people were rescued and more than 200 bodies were recovered until yesterday.

Moin could not confirm, but it was estimated that at least 1,000 people were still trapped. He said a human being could survive 72 hours in such a situation.

Officials however apprehended the operation might take a week to complete.

TAWFIQUE ALI

\* <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/its-peoples-mission/>

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## **Back from the death**

### ***Sofura tells her harrowing ordeal of 27 hours***



*Sofura begum calls her relatives to let them know she survived the Rana Plaza disaster.* Photo: Amran Hossain

It was not pain but fear that was killing her during the time she was stuck in the mangled wreckage of the nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar.

At the time of the collapse on Wednesday, Sofura Begum was working at Phantom Apparel on the third floor. All of a sudden the rooftop caved in, carrying her along to the second floor where she remained sandwiched for the next 27 hours in rubble.

Sofura, a divorcee and mother of two children, was speaking of her horrifying experience to The Daily Star as she lay on a bed at Enam Medical College Hospital, Savar, yesterday.

She had not blacked out even for a moment before she was rescued around 11:00am. Trapped under a sewing machine and pressed against a concrete wall on the other side, she could only move her eyelids in futile attempts to see in the dark.

At one point she felt very thirsty but there was no water, Sofura said. "One worker was then kind enough to give me saliva" to wet her throat.

"I also heard of people urinating and some others drinking that thing."

Her injuries to the head, arms and legs had not worried her. All the time she had been wondering whether she would see her eight-year-old daughter Regina and five-year-old son Sohel again.

There had been a lot of people like her trapped on the second and third floors, she said. Some were buried under debris while some were trapped but unhurt.

She joined the garment factory three years ago, leaving her children in her home town Bogra. She has one relative in Dhaka — her uncle Akkas Ali, who resides in Savar.

“I was afraid to go to the factory [on Wednesday] as cracks had developed in the building the day before.”

But the factory owner had threatened that the workers would not get their arrears if they remained absent, Sofura said.

She had not received her payment for the last two months. Akkas Ali, a plumber who was looking after her at the hospital, said she borrowed Tk 50 from him on Tuesday to buy a kilogram of rice.

“Now I don’t know how she will bear the costs of treatment.”

PINAKI ROY

FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2013

\* <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/back-from-the-death/>

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FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2013

## **72 more rescued from ruins**

### ***Death toll rises to 304***

Seventy-two more people were pulled out alive as rescue operation continues for a third day on Friday, with the death toll from the Savar building collapse rising to 304.

Of the bodies, 281 have so far been handed over to their families, Shahinur Islam, director of Inter-Services Public Relation, said at a press briefing at the spot around 4:30pm.

He said 2,348 victims — 304 deceased and 2044 alive — have so far been pulled out from the ruins since the nine-story building collapsed Wednesday morning.

The ISPR director said, “Our first priority is to save the lives as per the government’s instruction. We will carry on our operation until the last person is pulled out.”

“All necessary equipment is at our disposal. We are trying to make an intelligent use of our resources.”

Of the survivors, 18 were brought out together from a point on the fourth floor of the collapsed building around 4:00pm, report our correspondents at the site.

Earlier, rescuers have brought out four survivors from a mangled floor of the caved-in building around 1:50pm, said sources in the control room opened for counting the bodies.

As people's shouting for help was being heard out of the holes, rescuers from fire service and army struggled with concrete cutters and cranes with the hope of finding more survivors trapped inside the collapsed Rana plaza.

Besides, food and water were given through the holes as the exact number of survivors is still unknown.

Rana Plaza, a nine-storey building, housing five garment factories, a shopping complex and a branch of Brac Bank collapsed Wednesday morning, trapping inside a huge number of people.

STAR ONLINE REPORT

\* <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/toll-reaches-278/>

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## **RMG workers go berserk in capital**

### **SAVAR BUILDING COLLAPSE**

#### ***Over 100 vehicles vandalised, hundreds suffer as vehicles go off the roads***

Angry over the deaths in Savar building collapse, thousands of garment workers vandalised over 100 vehicles in different parts of the city disrupting vehicular movement on several city streets for long time.

While many splinter groups demonstrated in many parts of the city, the main vandalism took place at Gabtoli, Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Mirpur, Pallabi, Gulshan, Badda, Rampura and Malibagh, our correspondents reported as death toll from the collapse shot up to 292.

Hundreds of people were seen walking to their destinations as passenger vehicles kept off the road for quite some time following the vandalism.

The aggrieved workers swung into action at Rampura in the morning as rescuers kept on pulling out more bodies from inside the rubble two days after the nine-storey Rana Plaza in Savar was razed to the ground.

A few hundred workers marched the DIT Road, chanting slogans demanding arrest and punishment of the people responsible for the deaths in the building collapse.

They vandalised a few vehicles there.

Several other groups meanwhile brought out similar processions in Badda and Malibagh.

Our correspondents reported that aggrieved garment workers came out on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Gabtoli and Kalyanpur.

With bamboo and wooden sticks in their hands, the RMG workers attacked all kinds of vehicles that were plying the busy road.

They kept the highway blocked for a few hours, suspending vehicular movement.

After being stranded for quite some time, scores of people later started to walk to their destinations on feet.

Normalcy returned there around 1:00pm.

At Shyamoli, hundreds of workers carrying bamboo and wooden sticks vandalised at least 15 vehicles, including BRTC double-decker bus, covered van and private cars, plying on the Mirpur Road around the noon.

At least 15 people, including 10 bus passengers, were hurt this time.

Garment workers also demonstrated in Mirpur and Pallabi area where they also vandalised vehicles.

They chanted slogans demanding punishment to the owners of RanaPlaza and also the factories housed in the building, said Abdul Latif Sheikh, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station.

The agitating workers vandalised a number of factories at Shewrapara, Mirpur and Pallabi areas which remained open on Friday.

Following the vandalism, most of the factory authorities in the areas suspended their operation for day fearing further unrest, the police official said.

Meanwhile, five demonstrators sustained injuries when vehicles tried to speed away in a bid to avoid the vandalism in Gulshan-1.

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