

Deadly fire at Bangladesh food processing factory

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Flames rise the morning after a fire broke out at a factory in Rupganj of Narayanganj district, on the outskirts of Dhaka [Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters]

Dhaka, July 9 (RHC)-- A massive fire in a Bangladesh food processing factory has killed at least 52 people trapped by flames that forced many workers to leap for their lives from the upper floors, AFP news

agency reports, citing police officials.

The blaze broke out at the factory in Rupganj, an industrial town 25km (15 miles) east of capital Dhaka, on Thursday afternoon and was still burning nearly 24 hours later, the agency said.

“Once the fire is under control, we will conduct a search and rescue operation inside. Then we can confirm any further casualties, if any,” fire service spokesman Debashish Bardhan said.

About 30 people were injured and hundreds of distraught relatives and other workers waited anxiously as emergency services brought out bodies from the burning building. Police initially gave a toll of three dead but it rose dramatically as firefighters reached the upper floors and started bringing out dozens of bodies of trapped workers.

The charred victims were piled in a fleet of ambulances to take them to mortuaries amid anguished shouts and tears from people watching in the streets. Dinu Moni Sharma, head of the Dhaka fire department, said the fire took place because highly flammable chemicals and plastics had been stockpiled inside.

Relatives of the victims mourn at the site of the fire [Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters]

Many of those injured leapt for their lives from the upper floors in the complex, police said. It was unclear how many people were trapped inside.

Mohammad Saiful, a factory worker who escaped the fire, said there were dozens of people inside when the blaze began. “On the third floor, gates on both stairwells were closed. Other colleagues are saying there were 48 people inside. I don’t know what happened to them,” he said.

Mamun, another worker, said he and a dozen other workers ran to the roof after the fire broke out on the ground floor and black smoke covered the whole factory. “Firefighters brought us down by using rope,” he told reporters.

As clouds of smoke billowed from the factory building, hundreds of distraught people gathered outside to find out updates of their kins.

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