



বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড এন্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট) BANGLADESH LEGAL AID and SERVICES TRUST (BLAST)

28th April, 2013

Press Release:

High Court Directs Bangladesh Bank to Freeze Accounts re Rana Plaza Collapse

The High Court today directed the Bangladesh Bank to issue a circular on concerned commercial banks imposing restrictions on withdrawal or transfer of money by the owners of Rana Plaza in Savar and by owners of the five RMG factories located there. It noted that the salaries of the workers should nevertheless be paid from these accounts under BGMEA's supervision.

The HC also issued a Rule Nisi on the concerned authorities asking them to show cause why the collapse victims should not be compensated and why legal action should not be taken against the persons involved. The Court summoned the chief factory inspector, the director of industrial police in Savar zone, and the local government officer (the Upazila Executive Officer (UNO) to appear before it.

The Court also ordered the Inspector General of Police to submit a report before it within seven days on what legal steps the government has taken after the collapse of Spectrum building in 2005, Phoenix building in 1997 and the fire in Tazreen Fashions Ltd in 2013.

A Division Bench of the High Court, comprising Justice Mirza Hossain Haider and Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam, passed the order today in a writ petition filed on behalf of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK). Advocate ZI Khan Panna, represented BLAST and ASK in Writ Petition No.4390/2013, with Advocate Shahnaj Babli, Advocate Khondoker Shahriar Shakir, Advocate Qazi Zahed Iqbal, Advocate Abantee Nurul and others. Deputy Attorney General AL Amin Sarker and Assistant Attorney General K B Masud Rumi appeared for the Government.

Background: On Thursday 25 April 2013, the Rana Plaza in Savar collapsed suddenly after developing cracks, causing the death to date of more than 300 people with many more injured and countless others remaining trapped in the wreckage.

On the reporting of this incident, a High Court Division bench comprising Mr. Justice Mirza Hossain Haider and Mr. Justice Md Khurshid Alam issued a Suo Motu rule on 25 April 2013. The High Court has earlier issued directions and orders on the Government to take action in cases of building collapses resulting in the deaths of scores of citizens. For example, in 2005 after the Polashbari incident, it directed the concerned authorities to show cause why they should not establish an independent Commission to inquire into the incident, and protect the victims and their families. In this earlier order, the Court had directed the building owner and the concerned RMG factory owners to submit a list of their accounts and to allow the victims and their families to enforce their legal right to compensation and further restrained them from disposing of any of their assets and properties to frustrate the realization of compensation by the victims and families till disposal of the Rule. That Rule was made returnable within three weeks. No action appears to have been taken to date.

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