

## Repetition of the incident: Distribution of free clothing as 'Zakat' killed 25

At least 27 women and children (4 children and 23 women) were killed in a stampede when several hundred poor people gathered Friday (July 10, 2015) in front of a house in Mymensingh district headquarters to collect free clothes as Zakat.

Police and witnesses said since Thursday night over 1,000 people had started gathering on the narrow Atul Chakrabarty Road outside the home of zakat donor who owns a chewing tobacco brand Nurani Jarda. The factory authority had announced the distribution of free clothing at his home which also serves as his factory.

Around 5:00am, a small gate to the factory was opened and some people seeking zakat clothes went in but it was difficult to go through with every one trying to get in. When the main gate was opened to let people in, the crowd stormed the compound. With zakat seekers running and pushing and shoving each other in their frantic effort to get the clothes, some fell to the ground and got trampled, they said. Over 50 people were injured.

Some alleged that the workers of the factory had swooped on them with truncheons, worsening the situation during the incident. "As they [the workers] beat us inside the gate, people started running. Many fell on the ground at that time," said Ambia Begum, 50, who had managed to get out of the compound unhurt.

However, a murder case was filed and arrested the donor, his son and six factory employees.

The factory authority distributed 640 cards among the slum dwellers on Thursday but some 1,500 people gathered and stormed the compound.

They had a budget of distributing 1,000 saris and lungis among the poor this year.

Abdur Rashid, senior assistant superintendent of police of Mymensingh, told "They [the factory authorities] did not inform us about distributing zakat to such a huge number of people. They did not ask for any help from us either."

Farhad Hossain, a physician at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), said the reasons for the deaths were stampede and suffocation. The bodies were handed over to the families, said Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mymensingh Kotwali Police Station.

Among the over 50 injured, two people were still admitted to the medical college in critical conditions.

Last year, two people were killed in a stampede when the hundreds gathered to collect zakat clothes at a company's office on Katpatti Road in Barisal. In the last two decades about 147 people were killed to collect the Zakat clothes.

## List of Zakat Tragedy from 1980 to 2015

Year/Date	Location	Number of Death	Number of Injured
July 10, 2015	Mymensingh -Sadar	27 (23 Women & 4 Children)	50
July 25, 2014	Barishal-Kathpatti	2	20
July 24, 2014	Manikganj- Girls School Road	3 women	13
August 16, 2012	Dhaka- Fakirapul	3 women	
December 1, 2002	Gaibandha- Godown Road	45 (most of them are women and children)	100
April 13, 1991	Dhaka -Nwabpur	2 (1 man, 1 woman)	25
April 26, 1990	Chittagong- Sadar	35	200
May 5, 1989	Chandpur	14	50
May 23, 1987	Dhaka-Cantonment	4	NA
July 9, 1983	Dhaka- Bangladesh Bank	3 children	NA
1980	Dhaka - Jurain	13	NA
<b>Total</b>		<b>147</b>	<b>458</b>

### PROBE AND COMPENSATION

A three-member probe body, led by Additional Deputy Inspector General of Police Shafiqul Islam, was formed yesterday (July 10, 2015) to investigate the incident. The committee was asked to submit its report in three working days.

Mymensingh district administration also formed a three-member committee led by Additional District Magistrate Mollica Khatun. It would submit its report within the same time.

The religious affairs ministry and district administration separately announced to give Tk 10,000 to each of the victim's families, said ANM Faizul Haque, upazila nirbahi officer of Mymensingh sadar upazila.

### 'ASK FOR POLICE HELP'

Police headquarters yesterday issued a statement asking people to seek their help in distributing zakat or for any "uncontrolled" large gatherings.

The statement made on behalf of Inspector General of Police (IGP) AKM Shahidul Haque said the superintendents of police of districts or the officers-in-charge of police stations should be informed at least a day ahead of such events.

The statement warned of legal actions if there was a lack of security in any such unannounced gatherings.

The Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, expressed deep shock over the tragedy, according to Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha. In a condolence message, she offered prayers and 'conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved families.'