

About 3,000 homeless as fire consumes Bangladesh slum

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People gather at a rooftop to watch the fire that broke out at a slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, August 16, 2019. (Reuters)

Dhaka: About 3,000 people in Bangladesh were left homeless after a massive fire consumed several hundred shanties in a slum on the northern outskirts of the capital city of Dhaka, government officials said on Sunday.

Three people were injured in the blaze that struck a congested slum in Mirpur town on Friday night.

Video footage showed heavy plumes of smoke billowing all around the slum area, just a few kilometers from the country's main cricket stadium.

Fire officials scrambled to get access to enough water and struggled for three hours to douse the flames, said Anwar Hossain, senior station manager of Mirpur fire station.

“According to our investigation committee 1,200 shanties were damaged and out of this 750 shanties burnt totally,” said Enamur Rahman, junior minister for Disaster Management and Relief.

Slum-dwellers are seen searching for their belongings from ashes after fire broke out on their shelters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, August 17, 2019. (Reuters)

There were no fatalities as most residents were away celebrating the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, officials said.

Rahman said the government will initially provide a total of 500 tonnes of rice and 1.3 million taka (\$15,476) for everyone affected and authorities were looking into the reason for the fire and to assess the extent of the damage. He rejected some news reports that said many more homes were destroyed.

Slum-dwellers are seen gather near their shelters after fire burnt them out in Dhaka, Bangladesh, August 17, 2019. (Reuters)

Fires at factories, slums and markets are common in Bangladesh. At least 25 people were killed in March this year when fire broke out in a 22-storey commercial building in Dhaka's upscale area of Banani.

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