

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

JANUARY TO JUNE 2018

## HUTS ON FIRE



## Urban Resource Centre

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## City witnesses three fire incidents in a day

A huge fire broke out in a chemical factory in Gulshan-i-Maymar on Thursday evening, according to officials.



The fire erupted at around 5pm in phase-II of the locality. Initially, a few fire engines were sent to put out the fire but after some time more fire engines were called in from across the city as it was declared a third degree blaze.

As many as 12 fire engines were busy in controlling the fire till late Thursday night. Firefighters have also sought help from around 10-12 private water tankers to meet a shortage of water, said fire official Ghulam Yasin.

So far, no loss of life or injury to any human was reported.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal directed the police concerned to provide every possible help to firefighters and get the roads leading to the factory cleared.

### **SITE area**

Earlier in the day, a fire erupted in a warehouse, where used clothes were stored, in the SITE area near Paracha Chowk.

Three fire engines managed to control the fire, after hectic efforts lasting over three hours, which caused a huge financial loss.

An official from the fire department told Dawn that the city is experiencing windy weather these days which spreads fire fast and makes the job of firefighters difficult.

He added, "Had there been no winds, the situation would have been brought under control much earlier and the damage could have been minimised."

### **Nazimabad No 4**

In the early hours of Thursday morning, at around 5am, a cardboard factory in Nazimabad No 4 caught fire.

It was extinguished after hectic efforts lasting several hours, according to officials.

After realising the gravity of the situation, six fire engines and a water tender were sent to meet any eventuality.

The firemen managed to control the blaze by 3:30pm, a fire official said. The fire badly damaged the factory building, destroyed its dyeing machine and other equipment.

However, the exact estimation of loss and cause of the fire could not be ascertained immediately, added the fireman.

"We are working on calculating the loss and it will soon be determined," he concluded.  
(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 17, 12/01/2018)

## **Heirs of Baldia factory fire victims to get monthly pension**

Regretting that the culprits responsible for one of the worst industrial disasters in the country were still at large, activists representing two major non-governmental organisations announced on Monday that heirs

of the Baldia factory fire victims would get monthly pension as a long-term compensation from the amount paid by the Germany company for the affected families.

The press conference was jointly organised by the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and the Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research (Piler).

More than 250 workers lost their lives in the fire that engulfed Ali Enterprise, a garment manufacturing unit, in Baldia on Sept 11, 2012.

“We have been struggling to secure appropriate compensation for the heirs of Baldia fire victims since 2012. This issue is now almost resolved as a pension formula has been agreed upon with consensus and the workers’ families will start receiving monthly compensation this month,” Nasir Mansoor of the NTUF said.

#### ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER AD

The German company (KIK Textilien), which received most of the produce manufactured at Ali Enterprise, had earlier paid \$1m as immediate compensation to the families of the victim.

“The German company initially sent an amount of \$1 million for immediate relief under the agreement it signed with Piler, The amount was disbursed with the help of a judicial commission in a transparent manner,” he explained, adding that the company later sent \$5.16m as long-term compensation required under the accord.

However, Mr Mansoor said that the International Labor Organisation (ILO) had suggested a procedure of distribution which was not accepted by the affected families. An oversight committee was set up comprising representatives of the victim families, labour department, Sindh Employees Social Security Institution and labour NGOs.

“Affected families had some reservations over the pension formula, which now have been removed. The ILO has recently made this formula more effective and suggested three options for disbursing pension,” he said.

Under the formula adopted with consensus, a widow and parents of a deceased worker would get a monthly pension of Rs7,545 (in case of an unmarried victim) each.

“With one child, a widow would get Rs10,060. With two children, the amount would be Rs13,138. The pension would be distributed through the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution,” he said.

Calling the case a great victory, Karamat Ali of Piler said that this was the first instance in the world where a compensation system had been established under the ILO conventions for families whose loved ones died in a factory fire.

“We will fight for the right to pension for life and that there are no deductions in the pension amount,” he said, underscoring the need for implementing labour laws in the country, carrying out inspection of factories and creating safe working conditions.

The activists appreciated the support from local and international organisations, including Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, activists, the German government as well as the German company which took responsibility and compensated the victims, though it delayed the compensation process.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 17, 16/01/2018)

### **Alleged Baldia factory arsonists bail plea rejected**

The Sindh High Court (SHC) dismissed on Monday the bail application filed by Zubair alias Lala alias



Chariya who is facing trial for allegedly setting fire to the Baldia garments factory, an incident which claimed the lives of 259 workers, in September 2012.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto, dismissed the plea as the lawyer representing the applicant did not press the same. However, it directed the concerned anti-terrorism court to expedite the trial and conclude it as soon as possible.

The judges gave their verdict after hearing arguments from the defence's lawyer, the special public prosecutor and the investigation officer.

Zubair had approached the court in April last year against the dismissal of his bail plea by the ATC, where the trial against Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leaders Hammad Siddiqui, Abdul Rauf Siddiqui, Abdul Rehman, alias Bhola and others is pending in the factory fire case.

Zubair's lawyer, Advocate Muhammad Tamaz Khan, argued that the prosecution had named his client almost two years after the incident took place. Justice Phulpoto asked was not it enough that the suspect had been named in the high-profile case. He went on to ask how many people were killed in the incident.

**Baldia factory fire case: ATC rejects Rehman Bhola's bail plea**

The defence lawyer said it was an unfortunate and very tragic incident, but the matter needed further inquiry in regard to his client, who may be punished according to the law, if found involved in the alleged offence. He said that while the court might not order excluding the applicant's name from the case, he may be released on bail till the inquiry was completed.

The investigation officer, SSP Sajid Sadozai, read out the statements of the owners of the ill-fated Ali Enterprises and the co-accused. He argued that one witness deposed on December 22, 2016 that chemicals were sprinkled in the factory and Zubair had set fire to it.

The investigation officer claimed that the prosecution had enough evidence available against Zubair and Bhola, the alleged front-man in the case, who himself had confessed his role in the arson attack.

Justice Phulpoto asked whether the people (workers) were burnt to death. At this, the special public prosecutor Sajid Mehboob informed that initially the matter was poorly investigated. However, after the statement of another suspect Rizwan Qureshi, emerged the case was re-investigated.

He argued that statements of the factory's owners were recorded by a joint investigation team, which comprised officers of intelligence agencies. The JIT report revealed that the factory was set on fire and it was not an accident.

**FIA team to bring Hammad Siddiqui back from Dubai**

Quoting the report, the prosecutor said the chief of the MQM's Karachi Tamzeemi Committee, Hammad, and Bhola wanted a share in extortion demanded from the factory's owners.

Mehboob argued that even after the factory was set on fire, the MQM leaders received more money from the factory owners.

After hearing arguments, the judges dismissed the bail plea. They further directed the ATC concerned to expedite the trial and conclude it as soon as possible, according to the law.

**Case history**

A JIT had found that Zubair, a supporter of the MQM who ran the finishing department at the ill-fated Ali Enterprises, came on the day of incident to the factory accompanied by Waseem Dehelvi and four others.

An accountant at the factory, Muhammad Arshad, testified that he saw Zubair handing out black shopping bags to the men accompanying him. Zubair was the first to toss a bag to the side of the warehouse and the rest followed course and threw their bags in different directions. The fire erupted within a short period of time, Arshad said.  
(THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, 05, 30/01/2018)

### **MPA Rauf Siddiqui, nine others indicted in Baldia factory fire case**

An antiterrorism court indicted on Wednesday Muttahida Qaumi Movement lawmaker Rauf Siddiqui and nine others in the Baldia factory fire case.

Over 250 workers were burnt alive when a multistorey garment factory was set on fire in Baldia Town in September 2012.

The judge of ATC-VII, who is conducting trial at the judicial complex inside the central prison, read out the charges against MQM MPA Rauf Siddiqui, then MQM sector-in-charge Abdul Rehman alias Bhola, Zubair alias Charya, Dr Abdul Sattar Khan, Hyderabad-based businessman Umar Hasan Qadri, Iqbal Adeeb Khanum and the ill-fated industrial unit's four gatekeepers — Shahrukh, Fazal Ahmed, Arshad Mehmood and Ali Mohammad.

*Prosecution told to produce its witnesses for evidence on Feb 17*

However, they pleaded not guilty and opted to contest the charges. The court directed the prosecution to produce its witnesses for evidence on Feb 17.

The jail authorities produced Abdul Rehman and Zubair before the court during Wednesday's proceedings while the other accused persons are on bail.

The then chief of the MQM organising committee, Hammad Siddiqui, and businessman Ali Hasan Qadri have been declared proclaimed offenders in the case.

Initially, owner of the factory Abdul Aziz Bhaila and his two sons, Arshad Bhaila and Shahid Bhaila, a general manager and four gatekeepers were charge-sheeted for their alleged negligence.

However, the case took a new turn in February 2015 when Pakistan Rangers, Sindh, submitted a joint investigation team (JIT) report in the Sindh High Court, which revealed that the factory was set on fire after its owners failed to pay 'protection money'. Subsequently, the reinvestigation of the case was ordered in March 2015 through a JIT.

In March 2016, the police through a progress report informed the court that the factory fire was a planned terrorist act and the JIT had recommended that a new case be registered under the antiterrorism law and proposed Hammad Siddiqui, his alleged frontman and then Baldia Town sector-in-charge Abdul Rehman, businessmen brothers Ali Hasan Qadri and Umer Hasan Qadri, Dr Abdul Sattar, Ms Khanum, Zubair alias Charya and others as accused in it.

However, after a lengthy reinvestigation, police filed a supplementary investigation report in August 2016 in which they only charge-sheeted Hammad Siddiqui, Abdul Rehman and their three to four unknown accomplices and did not send the 13 other suspects, including those proposed by the JIT, for trial.

But the court had put all discharged men in the list of the accused by observing that the owners/manager had ordered the closure of the gates while others abetted the crime one way or another by extorting money on the pretext of distributing it among the victims' families.

Later, the court partly recalled its order regarding the inclusion of the owners as accused as the prosecution said they were the key witnesses in the case.

In December 2016, Abdul Rehman alias Bhola was brought back after his arrest in Bangkok through Interpol, and he recorded his confessional statement before a judicial magistrate. In April 2017, police filed a supplementary charge sheet against Abdul Rehman.

According to the supplementary charge sheet, Abdul Rehman during interrogation as well as in his confessional statement before a magistrate disclosed that he had directed detained accused Zubair alias Charya, and others to set the factory ablaze on the instruction of Hammad Siddiqui as the factory owners had refused to pay the demanded protection money and 'partnership' [in the factory].

He also alleged that after the incident Rauf Siddiqui got a case registered against the owners of the industrial unit and then he said that he came to know that Rauf and Hammad received Rs40 million to Rs50 million from the owners to tone down the case against them. However, police had declared the MPA innocent in the supplementary report.

Thereafter, special public prosecutor Sajid Mahboob Shaikh filed an application and argued that police had not charge-sheeted the lawmaker, but still sufficient evidence was available to connect him with the offence.

Last month, the court allowed the application and made Mr Siddiqui an accused in the case.

The Qadri brothers, Dr Sattar Khan and Ms Khanum have been charged with using the money allegedly extorted from the factory owners on the pretext of compensation for the victims' families while the gatekeepers have been booked for allegedly closing the exit points.  
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn 17, 15/02/2018)

### **Disbursement of pension to families of Baldia fire victims begins**

Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (Sessi), working under the Sindh labour ministry on Thursday initiated the process of disbursement of pension to the legal heirs of the victims of Baldia factory fire after signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) a day earlier.

The MoU was signed by Abdul Rasheed Solangi, labour secretary, and Vic Van Vuuren, director enterprise department of the ILO, at a programme in which representatives of labour organisations, ILO and Sindh government were also present.

ILO country director Ingrid Christensen; Mukhtar Ahmed, Nasir Mansoor, deputy secretary general of the National Trade Union Federation, and Karamat Ali, executive director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research signed the MoU as witnesses.

Officials said on Thursday heirs of some 60 out of 260 victims of the fire incident took part in the process. The remaining would do so next week.

#### **ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER AD**

The funds amount to US \$5.15 million, including a margin of \$0.25m, provided by German company KiK Textilien after an agreement with PILER in 2012 under which KiK had initially paid \$1m for emergency relief during the same year. The incident happened on Sept 11, 2012.

The ILO, under Convention 121 — Employment Injury Benefits Convention, has played an important role in finalisation of long-term compensation, which is now being distributed in the form of pension.

The German company transferred the amount for long-term compensation to the ILO which would provide part of it to Sessi for disbursement.

The ILO in consultation with other parties determines the duration of the initial period of implementation of the Baldia arrangement.

During the provisional period, the ILO will transfer the required monies from the fund as authorised and requested by the oversight committee.

At the end of the provisional period, the ILO will transfer the remaining principal of the fund to the authorities appointed to be in charge.

Under the MoU, Sessi can invest the funds in secured investments expected to receive return of at least two per cent.

An oversight committee with tripartite mechanism has been established to look after the process of disbursement of pensions.

Members of that committee included Sindh government's labour ministry, federal government's ministry of overseas Pakistanis and human resource, PILER and Ali Enterprises Factory Fire Affectees Association, besides others.

There are non-member participants and advisers of the oversight committee, which included technical advisers of the ILO, Sindh finance ministry and Sindh province (investments).  
(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn 17, 23/03/2018)

### **Case properties destroyed in 'mysterious' fire at City Courts**

Important evidence in thousands of criminal trials and case properties was destroyed in a huge fire that broke out in a malkhana (storehouse of case properties) located on the premises of the City Courts in the early hours of Wednesday.



As police investigators are sceptical about the exact cause of the mysterious fire, the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident, saying the cases of prosecution would suffer irreparable damage in the absence of case properties and benefit the accused parties.

DIG South Azad Khan told Dawn that the fire erupted at around 1.30am inside a sealed room of the malkhana but a watchman and police guards noticed it at 2.30am when they smelled smoke emanating from the room.

*Police seek help from army's bomb experts; Karachi Bar demands judicial inquiry*

They immediately informed the fire brigade, which said it initially sent one fire tender after getting information at 2.31am.

However, the gravity of the situation forced them to call in more fire tenders from across the city. The fire tenders of the Karachi Port Trust and Pakistan Navy also took part in the firefighting effort.

Around 23 to 24 fire tenders managed to control the blaze at about 6:55am, a fire official said, adding that the cooling work continued till late in the evening.

During the firefighting effort, small explosions inside the building spread panic in the area. The bomb disposal squad of the police was called which said the explosions occurred because live bullets kept in the malkhana went off due to the fire.

Help from army, Punjab Forensic Agency sought

Police investigators cast doubts over the preliminary finding that the fire might have been caused by short-circuit.

They initiated their own probe and also sought help from the Pakistan Army's bomb experts as well as the Punjab forensic experts to go through the facts and evidence to ascertain the exact cause of the incident.

A police team led by DIG Khan along with army experts, Rangers and other officials visited the scene. The DIG said that although the cooling process had been completed in the evening the bomb experts could not examine the site because of darkness.

He said three teams of experts belonging to the army, Rangers and police would visit the scene again on Thursday (today).

A forensic examination would be conducted by two teams of experts as the police sought help from the Punjab Forensic Agency in addition to forensic experts from Sindh, he added.

The DIG said the investigators also obtained the footage of closed-circuit television cameras installed inside and outside the malkhana. The footage suggested that the door remained sealed and no one had entered it.

He said that two investigation teams were formed to determine the loss of evidence and case properties. Regarding destruction caused by the fire, the DIG said that the case properties and evidence of criminal cases belonging to the East and South districts were destroyed in the fire.

However, the evidence and properties of criminal cases of the West and Central districts remained safe in an adjacent room that remained unaffected by the blaze.

**KBA demands judicial inquiry**

KBA president Haider Imam Rizvi urged the chief justice of the Sindh High Court to order a judicial inquiry into the malkhana fire through a judge of the high court.

He was of the view that the lawyers had been demanding shifting of the malkhana out of the courts' premises and the then KBA president had also sent a letter to the inspector general of police in this regard in 2014.

He urged the authorities concerned to immediately relocate the malkhana.

He said that the cases of prosecution would suffer irreparable damage in the absence of case properties and benefit the accused parties.

He deplored that there was no outcome of inquiry/investigations conducted into the previous fire incidents, adding that the warehouse facility was overburdened and the case properties were dumped and scattered.

Former KBA president Mahmood-ul-Hasan also demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident and said that a number of incidents of fire in the malkhana took place in the past, but no action was taken against the perpetrators.

He wondered why a fire broke out every time in the malkhana and not in a dispensary or a library adjacent to it. The incident has benefitted the accused persons, he added.

**Legal proceedings suspended**

The legal proceedings remained suspended at the City Courts on Wednesday since undertrial prisoners could not be brought to the judicial lock-up.

Litigants were also not allowed to enter the court premises.

The registrar of the Sindh High Court also visited the City Courts.

(By Ishaq Tanoli | Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 17, 12/04/2018)

## **Case property of districts South and East destroyed in fire**

Materials and objects relating to the cases in districts South and East were reduced to ashes in a mysterious fire that erupted on Wednesday at the City Courts' malkhana.



However, materials relating to the cases of districts Central and West survived as they were stored in another room of the malkhana. The blaze erupted in the early hours of Wednesday and quickly engulfed the entire building.

Initially, the fire brigade department dispatched two fire tenders to the site. However, they were not enough to douse the fire, after which fire tenders from across the city were called in.

### **Plaza fire claims five lives**

The blaze still could not be controlled after which the operation was called off. The fire tenders and rescue teams present at the site were also asked to move away from the building due to the presence of explosive materials, hand grenades and a large quantity of weapons kept in the malkhana, which caused minor explosions.

“A total of 12 fire tenders, two water bowsers and a snorkel participated in the extinguishing work,” said Chief Fire Officer Tehseen Siddiqui. “Our firefighters made efforts to control the blaze despite the presence of explosive materials without bulletproof jackets or other safety equipment.”

The fire tenders and rescue teams present at the site were also asked to move away from the building due to the presence of explosive materials, hand grenades and a large quantity of weapons kept in the malkhana.

According to Siddiqui, nothing could be said with certainty about the cause of the fire. The fire brigade department would be able to comment on the cause of the fire after the examination of the site once it cooled, he said.

It took at least five hours for the firefighters to control the blaze, whereas the cooling process was under way till the late hours of Wednesday evening.

Sindh Inspector-General (IG) of Police Allah Dino Khowaja, along with Karachi Additional IG Mushtaq Maher, Zone South DIG Azad Khan and SSP Sheraz Nazeer, visited the fire site. “A bunker could have been made while using the latest technology to keep the explosive materials,” the IG said while speaking to the media. “This [malkhana] building was established during the British era. The explosive material kept at the malkhana was defused. However, the intensity of the fire caused explosions,” he added.

The fire could have been caused by a short circuit, the IG said, adding that nothing could be conclusively said till the investigations were completed.

Responding to a question, SSP Nazeer said, “The fire brigade just handed over the building to the police late on Wednesday evening”. He reiterated that till investigations were completed, it could not be said whether the fire was the result of a criminal act.

### **Major fire engulfs Istanbul hospital, patients evacuated**

The SSP maintained that the police would start investigations today (Thursday) to ascertain the actual cause of the fire. The case properties of four districts – South, West, East and Central – were kept at the malkhana, he said, adding that the case properties of districts South and East were destroyed in the incident, while districts West and Central records remained safe.

Earlier, SHO Shoaibur Rehman had claimed that the fire was caused by a bottle containing chemicals that had accidentally been left out at the site during a cleanliness drive.

Earlier on February 25, a fire broke out at the new Sindh Secretariat building where offices of the chief minister, information minister and industries minister are located. The fire brigade department had termed the fire 'suspicious'.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 12/04/2018)

## **209 fire victims' heirs to get around Rs150,000 each by Monday**

The International Labour Organisation's country director Ingrid Christensen stressed the need on Saturday to revise and update labour laws to improve industrial safety and prevent a recurrence of incidents like Baldia factory tragedy in which over 250 workers were burnt to death.

Speaking at a function organised in connection with the distribution of compensation among the heirs of victims of the tragedy, she said that the ILO would provide all possible technical assistance to the government in improving its labour-related laws and making these in conformity with the ILO conventions.

The function was organised jointly by the ILO, the Sindh government, the National Trade Union Federation, the Pakistan Institute of Labour Research and Education and Ali Enterprise Factory Fire Affectees Association (AEFFAA) at the Arts Council of Pakistan.

Sindh Labour Minister Nasir Shah said that the government would fulfil all its promises made to the heirs of the victims in connection with the compensation.

He said to pay homage to the Baldia factory victims the government had already announced to observe September 11 as Occupational Health and Safety Day. He said that a monument would also be constructed for victims.

AEFFAA representative Saeeda Khatoon lauded the heirs and families of the victims for their struggle and said that without their joint efforts getting compensation could have been next to impossible. She said that the money could not bring back the dead, but might help the families whose breadwinners had died.

She regretted that the "real" culprits of the tragedy had not yet been caught.

Nasir Mansoor of the NTUF said that the German garments importer had paid \$5.15 million to the Sindh government and this amount had been invested. The income on the investment would be paid at approximately Rs7,500 per month to the heirs of each victim for life in their bank accounts through the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution.

He said that around 20 months had passed since the payment had been received so the heirs of around 209 victims belonging to Sindh would get an accumulated amount of around Rs150,000 in their bank accounts, most probably by Monday.

The rest of around 50 victims' families residing in the upcountry areas would get paid in the next few weeks. He said that an oversight committee, comprising all stakeholders, had been set up that would ensure regular and transparent distribution of compensation.

He said that while industrialists and exporters continued to get benefits from the European importers under the GSP Plus status, they did not provide basic health and safety facilities to their workers.

Karamat Ali of Piler said that after getting this compensation now the victims' families would launch a joint struggle to get the pension restored for them from the Employees Old-age Benefits Institutions (EOBI).

He said that earlier the main German garments importing company KiK Textilien had provided \$1 million that was distributed among the heirs and later it provided over \$5.15m and profit from it would be distributed as long-term compensation/pension among the heirs.

He said that the salary of the victims had been fixed at around Rs25,000 and pension had been calculated at around Rs7,500 per month.

Advocate Faisal Siddiqui, who had fought the case for the compensation payment to the victims' heirs, suggested that a committee, comprising representation from all stakeholders, be set up to ensure enforcement of health and safety laws.

A representative of the German consulate general Ingolf Vogel, senior lawyer Rashid A. Razvi, labour secretary Rasheed Solangi, trade union leader Habibuddin Junaidi, Majyd Aziz of Employers Federation of Pakistan, and others also spoke to the audience comprising heirs/families of the Baldia factory victims. (By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 18, 20/05/2018)

### **Minor girl killed as fire engulfs slum in Karachi's Gulshan-e-Iqbal**

A minor girl lost her life in a fire at her hut in a shanty town in the Gulshan-e-Iqbal neighbourhood Tuesday evening. As many as 150 huts were gutted in fire, while the remaining 100 huts were partially damaged.



The fire broke out at around 4pm at one of the huts which quickly engulfed the others. Reacting on information, initially one fire tender was rushed to the site, however, at least five more fire tenders reached the site because of the intensity of the blaze.

According to fire brigade spokesperson, they received information about a fire at around 4pm, adding that the fire tenders were immediately rushed to the area located in Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

The firefighters managed to bring the blaze under control after hectic efforts of at least two hours. The fire brigade spokesperson said that the cause of the fire has yet to be ascertained, while the firefighters remained busy in the cooling process till the filing of this news story.

#### **Two children burn to death in Karachi shanti town inferno**

Volunteers from different welfare associations also reached the site and participated in the rescue operation. According to Edhi volunteers, a minor girl lost her life in the fire. She was later identified as one-and-a-half-year-old Aiman. Her body was shifted to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and later handed over to the family for the burial.

An extra contingent of police also reached the site and inquired about the incident. Police officials said they did not find any criminal element behind the fire in the initial investigation, however, a case will be registered if any criminal element was found.

(By Faraz Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 23/05/2018)

### **Infant killed in Gulshan-i-Iqbal hut fire**

A woman checks her belongings burnt in the fire that erupted in a slum near Gillani railway station in Gulshan-i-Iqbal on Tuesday.



An infant was burnt to death and dozens of huts were destroyed when a fire broke out in a shanty town along the main University Road in Gulshan-i-Iqbal Block 13-C on Tuesday, police and fire officials said.

They added that the infant, said to be a few months old, could not be identified.

The huts were raised by some families from south Punjab and the residents claimed to have been residing there for the past few years.

Witnesses and officials said the fire destroyed 12 of 14 huts that stood in the shanty town. While fire department officials and the area police appeared convinced that the blaze was accidental, the affected families expressed suspicion saying that the fire broke out all of a sudden and the huts were reduced to ashes in 30 minutes.

The firefighters said the blaze had already caused considerable damage by the time they arrived at the scene.

The area people said that the inhabitants of the shanty town were no stranger to fires as earlier low-intensity fires had broken out without causing any serious damage.

Expressing concern over the trend of makeshift settlements, the fire officials said such huts were made up of bamboo, straws, cartons, etc, which caught fire easily causing widespread damage.

“Shanty towns comprising such huts are always at risk of fires amid gusty winds and low humidity,” said chief fire officer Tehseen Siddiqi.

The Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre confirmed that the facility received the body of a four to five month-old boy, who died of burn wounds.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 18, 23/05/2018)

### **Eight family members killed in fire ignited by ‘mentally disturbed’ mother**

Eight members of a family were killed and two others injured in a mysterious fire inside their home in the Mochko police limits late on Sunday night, officials said on Monday.



The victims included a woman and her seven children — four sons and three daughters. Another son of the victim mother was also injured in the fire.

Police and fire brigade officials in their initial probe believed that the mother was emotionally disturbed who set her home on fire by locking the door from inside. However, City SSP Sheeraz Nazeer told Dawn that the police were investigating the case from different aspects and they had not reached a “final conclusion” about the cause of the fire.

According to officials, four members of the family died on the spot, three others succumbed to their burns while being shifted to the burns centre of Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi while another patient died during treatment.

#### *Police investigators yet to reach a conclusion*

Another member of the family, Sajid, 18, was admitted for treatment. A neighbour, Sain Dad, 45, was also injured while trying to rescue the family.

The City SSP said that 10 members of the family were living in a single room in Malang Goth near Lucky Pahari located on Hub River Road.

Ali Bux Brohi, father of the seven victim children, had gone to the bathroom when his wife, Gulzar Bibi, 50, locked the door from inside and set it on fire.

Ali Bux told the police that he was in the bathroom when he heard cries of his children and rushed to the spot but the door was locked from inside.

His injured son, Sajid, 18, also told the police that he was woken up by a brother of his when smoke engulfed their room. He also told the police that the door was locked from inside.

A fire brigade official said that they received information about the fire at around 2.10am and they put out the fire soon.

Fire brigade chief Tahseen Siddiqi ruled out the possibility of arson behind the incident.

The seven dead victims were identified as Zafar, 22, Nazia, 16, Rehan, 14, Aqsa, 12, Ruqayya, 7, Tayyab, 4, and Naila.

SSP Nazeer said that during ghusl of the dead bodies, the key to the door was found in the clothes of the dead woman, Gulzar Bibi, which also lent credence to the initial statement of the surviving family members and neighbours that she had probably set the house on fire.

However, the SSP said that the police were also investigating whether the fire erupted “accidentally” or “something else” was its cause.

He said that so far the fire brigade officials had not submitted their report to the police about the exact cause of the fire.

Keamari DSP Mukhtar Khaskheli said that Gulzar Bibi was “mentally unstable” and as per the statement of her husband she had been getting treatment for the last two years.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 17, 29/052018)