Beat: News

Death toll in Bangladesh building collapse reaches 481

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USPA News - Rescue workers in Bangladesh have recovered the remains of dozens of people at the site where an eight-story factory building collapsed more than a week ago, local officials said on Friday, raising the confirmed toll to 481 as scores remain missing. The deadly accident occurred at around 9 a.m. local time on April 24 when an eight-story factory building in Savar, located on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka, collapsed.

It is believed between 3,000 and 4,500 people were working in the building, from which five clothing factories were operating. Local officials said they recovered 25 bodies on Thursday and another 45 by early Friday morning, raising the overall death toll to 481. The Army said Wednesday that it had received the names of at least 149 people who were still missing, but a spokesman later admitted that the list was incomplete and that the actual number is likely higher. A total of 2,437 people were rescued from the site of Bangladesh`s worst-ever industrial disaster, but hopes of finding more survivors came to a brutal end on Sunday night. A woman who had survived under the rubble for more than 110 hours was in the process of being rescued when sparks from saws caused clothes to catch fire, killing the last known survivor. Last week`s collapse happened just a day after factory workers discovered a large crack in the building and left their work, but the owner claimed it was safe and warned workers that they would not be paid if they did not return to work. Local authorities had ordered the owner to shut down until details about the building`s condition were known, but police orders to evacuate were not followed. On Wednesday, Pope Francis condemned as "slave labor" the poor conditions for thousands of people who worked at the factory building. "Not paying a just [wage], not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God," he said, as quoted by Vatican Radio. The pontiff said he had been particularly struck by a headline that said the workers at the Savar factory were being paid only 38 euros ($50) a month. "This was the payment of these people who have died. And this is called slave labor!" he said. "How many brothers and sisters throughout the world are in this situation because of these economic, social, and political attitudes?" Accidents such as the one last week are not uncommon in Bangladesh due to poorly regulated safety standards, but never had it been so deadly as in Savar. At least 83 people were killed in 2005 when another garment factory collapsed on the outskirts of Dhaka, even though there had been obvious signs that the building was not safe.

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483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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