

## EDITORIAL

## Industrial Burn in Bangladesh: A Call for Action for Sustainable Development

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Bangladesh has seen a major shift from heavy dependency on agriculture to progressive industrialization and urbanization since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Industrial burn is such an entity that causes human tragedies or financial losses and has strong ecological, technological, and legal impacts.

Industrial burn is easy but very important to prevent. Why? Let's answer 'easy' first. It's easy because an industrial infrastructure is considered a controlled environment dwelling a homogenous group of people that is the workers. And the second issue is why it is so important. This is because the people working here, who become major victims of these incidents belong to those 47% people of in the country who are at their working age.<sup>2</sup>

A study conducted at Dhaka Medical College in the year 2022 that considered autopsy data and relevant medicolegal information of the year, and found burn is the most common cause of unnatural death (418 among 1792 cases). Among burn deaths, 55.74% were laborers, 55.98% were 21-40 years of age and 70.09% of victims were male.<sup>3</sup> Although it is data from a medical college only, it manifests the current demographic pattern of burn injuries.

Despite progress in workplace safety regulations, burn injuries continue to cause loss of lives, long-term disabilities, absenteeism at workplaces, and social, psychological, and economic hardship.

Our team tried to identify the country's industrial burn burden over a year (2022-23) and evaluate the preparedness of regional burn centers of the country and post-burn rehabilitation of the industrial burn victims. However, due to the prospective acquisition

of data from retrospective incidents, incident identification, and representative data collection was challenging. Being the foremost respondent to major burn incidents, Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense Department was contacted for incident identification and victim tracing. Digital data was not available, so, we had to depend on data retrieval from the registrar. But even with that information, this study could identify only major burn incidences that required fire service involvement and regional burn center attention. Minor or small-scale burn incidents that were not notified to the mentioned authorities remained unnoticed.

Industrial burn is a preventable calamity but its call for action is dynamic and requires continuous surveillance, record keeping, incidence notification, and multidisciplinary evaluation and action. Current data, though it may not represent the actual magnitude of the problem, suggests the following call for action now:

1. Digital incidence data recording at the fire service and civil defense department, implementation of national burn registry, and development of data-driven policies.
2. Multidisciplinary audit (Government agencies, industry leaders, and healthcare professionals) of industrial burn and other accidents every year.
3. Safe workplace practices.
4. Yearly fire drill.
5. Primary burn and trauma care training of workers.
6. Medical insurance of workers.
7. Establish an industrial court, enforce laws regarding workplace safety, and ensure the compensation and rehabilitation of injured workers or their families.

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8. Establishment of well-equipped medical centers in industrial areas as well as strengthening peripheral burn centers for mass/multiple casualty preparedness.

Industrialization in Bangladesh when orchestrating the symphony of development, without ensuring workplace safety and burn consciousness, this development will not be sustainable. Protection of workers from preventable burn injuries is not just a regulatory obligation but a moral imperative to enhance long-term sustainability.

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