

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Sunday 12 May 2013

The Realities of Living in a Global Village

The death toll following the collapse of the Rana Plaza clothing factory complex in Bangladesh has risen to more than 600 people. Rescue workers are exhausted and the relatives of the victims are grief stricken as each day bodies are brought out of the ruins of the eight-storey building. This is Bangladesh's worst industrial disaster. A preliminary government investigation thinks that vibrations from four generators on the upper floor caused the collapse. The generators were started following a power cut sending powerful vibrations throughout the building which, together with the vibrations from thousands of sewing machines, may have triggered the collapse.

The building was designed to be used for offices and shops and was poorly constructed. It housed an intensive clothing industry making cheap clothes for the Western world. The Bangladeshi Finance Minister said that steps are being taken to prevent similar accidents but he does not think the collapse will seriously impact the country's garment industry. Bangladesh has one of the largest garment industries in the world.

This tragedy brings home to us the realities of living in a Global Village. Factory workers in places like Bangladesh work very long hours and earn very low wages. A factory worker in Bangladesh works up to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and earns £40 a month. The designer clothes they make are sold in

affluent countries for very low prices. Large companies make big profits and shoppers in affluent countries find bargains. Should the tragedy in Bangladesh make us think?

God is deeply concerned for social justice and for the oppression of poor people. In the New Testament James challenges the rich who have much more than they need yet do not care for the poor. He writes, "Look here, you rich people, weep and groan because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver have become worthless. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgement. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty."

We pray that God will comfort the bereaved in Bangladesh and that we will be concerned that, in future, workers there will work in safe buildings and be paid a fair rate for their labour.

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