

Building Collapse in India Leaves at Least 7 Dead

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NEW DELHI — At least seven people were killed when a residential building collapsed in a New Delhi neighborhood popular with college students, and rescue crews were working to free people trapped beneath the wreckage, the authorities in India said on Monday.

The five-story building, which was called Hostel Daze, collapsed on Sunday afternoon in Satya Niketan, a neighborhood near the University of Delhi's South Campus where students from outside the capital rent beds in shared rooms for about \$158 a month.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences said in a statement on Monday that six of those who died were 35 years old or younger, and the seventh was 75. Three other victims were in critical condition and two were stable, one of whom had been discharged, the statement said. It was not immediately clear how many of the victims were students.

Yash Malhotra, 22, said that he had helped to pull out the bodies of two people, who were students at his college, on Sunday afternoon. Three other students from his college were rescued with severely injured faces and limbs, he said.

"The building was not in good shape and was recently reopened after some renovation. Maintenance work was still on in the basement because there was water getting in," he said.

Rekha Gupta, the chief minister of the Delhi state government, said on Monday that the owner of

the building had been arrested and that several municipal officials had been suspended, though she did not offer details.

The surrounding neighborhood is popular with students for its proximity to colleges. Gyms, cafes, libraries, grocery stores, internet cafes and coffee shops dot the narrow lanes between warrens of residential buildings. Built close to each other, the multistory housing blocks beckon students with "To Let" signs.

Manjinder Singh Sirsa, the environment minister for the Delhi state government, told reporters on Monday that a neighboring building's structure was also in poor condition, adding to the challenges facing rescue crews as they worked to free trapped residents and clear debris.

The collapse came weeks after mass protests by Indian university students — set off by irregularities in a medical school entrance exam — resulted in the resignation of the education minister.

On Monday, students gathered in the alley leading to the collapsed building to express anger at the government for allowing an unsafe residence to operate.

Yash Vardhan, a second-year college student, said that he knew two other students who had lived in the Hostel Daze building and were still missing.

"I was here within half an hour of the collapse, and I could see that locals were helping people make their way out of the rubble. Disaster relief and fire department personnel came much later," Mr. Vardhan, 19, said.



FRANCIS MASCARENHAS/REUTERS

Searching for survivors after the collapse in Satya Niketan, a neighborhood in New Delhi where college students rent beds.