

hellodhaka

Weekly weather forecast for the city

High **29C** 

Cloudy, thunder

Cloudy, thunde-

Thursday Low **27C** Humid; morning

**Friday** Saturday High 30C High 30C Low 27C Low **27C** A couple of t-Chance of rain in the p.m.

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## Rescue efforts falter in Old Dhaka alleys

plans.

(Rajuk) are

unaware of

of narrow

Rajuk officials said

they have no map of

Old Dhaka, but DCC

working on it.

officials claimed to be

"We have already

and I hope we will complete it by the next year," said Abu Taleb,

done half of the work

DCC estate officer.

Mayor Sadeque

streets.

the numbers and locations

MIZANIIR KHAN

Narrow streets are the main hindrance to rescue efforts in Old Dhaka, home to hundreds of centuriesold ramshackle buildings that have become virtual death

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traps for residents. Encroachment and construction of illegal structures along the lanes and by-lanes of Sutrapur, Kotwali and Lalbagh that have slowed the pace of transportation add to the problem.

The fear of disaster moved front and centre, as a six-storey building collapsed at Shankhari Bazar on June 9, killing 19 people in sleep and injuring many more.

"Thank God, it was a predawn collapse. If it had happened in the busy hours of the day, more people would have been killed," said Hrishikesh Nandi, 95, who lives close to the

Locals, firemen and army engineering corps said they could not reach the spot immediately for rescue work, as they could not get the vehicles in because of the narrow

"We rescued some who were seriously injured but could not take them to hospital Our ambulance could not move because it

Shankhari Bazar tragedy is an eye-opener as firemen, army fought to reach the scene after a six-storey building collapsed



The allevs are dark. narrow, long and winding. Traffic congestion in Old Dhaka has become commonplace and people get stuck in the

populated old quarter of the city is a maze of narrow streets permitting only rickshaws to ply Residents walk a long distance from the main road to reach home.

rush-hour gridlock. "We start from home at least an hour before to reach school in time. We sometimes change rickshaws several times on the way to make sure we do not miss the first lesson," said

unplanned structures and worn-out sewers have made life miserable for some 20 lakh residents. "Some have already moved to the new part of the city," said Anup Sur, a at Shankhari Bazar.

Shahana Islam, a ninth

Locals said narrow roads with potholes, 35-year-old shop owner

"Narrow streets in Old Dhaka are no new, but the increased flow of traffic and illegal expansion of buildings

> the movement more than snail's pace," he added. Professor Muntasir Mamun of the history department at Dhaka University (DU) said Old Dhaka streets have

by landowners slowed

This is a social problem. Rajuk and capital was set DCC cannot solve the up on the especially locals, must Houses were have a hand in solving the problem.' built according to people's The mayor sat with

the ward commissionauthorities ers and local leaders several times and addressed the issue. The solution will not building come out of one meeting. I think if Rajuk "People designs a master plan, used Palki, we can implement it,'

horses as their Taleb said. mode of "The North South transport. Road was constructed about 15 years ago. concept of cars in the city Why can't we go for more?" he asked. and roads DCC Chief Engineer

Idris Mian said there developed for was a plan to widen heavy traffic, narrow streets. He said the principal secretary has taken a decision he said. Dhaka City Corporation and asked the DCC to (DCC) and go in for implementa-Rajdhani Uńnayan "How can we do that

if the landowners do not cooperate? If they do not spare any land where shall we construct the streets?' Dr Mian said, adding whenever there was a move to widen the streets, landlords filed

The chief engineer claimed that the DCC has already widened 14 streets in Nawabganj and Hazaribagh. The Central Road was widened from 16 feet to

The DCC zone-2 is

construction and maintenance of the roads in much of the old city. According to the zonal staff, there are around 100km of streets in Kotwali and Sutrapur, among them 22km are primary, 18km secondary and 32km local.

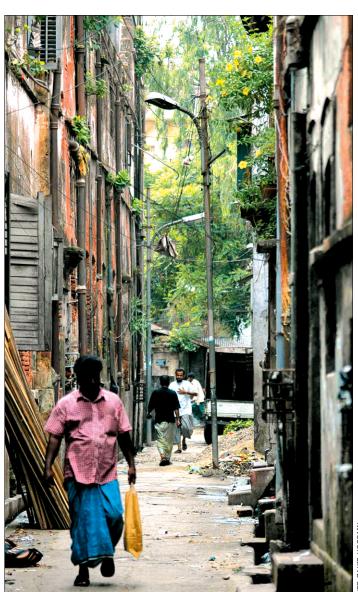
"It is impossible to widen roads without demolishing some buildings," said Mofazzal Hossain, the zone's assistant

Professor Nazrul Islam of DU, an urban expert, pointed out that less than five percent of the total 25 square kilometres of land area in Old Dhaka is used for road network. The figure is about eight percent in the new quarter of the city.

"A big city should have eight percent of its total land area for roads," Dr Islam said.

Indromohon Nandi, 65, who was sleeping on the rooftop of the collapsed building, believes the authorities have to come forward to defuse the crisis.

"The people living here are poor and cannot think of widening streets. Rajuk or DCC should come forward to save us by other means," he said



A resident, right, walks home along an alley in Old Dhaka and rows of rickshaws, left, clog a narrow street.

## Dhaka-Agartala bus service runs short of passengers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The regular bus service between Dhaka and Agartala launched last September is still facing shortage of passengers.

The Agartala bound bus on June 14 morning left Dhaka empty and a bus counter staff member said that only 16 passengers had used this service over the last 10

It is same from the Agartala end. According to Tripura authorities the number of passengers will only increase if the Bangladesh government issues doubleentry visas to Indian passengers from Agartala.

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Tripura Road Transport Corporation (TRTC) operate the bus service between Dhaka and Agartola. But with a few passengers making the journey, both operators agreed to offer the service a three times a week from December last year. Prior to that buses plied six days a week except Sundays.

As part of the reduced schedule buses leave Motijheel BRTC depot for Agartala and return the next day. The TRTC also operates in the same way, BRTC sources said.

In the beginning, the BRTC operated two air-conditioned buses from Dhaka. Passengers paid Tk 600 for a return journey.

Some blame the shortage on the introduction of the road-link between Dhaka and Agartala.

On the future of the bus service BRTC Chairman Advocate Taimur Alam Khondaker said both operators met about two months ago in

He said their Tripura counterparts put forward a set of proposals which included double-entry visa for Indian passengers who wish enter Kolkata and other cities though Dhaka using the Agartala- Dhaka route. BRTC proposed to develop the tourism sec-tor to attract Bangladeshi tourists

The BRTC chairman said all proposals were forwarded to their respective governments for careful consideration and that another meeting was scheduled to take place soon in Agartala.

The Dhaka-Agartala bus service launched on September 21 is the second Indo-Bangla direct road link, the first being the Dhaka-



## Living without loved ones

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

She was lying on the floor, a blank look in her eyes. Still reeling from the shock, 75-year-old Madhumala was trying to cope with the nightmare that came crashing down on her in the early hours

Madhumala lost almost all her loved ones to the predawn collapse of a sixstorey ramshackle building in Shankhari Bazar in Old Dhaka, home to hundreds of old structures Rajuk marked as vulnerable to cave-in.

"I had two sons who left me behind to live alone," the old woman sobbed. Her eldest son died two years ago and she was living with her younger son Kashinath Sur in the worn-out building at 81 Shankharibazar. Her son Kashinath, daughter-in-law Chhobi Kor Sur and grandsons Joy and Joyanto were among 19 dead.

Modhumala said a thunderous sound jolted them out of sleep. "I slid a few inches down and felt severe pain in my legs. Masonry came flying down on me," said Modhumala, who shivers at the thought of the dreadful night.

"Joy was asking for water. I could not give him any. I could not move," said Modhumala, disconsolate with grief.

"I did not have any idea what happened to the others that night," she said, wiping her tears.

Modhumala came back from Dhaka Medical College Hospital where she was treated for fractured limbs and

"When she was in hospital, I did not let her know what happened to our family. I told her everything when she came back," said her other daughterin-law. She and her son are now the only relatives Modhumala has. "Truth hurts, but it is not possible to hide the truth for long," she said.

It was the landlord whom Modhumala cursed most. "We have lived there for the last two and a half years but never knew that the building was in such a vulnerable state," she "Had he told us before, my children would not have died," she

Modhumala is now living with the other survivors of her family in another building opposite the collapsed one. Sunlight hardly enters the building with small rooms and a narrow staircase. The entrance is too narrow for two people to walk in together. Residents of the house said that building has also been marked as vulnerable to collapse.

## Pizza Hut's fun outlet for kids

Pizza Hut launched "Pizza Pooch Birthday Party", a programme tailored for kids, at its only outlet on South Avenue in Gulshan on

The theme of the party is based on a story with characters such as Pizza Pooch, Hut Mutts, Pupperoni, Speedy, Topper and the Cat. Their ongoing battle, portrayed in the story, dramatises their love and craving for pizza.

Anyone can book for the programme any day of the week at prices ranging between Tk 350 and Tk 450 a child. The party timing is 3:00pm to 6:00pm. The beautifully decorated venue has specially trained personnel to conduct the party providing invitation cards, nametags and party hats/gifts for all children. The package also includes two games for the children, prizes for winners, special gifts and many

Akku Chowdhury, head of operations of Pizza Hut, other team members of the restaurant and media personal were present at the inauguration.



