

Old Dhaka at grave fire risk

More than one fire takes place a day in old town mainly because of numerous chemical storage, plastic and other factories

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Old Dhaka is so prone to fire disasters that last year it saw at least one fire incident a day on average.

Fire service data show 468 fire incidents struck the old town's Lalbagh, Hazaribagh, Sadarghat and Siddique Bazar, where more than 500 chemical warehouses and factories operate illegally.

Luckily, casualties were low -- one man was killed and two others were injured -- in these incidents, but they damaged properties worth Tk 6.88 crore, the data show.

Highest 163 fire incidents occurred in

Siddique Bazar, damaging properties worth Tk 1.97 crore, followed by Hazaribagh where 160 incidents occurred, burning properties worth Tk 1.42 crore.

"The frequency indicates how vulnerable Old Dhaka is," said Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

"If you take a stroll in old town, you will find chemicals, plastics, cosmetics, rubbers and nail polish in residential complexes. This makes an ideal situation for a fire to take place," he told The Daily Star.

In a survey last year, the fire service found 537 chemical warehouses in old town that is

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Father of Chawkbazar fire victim Rezaul sobs in front of the morgue of Dhaka Medical College yesterday, hours after his 21-year-old son lost the battle for life at the DMCH burn unit. With him, the death toll from the February 20 disaster rose to 70.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigers face uphill task

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts New Zealand ended the second day of the first Test just as they had started it -- on top -- as they managed to reach 451 for four at close at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. With Bangladesh scoring just 234 on the first day, New Zealand have all but batted the tourists out of the match with a 217-run lead that is all set to swell further today.

While almost everything went according to plan for the Kiwis, Bangladesh -- who are already on the back foot in the game -- could see

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2,500-year-old crop seeds discovered

New clue to ancient farming practices in Bangladesh

PINAKI ROY

Archaeologists have found crop seeds as old as 2,500 years in Bogura's Mahasthangarh.

They believe it will help them discover many aspects of ancient Bengal's agricultural practices and environmental condition.

This is the first time archaeologists are researching crop seeds to determine Bangladesh's ancient civilisation, Mizanur Rahman Zamri, assistant professor at

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Voter awareness vital for fair polls

President tells election officials

STAR REPORT

President Abdul Hamid yesterday said there should be initiatives to make the voters aware of their rights and responsibilities.

"The more the voters will be aware, the more the election will be fair," he was quoted by UNB as saying.

The call comes a day after the poor voter turnout in Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-polls demonstrated what experts said was a sign of people's diminishing confidence in the country's electoral system.

Commentators have been pointing out that many people who were deprived of their voting rights in several

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Pakistan releases captured Indian pilot

New Delhi terms move as 'a first of many steps' as cross-border shelling rages on along LoC

AGENCIES

Pakistan handed a captured Indian pilot back to his country yesterday as the nuclear-armed neighbours appeared to scale back a confrontation that has prompted world powers to urge restraint.

But fresh violence raged in Kashmir, with seven people killed in the Indian-administered part of the tinder-box territory, suggesting that the crisis may not be over yet.

Television footage showed Wing Commander Abhinandan

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Abhinandan

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