



This damaged road divider, with rods sticking out, could cause an accident to approaching vehicles. The photo was taken on Dewanhat overpass in Dhaniala area of Chattogram city yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



## Form judicial commission to probe into fires

### Demands B Chy

UNB, Dhaka

Former president Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday called for forming a judicial probe commission to ensure proper investigations into the recent deadly fire incidents.

In a statement, he also voiced deep concern over the fire incident at Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Kitchen Market at Gulshan, just two days after a devastating fire in the city's Banani.

"Before the fire at Gulshan-1 kitchen market, many innocent people lost their lives in dangerous fire incident at Chawkbazar's Churihatta and [FR Tower of] Banani. I call for forming a judicial investigation commission to look into the incidents," said Chowdhury, president of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh.

He urged the government to ensure due compensation for families of those killed and those who suffered injuries in the fire incidents.

He conveyed deep sympathy to the family members and relatives of the victims of the recent blazes.

## Singer Khurshid

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The accident took place around 3am at Charmatha on the highway. A truck hit his private car, said SM Bodiuzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bogura Sadar Police Station.

Khurshid Alam went to Bogura on Thursday to join an award-giving ceremony of Prothom Alo's Bondhu Sabha.

The incident occurred when he was returning to his hotel after taking a tour of the town.

The truck driver fled the scene, the OC added.

Ashrafal Alam Khokon, who was in the car at the time of the accident, said the truck hit them from one side, leaving only Khurshid Alam injured.

"He is much better now. There is no internal bleeding in his head," said Sushanto Kumar Sarker, head of neurosurgery department at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, at around 11:30pm.

He lost four teeth in the accident, said Rokonuzzaman, a dental surgeon of the hospital.

## Empowering female

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business ideas for the promotion of peace, cohesion and prosperity in our society", as stated in a document distributed at yesterday's event.

"The universities now can take up the responsibility to support peace café," said Md Tamim, pro-vice chancellor of Brac University.

Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, vice chancellor of BRUR and Asuka Murata, programme specialist of UN Women Bangladesh, were present as special guests while Charlotta Schlyter, ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh, was chief guest at the event.

## Accident

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The meeting on management of chemicals and post-Chawkbazar fire was presided over by DCCI President Osama Taseer.

The DSCC mayor requested the director general of fire service to take necessary steps in setting up a fire station at Babu Bazar, following demand of traders in the area.

Khokon also suggested that the businessmen coordinate with finance and commerce ministries and National Board of Revenue while importing the 35 most flammable chemicals.

## Corruption, lack of governance

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The study said members of "real" fishermen associations are not economically capable to farm for fish cultivation in the haor areas.

As a result, they have no other option but to "sell license of their associations to influential people", who subsequently lease the waterbodies, it added.

The study found evidence of corruption in many cases in the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) system while building embankments. PIC was undertaken replacing the previous "contractor system" due to massive corruption, it said.

Prof Barkat alleged that many government officials and UP chairmen are involved in corruption.

In 2017, contractors and Water Development Board officials embezzled around Tk 8.18 crore during embankment construction, which led to a devastating flood in Sylhet region, the study added.

It recommended short and long term measures for the development of haor region, including ensuring good governance, financial and other assistance for fishermen, distributing seeds, fertilisers and other materials among poor farmers, and a specific plan to prevent and fight disaster in haors.

Speaking at the seminar, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "The leasing system should be cancelled."

She stressed on adopting an eco-friendly policy for the haor region as well as studying the areas' meteorological conditions.

Engr M Inamul Haque, former director general of Bangladesh Water Resource Planning Organization, said, "According to the government's Jalmahal (Wetland) Management Policy, open wetland cannot be leased out. But it's being done frequently."

Shamsul Huda, executive director of ALRD, said, "A special strategy has to be developed, considering environment of the region."

Experts and representatives from various haor protection organisations also spoke at the seminar.

## Coal power plants

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industries which will be built inside the ecologically critical area of the forest, he said in a keynote paper.

The environmentalist demanded that the government immediately stop construction of the Rampal power plant and the other industrial activities near the Sundarbans, and move away from building any further coal-based power plants.

He suggested that the authorities should focus on solar energy as a better alternative to the power solution in the coastal areas.

About the Rooppur nuclear power plant, Prof Muhammad alleged that the government started construction of the project without conducting any prior environmental impact assessment survey, and most of the information of the project are not transparent.

"The government is not building the Rampal and Rooppur power plants only to meet the demand of electricity. They [the government] are building those to maintain strategic relationship with India, which is closely involved in both of the projects," he said.

He also demanded that all information on the Rooppur power plant be made available to the public.

Prof Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah, convenor of the National Committee; Saiful Huq, general secretary of Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh; and Ruhin Hossain Prince, a central leader of Communist Party of Bangladesh, also spoke at the press conference.

## Selling off

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The products were being sold at Tk 100-400 apiece, a much lower price than the actual price, said Mohammad Habib, a trader of Upohar Crockeries.

People, especially women, who arrived at the spot hearing news of fire incident, were buying the items.

"I bought at least seven items for only Tk 1,000," said Jesmin Rahman, a housewife from Maddhya Badda area.

As customers haggled for prices, traders were heard asking for a little bit more, saying they lost everything in the fire.

The fire broke out at the market around 5:45am and nearly 210 shops were burnt to ashes before fire fighters doused it around 10:30am. No casualties were reported.

## Barishal Univ VC

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the law-and-order situation in and around the campus. The students were also asked to vacate their residential halls and dormitories.

Though they left the campus, students intensified their protests, demanding the VC's resignation. On Friday evening, they brought out a torch procession from the university's Central Shaheed Minar and took position on Barishal-Patuakhali road in front the VC's residence for a while. Later, the agitating students burnt an effigy of the VC and chanted slogans demanding his resignation.



Protesting students bring out a torch procession on the campus on Friday.

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GD-588

## 1,300 city markets, malls at fire risk

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A market should have sufficient reserve water, a diesel pump, an electrical pump and a jockey pump, arrangement for emergency lightings, smoke and heat detector, fire alarm system and sprinkler.

Also, it will have to have fire safety and evacuation plan, emergency exists with smoke-proof stairwells.

But most malls and markets do not comply with the requirements, Wahidul Islam said.

During a recent visit to around 15 DSCC and DNCC markets, The Daily Star found that the markets are running without proper fire fighting equipment. They do not even have sufficient fire extinguishers.

The markets include Dhaka Trade Centre, Sundarban Square, Bangabandhu Square Patal Sarak Market, Gulistan Shopping Complex, Bangabazar Hawkers Market, Phulbaria Super Market 1 and 2, Gulistan Hawkers Market, Mahanagar Hawkers Market, Adarsha Hawkers Market,

Mohammadpur Krishi Market and Gulshan DNCC Kitchen market.

Visiting Gulistan Shopping Complex, a market of Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Association, yesterday, no fire equipment was found in the nine-storey building.

There were warehouses and a blanket factory in its basement, which was designated for parking.

Mohammad Abul Hasan, finance secretary of the market, said there are 1,075 shops and offices in the building. He said the welfare association or developer did not take any step to ensure fire equipment, which has put the entire market at severe risk.

When asked why they did not take any initiative to set up fire extinguishers, he said, "We are going to purchase 100 fire extinguishers soon."

Abdul Kaiyum Khan, manager of Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Association, acknowledged that the market is under serious fire risk.

He said a trader has set up the warehouses and blanket factory in the basement, putting the building under

huge fire risk as there is a power substation there.

A probe committee of the association has already been formed and they will take steps in this regard as well and fire safety soon, Khan added.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said most city markets do not have fire fighting equipment. He said they will start inspecting DNCC markets to check condition of the buildings, its fire and electrical safety and will take necessary steps.

About markets and malls, he said, "It's the duty of all -- including the government agencies and market owners -- to take necessary measures and ensure safety."

Atiqul's DSCC counterpart, Mayor Sayeed Khokon, said they had taken steps after the 2017 fire incident in Gulshan DCC market. The markets in DSCC areas at that time also took fire safety measures.

"Now, we will conduct a survey to know the state of fire safety at the markets and take necessary action based on it," he said.