



Enduring severe dust pollution, commuters brave the roads of Dhaka every day. The traffic problem often becomes secondary when breathing is a challenge. The photo was taken in Farmgate on Thursday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Chawkbazar fire took

FROM PAGE 3

Moyna Begum, wife of another fire victim Mohammad Shahin, said after her husband's death she and her three children have become destitute.

"I don't know how I would feed my children, pay the rent, and meet education expenses," she said, adding that they do not have relatives who could provide financial assistance.

The families' other demands include free treatment for the injured, compensation for the affected traders, regular examination of gas cylinders and banning use of expired ones, storing chemical and flammable objects in safer places, and strictly following Rajuk's rules and regulations.

A devastating fire broke out in Old Dhaka's Chawkbazar area around 10:40pm on February 20, claiming the lives of 70 people.

The victims were mostly pedestrians, people travelling in rickshaws and cars, residents of the buildings as well as owners and staffers of the shops and warehouses at the spot.

The Chawkbazar fire, which sparked from a chemical warehouse, is the second deadliest chemical-fuelled fire incident in the country after the Nimtoli fire that had killed 124 people and injured many others on June 3, 2010.

[With input from our photographer Palash Khan.]

## DEADLOCK AT BU Mayor calls meeting today

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Barishal

The deadlock situation of Barishal University (BU) continued for the 11th day yesterday. Despite the weekend, agitated students observed a daylong hunger strike to press home their demand for the removal of Prof Imamul Huq from the post of vice-chancellor.

Barishal City Corporation Mayor Serniat Sadiq Abdullah said a discussion to solve the problem will be held today at noon in Barishal Circuit House.

"Students, syndicate members and government officials will be present at the meeting. I took this initiative to resume academic operations on BU campus as soon as possible," he said.

A student said, "We have no other demand other than the VC's removal."

Students started protesting on March 26 after they were allegedly excluded from the university's Independence Day programme. On the same day, VC Imamul Huq made a remark calling protesting students "razakar-er bachcha."

Agitated students demanded his resignation after this. On March 28, BU authorities announced that the university will be closed indefinitely. The next day, the VC apologised, but students continued their protest. On Thursday, students blocked the Barishal-Patuakhali highway.

## Millions at fire

FROM PAGE 3

Seventy people were killed in the Old Dhaka fire. The blaze at FR Tower claimed lives of 26 people.

Government officials said the tower was constructed flouting the building code and it had unusable firefighting equipment.

"It's not surprising," said Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansari. "Most high-rises in Dhaka lack necessary fire safety measures."

Prof Nazrul Islam said electric short-circuit, gas and other burners, cigarettes, gas cylinders, technological devices, inflammable objects and chemicals usually trigger fire.

It is still unclear what sparked the FR Tower fire.

### 'DISASTER LOOMS LARGE'

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury said a large number of buildings in Dhaka flouted the building code and Building Construction Rule 1996 during construction.

"With so many vulnerable buildings, I fear that between 1,00,000 and 1,50,000 people may be killed if a strong earthquake hits Dhaka," he said. The country still could not achieve much-needed progress in earthquake preparedness, he added.

Iqbal Habib said according to Rajuk, 80 percent of the capital's buildings lack proper approval. "Among the rest, 60 percent were constructed breaching designs and flouting rules," he said.

Habib said most buildings have not been constructed and designed to withstand earthquakes.

Prof Ansari recalled that their 2011 survey on 53 high-rises in the city showed that 90 percent of them lacked adequate fire safety measures.

Md Abdur Rahman, chairman of Dhaka's development authority, said they will conduct a drive soon to identify faulty high-rises.

### SUGGESTIONS

The experts urged the government to strengthen its agencies concerned and form a committee that will specifically work to ensure fire safety.

Government agencies, including Rajuk, need to be strengthened to stop construction of risky buildings as well as retrofit or remove such buildings, said Prof Choudhury, vice-chancellor of University of Asia Pacific.

He pointed out that pressure from foreign buyers after the Rana Plaza tragedy led to safety improvement at about 800 buildings that house factories.

"We need a body like Accord to ensure safety," said architect Iqbal Habib.

Prof Ansari said the government should assign a specific body to work for ensuring fire-safety in all high-rises. "More importantly, the building code, which clearly mentions how to construct a safe high-rise, should be followed strictly."

In case of low-rises, he recommended keeping fire extinguishers on every floor and train people how to use those. "We see many owners keep main gates and rooftop doors of their buildings locked. In such cases, owners must provide each tenant with keys."

# Govt to streamline judiciary

UNB, Dhaka

The government has planned to set up 313 more courts across the country and appoint 346 judicial magistrates, aiming to ease the plight of justice-seekers and ease the pressure of mounting cases, official sources said.

They said a process is underway to set up seven cyber tribunals, 122 additional district and session judges courts, 159 joint district judges courts, 19 environment courts, and six environment appeal courts.

According to an official document, the government has also decided to appoint 346 judicial magistrates or senior judicial magistrates or metropolitan magistrates to this end.

The public administration minister and the finance minister have given their consent to set up seven cyber tribunals while the public administration ministry has given its approval to create chief metropolitan magistrate courts in Gazipur and Rangpur, according to the news agency.

The official document, obtained by UNB, shows that the crisis of courtrooms is one of the main obstacles to quick disposal of cases. "The government is working to streamline the trial process by increasing courtrooms and ensuring the best use of working hours," it reads.

In this connection, the government is implementing a project for the vertical expansion of district judges' courts in 28 districts with modern facilities and constructing chief judicial magistrate court buildings in 42 districts, the document says.

The construction of 24 chief judicial magistrate court buildings have already been completed.

The process to prepare development project proposals in the rest of the 36 district judge courts and 22 chief judicial magistrate court buildings is also in progress.

The government has approved another project of constructing a 12-storey building with modern facilities on the High Court compound.

Besides, a monitoring cell is working to dispose of the old cases on the basis of priority, under the leadership of a solicitor, in addition to forming case management committees in every district.

According to the document, national and district-level 'Justice Coordination Committees' have been formed to ensure effective coordination for quick disposal of cases.

For resolving the transport problem of additional district and session judges, who usually deal with murder, robberies, rape and other serious cases, the government has approved a project to procure 128 vehicles.

The government has taken another initiative for the training of lower court judges.

It says a process to send 540 judges to Western Sydney University of Australia has started, while 253 have already received the training.

Besides, some 315 judges received training at the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal, India.

Meanwhile, the Judicial Administration Training Institute provided training to 2,838 judges, 135 prosecutors and 193 court staff from 2014 to 2018. Fifty-nine judges have received training on e-procurement. "In phases, more judges will be given higher training both at home and abroad," the document says.

The number of pending cases with the country's lower courts till December 31, 2018 is 35,69,750, with 14,29,861 civil cases and 20,48,067 criminal cases.

The number of pending cases with the higher courts is 5,37,094.

## Post-Brexit UK

FROM PAGE 3

as part of the second edition of its "Ambassador Lecture Series".

Cosmos Foundation Chairman Enayetullah Khan delivered the welcome address at the event held with Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, in the chair.

"We're bound by cricket and culture, language and literature, common visions and values that complement our political and economic relations," Khan said, highlighting the ties Britain and Bangladesh share.

High Commissioner Dickson said UK will be working alongside the Bangladesh High Commission in London to highlight the opportunities in Bangladesh for British companies.

"Serious efforts to address some issues making business in Bangladesh difficult will be a good way to attract private capital involvement that Bangladesh economy is going to need as it matures and becomes a larger player on the world stage," he said.

As Bangladesh is set to achieve middle-income status in the next few years, Dickson said the UK's assistance is likely to evolve from helping basic development to technical assistance with the economic and governance reform needed to continue progress.

### 'MADE IN MYANMAR'

Dickson said the Rohingya issue is something that Bangladesh had nothing to do with but the country has been "unbelievably generous".

"It's a problem made in Myanmar," he said, where Rohingyas, left out of the citizenship law, suffer a "basic injustice".

Bangladesh is currently hosting more than 1.1 million Rohingyas. Over 7,00,000 of them fled here since August 2017 after Myanmar military launched a brutal offensive targeting the mainly-Muslim ethnic minority.

The high commissioner said Myanmar has participated in ethnic cleansing. "It's a problem for the Rohingyas ... [and] obviously for Bangladesh ... [and] also for Myanmar."

Although Bangladesh and Myanmar signed repatriation deals, there has been very little progress.

Dickson said the UK has a role and that the Department for International Development (DFID) has provided 130 million pounds worth of humanitarian support and promised to provide more.

Noted foreign affairs experts and businesspersons, including Inam Ahmed Chowdhury, Prof Selina Mohsin, Lt Gen (retd) ATM Zahirul Alam, AK Khan Foundation Trustee Secretary Salahuddin Kasem Khan, Advanced Chemical Industries Limited Director Juned Ahmed Chowdhury, Mohammadi Group Managing Director Rubana Huq, Dhaka University's Honorary Professor Dr Shakhawat Ali Khan and former diplomats spoke on the occasion.

They focused on security, defence and education cooperation between the two countries. Commonwealth and current global issues, including the Rohingya crisis and climate change, also came up for discussions.

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## MA Haque's 23rd death anniversary today

CITY DESK

Today is the 23rd death anniversary of MA Haque -- former minister, police officer, writer, and founding president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira). A Quran-khwani has been arranged at Banani graveyard and at the residence of his daughter Rehana Ashequr Rahman. A daylong programme has been organised at his birthplace in Zakiganj, Sylhet.



## Dhaka-Rajshahi nonstop

FROM PAGE 3

"We are also thinking of installing some ticketing booths on the major points of the city so that this station can remain less crowded for Eid holiday tickets," the minister said.

Besides, Bangladesh railway is going to launch an app for selling rail tickets within April, according to the minister.

"People will be able to buy ticket using the app from their home [through mobile banking payment system]," the minister added.

There is no IT section in the railway, mentioning this, the minister informed that a separate IT department will be opened soon.

"We are trying to upgrade the rail service to international standard. Our goal is to serve people; not just to make profit," said the minister.

As part of modernisation of train services, the government has planned to set broad-gauge railways across the country.

"You will not see meter-gauge railways in any other country. We will upgrade all the meter-gauge railways to dual gauge gradually," the minister said.

Around 550 coaches and 100 engines for meter gauge, and around 250 rail coaches and 40 engines for broad-gauge will be added to railway within a year or two, the minister said.

Last month, the minister expressed dissatisfaction over the rail service while visiting the station and ordered an upgrade to the service within one month.

About the changes, the minister said, "Everybody [railway staff] is working hard [to implement the changes]."

PPP TRAIN SERVICE WILL NOT BE RENEWED  
Around 72 trains are operated by different private companies under public-private partnership system.

About this, the minister said, "We have decided that those contracts will not be extended once they end."

The minister also spoke of several other initiatives including human resource appointment and modern passenger services as part of the government's initiatives to upgrade quality of railway services.

High ups of the railway ministry and Bangladesh Railway were also present during the briefing among others.



## Invitation for Tender (IFT) for Different Types of Container BRAC AI Enterprise

Project name	AI Enterprise
Source of Funds	Own
Tender package no	BPD-AI/02-19
Reference no. & date	IFT/BRAC/BPD-AI/19-07 Date: 3 April, 2019
Tender name	1) Wide Mouth Semen Container 2) Liquid Nitrogen cryocontainer 10 ltr & 50 ltr. 3) Cryobiological Sement Container
Time of delivery	As per Tender Documents
Price of the tender documents	BDT 2,000.00 (Tk. Two thousand only) or USD 25.00 for foreign bidders (non-refundable)
Tender security	As per tender documents
Availability of Tender documents	BRAC Procurement Department (ground floor) BRAC centre 75, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. For study purpose please visit procurement. brac.net
Date & time of selling documents	07 April 2019 to 07 May 2019 Between 10.00 am to 3.00pm
Tender dropping place, date & time	Tender Box-1, Procurement Department (ground floor), 08 May, 2019 between 10.00 am to 1.00 pm
Tender opening place, date & time	BRAC Staff Canteen (4th Floor), 08 May 2019 at 2.00 p.m

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