



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.]

Crisis in CHT should

FROM PAGE 3
The group was formed by some ousted members of United People's Democratic Front, a regional political party, he said, adding that the recent killings and abductions started after that and the situation gradually worsened.

"The crisis in CHT is political which should be resolved for the sake of national interest," he added.

Nasiruddin Elan, director of rights group Odhikar, said rights violation situation in the hills was similar to that of elsewhere in the country.

Due to challenges in documentation, the real picture of rights violation in CHT was unclear, he said.

In the country, 3,543 people were victims of extrajudicial killings from 2001 to March, 2019 while 519 people became victims of enforced disappearance since 2009 to March this year, he said, citing Odhikar data.

Faizul Hakim, secretary of Jatiya Mukti Council, and Md Main Uddin, president of Parbatta Odhikar Forum, among others, spoke.

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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.

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".

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, Bangladeshi 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.

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.

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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, Mohamadi Group

Managing Director Rubana Huq, Dhaka

University's Honorary Professor Dr

Shakhat 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 dis-

cussions.

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