



The premises are always overcrowded and pushing and shoving to get through is a given.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

After page 3
 Asaduzzaman Khan Rochi, secretary of the Dhaka Bar Association, agrees that the heavy dress code needs to go. But, having talked to many leaders of the bar councils about the lawyers' demands, he concludes that changing the lawyers' dress code might hamper their dignity. "If it is withdrawn, it will be difficult to differentiate the lawyers from the clients. When we discussed this matter, some said only a gown would be appropriate, while others asked to keep the coat only. This is why we are yet to come to a decision."

Aside from the dress code, the lawyers are also vocal about infrastructural problems at the district courts. There's a severe shortage of courtrooms in the Dhaka judge court. "The Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman (Women and Children Repression Prevention) Tribunal has nine courts but only five courtrooms. They need to share the rooms by coordinating the time slots of trial procedures," says advocate Rochi. "Meanwhile, the cyber tribunal that deals with important militant cases has no courtroom at all. The same problem applies to the anti-terrorism tribunal. They need to depend on others to conduct their cases. This is unfortunate," he comments.

With the number of cases so high at the lower court, it is no surprise that the court must accommodate people beyond its capacity. It is quite alarming, however, that nearly 50,000 people use the only staircase in the 10-storied building of the Dhaka chief metropolitan magistrate (CMM) court from 10 in the morning until court ends for the day. "In the morning, when the court opens it is all we can do to squeeze through the crowd. There are lifts but not enough for everyone who come every day. You will find the same thing in

the metropolitan sessions judge court and the district court building," says advocate Joy Kumar Kanjilal from Dhaka judge court.
 On March 7 this year, at least 14 people, including a few lawyers, were injured when a lift in the old building of Dhaka district judge court crashed. The lift had been installed in 1980. One employee later died and a few injured are still undergoing treatment.
 In addition to the heat, even a little rain floods the court premises and makes

works department. We hope that they will look into it soon," says the Dhaka bar association secretary.
 Star Weekend also spoke to several female lawyers who mentioned that the condition of the washrooms is particularly bad in most of the district courts. When walking anywhere near these, you will be compelled to cover your nose. There are also no separate washrooms for women. According to advocate Sumaiya Zaman, it is most difficult for when women are on their period, because most bathrooms are

is also no breastfeeding corners for women who come to the court with babies," she adds.
 Those who come to seek justice face the most trouble as they are not allowed to stay in the courtrooms and there is no separate seating arrangement for them. Although there are one or two ramshackle wooden chairs scattered in the corridors, it is difficult to find a space to sit. The premises are always overcrowded and pushing and shoving to get through is a given.
 Numerous hawkers occupy the premises, and even the corridors inside, selling street food. Although thousands of people gather there every day, the authorities don't maintain minimum cleanliness—overflowing garbage bins in the corridors are a nuisance for the lawyers who work there year-round as well as passers-through.



On March 7 this year, at least 14 people, including a few lawyers, were injured when a lift in the old building of Dhaka district judge court crashed.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

it difficult for lawyers and other visitors to navigate in the downpour. In Dhaka judge court, the bar association secretary is trying to establish a footbridge to be able to move freely from the CMM court to the judge court. "We have already talked to the law and housing ministries and the public

in poor condition.
 "There is a bathroom in the women lawyers' common room at the Dhaka judge court, but nobody can use it as it's almost abandoned. The toilets on the other floors are not female-friendly at all. It is very unfair to women visiting the court. There

There is no information centre, I have to ask random people to help find the exact location of a specific tribunal or a courtroom. Older people especially don't have the physical strength to climb up all the stairs of a 10-storied building," says 48-year-old Amina Begum, the sister of a defendant, who has been coming to the courts frequently.
 Star Weekend contacted Md Shahadat Hossain, the chief engineer of the public works department, to find out whether there are any plans to refurbish and modernise the infrastructure of the district courts. He shares that a project referred to as the chief judicial building project is currently underway. "Under this project, a good number of modern buildings are being constructed in almost every district court. The old buildings will gradually be replaced with those new buildings. They have already completed the construction in many districts," he says.