



“The situation still remains catastrophic because what’s entering is not enough... there is not enough food.”

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on hunger crisis in Gaza



Choosing peace over pace

WR1



A wetland losing its farmers

WR2



How can AI democratise rural healthcare

WR3



Mimi, nostalgia and new bites

WR4

HSIA CARGO COMPLEX FIRE

Safety standards flouted at import section

Experts link fire incident to years of negligence, poor compliance

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and RASHIDUL HASAN

The import section of the cargo complex at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), which was devastated by Saturday’s fire, was not in compliance with internationally recognised safety standards, experts said.

Although safety protocols were followed in areas such as the export section of the cargo complex under EU and UK (ACC3 and RA3) validation, the import section was left out.

Users have repeatedly complained that import cargoes were often left carelessly outside designated sheds, and several theft incidents occurred in this key area.

The blaze destroyed valuables worth \$1 billion, according to initial estimates. The government has launched a probe to determine the cause of the fire.

As per EU/UK ACC3/RA3 requirements, airlines carrying cargo from a third country (outside the EU or UK) must have ACC3 validation, while handlers providing cargo services to ACC3 airlines must have RA3 validation.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines holds both ACC3 (as an airline) and RA3 (as a cargo handler) certifications. ACC3 requires airlines to meet EU security standards through verified cargo handling and screening, while RA3 allows ground handlers to manage cargo bound for the EU.

A member of Biman’s investigation committee, requesting anonymity, compared the import cargo section to a slum, saying it was in total disarray. “There was no fire control mechanism in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards,” he said.

He added that the courier shed was in particularly poor condition, with no fire safety plan from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

The probe member also highlighted that there are only two water hydrants at Dhaka airport for firefighting, raising questions about CAAB’s seriousness in safety management.

A major freight forwarder, requesting anonymity, said the fire occurred because safety and security measures at the cargo complex failed to meet internationally recognised standards for such a sensitive area.

Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, chairman of CAAB, however, declined to take direct blame for the blaze. While the building belongs to CAAB, operations are conducted by Biman, clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents, and customs authorities, he said at a media briefing on Tuesday.



Import section left out of EU, UK safety validation

Experts say fire control system was absent

Only two water hydrants available at Dhaka airport

Cargo stored haphazardly, blocking firefighting access

CAAB, Biman, customs, C&F agents blamed for lapses



Neglect in maintenance has led to the collapse of a portion of the Buriganga riverside walkway at Kadamtali in Pagla, Narayanganj. Berthing of cargo vessels for unloading sand and bricks in the area also contributes to the damage. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt project to save 4 rivers around Dhaka falters

PINAKI ROY

Even 16 years after the High Court directive to restore Dhaka’s four rivers to their original state, the government has yet to complete even half of the work, including boundary demarcation and walkway construction, aimed at preventing encroachment.

In June 2009, the court ordered the authorities concerned to demarcate the original boundaries of the Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakkhya to protect them from encroachment and pollution.

Following the order, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) was tasked with installing over 10,000 demarcation pillars and constructing 220 kilometres of circular walkways along both banks of the four rivers.

However, BIWTA has so far completed 72

Out of 220 km of planned walkways, 72 km built

6,200 out of over 10,000 demarcation pillars installed

Portions of walkways in ruins; boundary walls collapsed

Cost rose from Tk 845.55cr in 2018 to Tk 1,275cr

kilometres of walkways in two phases of a project initiated in 2014. Besides, it has installed 6,200 pillars demarcating the boundaries of the rivers.

In the first phase, 20 kilometres of walkways were constructed along the river ports in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Tongi and two eco-parks were built in Shyampur and Narayanganj. This phase cost the government Tk 142 crore.

The BIWTA began constructing another 52 kilometres of walkways in 2018 under the project’s second phase, which remains incomplete.

According to project officials, the walkways will extend from Kamarpura to Dhaur in Tongi; from Gabtoli to Sadarghat; from Fatulla to Nitaiganj Khalghat; and from Bosila bridge to Sadarghat via Gabtoli.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

BNP bloc at unease as partners can’t use paddy sheaf

Party to urge EC not to implement changes ahead of polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Already struggling with seat-sharing negotiations, the BNP now faces a new challenge after the advisory council approved changes to the rules on electoral symbols for alliances.

The amendment to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) makes it mandatory for candidates of alliance partners to contest under their own party symbols, instead of the coalition leader’s.

BNP and alliance leaders said the change has unnerved smaller partners who fear it will sharply reduce their chances of winning seats.

“The ground situation for alliance candidates is already weak. The new rule adds fresh concern and could strain BNP’s ties with its allies,” said a BNP Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed told a press briefing yesterday that the party will soon write to the Election Commission, urging it not to implement the change.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka on a perilous path

Lax regulations, weak oversight fuel capital’s unplanned expansion

HELEMUL ALAM

Once regulated by strict rules, Dhaka’s urban landscape has undergone a radical transformation over the last two decades, driven by the gradual relaxation of regulations, aggressive increases in floor area ratio (FAR), and weak enforcement of relevant laws.

Near-unregulated vertical

expansion has put immense pressure on utilities and infrastructure, worsened traffic congestion, and compromised fire safety in many areas of the city, according to experts.

Urban planner Emdadul Islam, also a former chief engineer of Rajuk, recalled that the height of buildings in the neighbourhoods of Gulshan, Banani, and Dhanmondi was

once capped at just three storeys.

In the 1980s, the rules were relaxed, allowing the construction of buildings up to six storeys.

Persuaded by developers, the government introduced FAR – a limit on how much floor space is permitted on a piece of land – in 2008 to encourage vertical growth and preserve open land. But in practice, the move made

matters worse.

“The idea was to save horizontal space while meeting the housing demand... But in most cases, developers went for expansion both vertically and horizontally, wiping out open spaces,” Emdadul explained.

Developers have often managed to bypass the rules altogether mainly due to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

HEIGHT LIMITS ON 5-KATHA PLOT IN CORE DHAKA CITY AREAS

YEAR	HEIGHT
1980	1-3 storeys
1990	4-6 storeys
2008	6-10 storeys
2022	5-8 storeys
2025	6-10 storeys

Trade talks with Canada off

Says Trump after ad invokes late president Reagan as free-trader

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday trade talks with Canada were terminated after a Canadian political advertisement used the recorded voice of late president Ronald Reagan saying tariffs cause trade wars and economic disaster.

Trump, who imposed import tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and autos earlier this year, called the video ad fraudulent.

“Based on their egregious behavior, ALL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH CANADA ARE HEREBY TERMINATED,” Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Canada has responded to the tariffs with trade sanctions of its own, but the two sides have been in talks for weeks on a deal for the steel and aluminum sectors.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said this week that the ad from his provincial government, more than a week old, had caught the Republican president’s attention.

The ad’s voiceover consists of Reagan, a hero to many US Republicans, criticising tariffs on foreign goods while saying they cause job losses and trade wars.

“I heard that the president heard our ad. I’m sure he wasn’t too happy,” Ford said on Tuesday.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation said the ad used “selective audio and video”, and that it was examining legal options.

“The ad misrepresents the Presidential Radio Address (by Reagan in 1987), and the Government of Ontario did not seek nor receive permission to use and edit the remarks,” a Foundation statement said.

The video uses five complete sentences from the five-minute weekly address, spliced together out of sequence.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1