

## Unsafe storage, lack of fire safety systems caused HSIA blaze : Probe

- A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : A probe into the October 18 fire at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's import cargo complex has concluded that unsafe storage of lithium-ion batteries and the absence of fire protection systems were the primary causes of the devastating incident.

Conducted by Biman Bangladesh Airlines and submitted to the civil aviation ministry on November 3, the investigation identified two likely triggers - overheating of stored batteries and an electrical short circuit. The possibility of arson or sabotage was dismissed due to lack of evidence.

The probe also revealed serious fire preparedness failures -there were no automatic sprinklers, insufficient hydrants, and delayed communication with the national Fire Service. The airport's rescue teams struggled to access the blaze due to blocked roads and piles of

uncleared cargo, while the tin-shed structure made it difficult to reach the source of the fire.

The report criticized the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for allowing unsafe structural modifications inside a high-security zone and failing to enforce safety standards during leasing and supervision.

### Recommendations

- n Clearly define fire safety responsibilities of all cargo complex lessees in lease agreements.

- n Install automatic fire detection and suppression systems in every warehouse, cargo shed, and service building.

- n Ensure regular clearance and auctioning of uncleared cargo to prevent congestion that hinders emergency access.