

# Buriganga hits a new pollution high



Chemical waste from factories in Rayer Bazar, Mohammadpur, is pumped untreated into the Buriganga every day, increasing toxicity of the river's already heavily polluted water.

SOHEL ISLAM

Pollution in the Buriganga river has picked up an alarming pace in recent years with the dissolved oxygen (DO) level falling below the acceptable level in winter.

The average DO level in the Buriganga dropped to 3.78 milli-gram (mg) in a litre of water in 2002-03 from 4.43 mg in 2002-02, according to the Department of Environment (DoE).

"Pollution of the river runs low from November to April. At some points such as the main discharge drain of tannery waste, at Chaddnighat and Dholaikhal, the DO level slips to zero," said Omar Faruque Khan, director general of the DoE.

"Water becomes so polluted that even bacteria won't survive."

"In winter, the DO level ranges between 0 and 0.3 mg in a litre, far below the standards of 5 mg."

"In monsoon, the level of pollution is less as natural cleanliness and dilution keep the river flow normal," Khan said.

Apart from Hazaribagh and Dholaikhal, the average DO level is above 5 mg in a litre.

"The key pollutant choking the Buriganga is sewage. At least 70 percent sewage of the city stream into the river," Khan said.

"The tanneries at Hazaribagh are another major drag on the river. If they are shifted to some other places, the river may get some respite," Khan added.

The government has recently decided to shift 400 tanneries from Hazaribagh to Savar in the next three and a half years.

A central treatment plant will treat the tannery waste to prevent pollution.

"Industrial waste of the city is also channelled into the river. The waste, laden with heavy metals like lead and chromium, also contaminates the river," said Khan.

An inter-ministerial committee is working to make the river clean and demolish illegal structures on it.

"We will have to raise the navigability of the river. The flow of the river will gather pace if it is free from pollutants," Khan said.

# Pre-paid tax for hosting over 150

SULTANA RAHMAN

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has introduced a prepaid tax system for hosts treating more than 150 guests in a public place or community centre at a time.

The prepaid value-added tax (VAT) was introduced on Saturday under the Guest Control Order 1984 that had lost much of its effectiveness, and the government failed to earn revenues because of tax dodge.

NBR officials hope the new system in which the hosts have to pay before they throw parties would cut tax fraud.

According to the rule, 150 guests are allowed to be entertained without tax in a marriage ceremony or religious and cultural functions. Functions with 151 to 1,000 guests are subjected to a tax of Tk 20 a person. If the number of guests crosses 1,000, each additional person has to pay Tk 10. Violators are subjected to a fine of twice the actual amount.

"Earlier the people were used to pay tax after the function, but now they have to pay before the function

if it crosses the number of guests 150," a NBR senior official explained.

The NBR, in a circular last month, handed the responsibility over to VAT and customs officials of enforcing the rule that was earlier implemented by the district commissioner (DC).

"The DC office lost a huge amount of revenues," the official said.

The law was amended last year while it allowed 100 persons without tax. A function entertaining between 101 and 500 persons were supposed to pay Tk 25 each.

Community centre managers said that at least 250 people attend any marriage or cultural function. Some occasions are attended by more than 1,000 people. They said that the guest control order is totally ignored now.

Almost every marriage that takes place in the city entertains more than 150 guests without paying tax. In a recent ceremony in Dhanmondi, a rich businessman entertained more than 3,000 guests on the occasion of his son's wedding

without paying tax. Every weekend, lavish weddings are taking place in homes, community centres and big restaurants.

It is often alleged that although owners of the premises where functions take place collect tax from customers, the state never gets it.

The customer is usually unaware of the expenses and makes a package deal with the owners of the premises. The owners simply do not pay the tax to the state.

Last year, the food ministry reformulated the Guest Control Order 1984 in a bid to stop waste. The authorities described the reformulated rule as time-befitting, pragmatic and people-oriented.

Earlier, the law allowed 100 guests without tax, but the ministry found the law unrealistic because of the small number of guests.

Dhaka City Corporation owns about 35 community centres, while there are nearly 100 centres run by the private sector. The managers of some centres said they are unable to pay tax, which might take away their business.

## Do something exciting Book reading contest for school goers

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Book readers, this opportunity is for you. *Dalchhut* an adventure magazine is organising a book reading competition for school goers. Enter the competition and win trips to Nijhum or St. Martin's island or the hills.

"It is to encourage the students to do something exciting apart from their regular monotonous school routine," said Mashhurul Amin, organiser of the competition. "I think this is the perfect time to open windows of other worlds and let these teenagers in, giving them the opportunity to innovate and create."

The competition is open to students of classes eight and nine. The competitors should read the books specially selected for the competition, draw up their own conclusions and appear for an evaluation test.

Each competitor has to read five books out of seven. The five selected books are "Kon Tiki" by Thor Heyerdhal, "*Zen Jibondarshan o Parbotarohan Aviggata*" (The Philosophy of Zen and his mountain climbing experience) by Neville Shulman, "*Shackletoner Dushshahoshik Avijan*" (The adventure of Shackleton) by Alfred Lansing, "*Deshe Bideshe*" (Home and Abroad) by Syed Mujtaba Ali, "*Chander Pahar*" (Lunar Mountain) by Bibhutivushan Bandopadhyaya, "*Bhobghure Shastra*" (Skills of a Vagabond's) by Rahul Shankrityayan, and "*Shangi Cycle o*

*Araddha Prithibi*" (Cycle around the world) by Ashrafuzzaman Uzzal.

The competitors will have to make notes on reading the books and take part in a discussion. They should write at least ten instances on what they liked or disliked about each book they read. The competitors would also to travel any place they like and write about the trip they had. This travel and write-up is a part of the competition too.

There would be an evaluation test based on their notes and discussions. Although *Dalchhut* is organising the competition they are not providing the books. The competitors have been asked to procure the books themselves and read them.

The last date of submission of names by the competitors is November 15, 2003. They should make an application in the prescribed form published in the *Dalchhut* magazine along with two copies of passport-size photographs.

The discussion and the test will be held on the December 4. The first four winners will win a trip to Nijhum Deep (an island on Bay of Bengal) for four days. Second prize is a 2-day trip to Saint Martins Island for the next five winners. The group of six who wins the third prize will have a 2-day trip to a Bandarban hillside resort. The next set of six students will win a one-day river cruise and all the competitors will receive a certificate each.

# Move for equal airfare for all Hajj pilgrims

The ministry has raised the fare for ballotees this year, but kept it the same for non-ballotees.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A move is underway to equal airfare for both ballotee and non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims from next year.

The Parliamentary Committee on Religious Affairs Ministry at a recent meeting discussed the issue and recommended immediate steps to that end.

During the last pilgrimage, airfare for ballotees stood at US\$ 870 while for non-ballotees at US\$ 1,050.

The civil aviation ministry has raised the fare for ballotees at US\$ 900 this year, but kept it the same for non-ballotees.

Meanwhile, the deadline for money deposit for pilgrimage in 2004 as ballotees has been extended till November 10 from October 30.

The National Hajj Management Committee at its meeting also decided to send a two-member high-level delegation to Saudi Arabia to arrange accommodations for the pilgrims. The final decision on housing

arrangements and rent will be taken later.

The meeting also decided to arrange separate rooms for women pilgrims.

Ten thousand ballotees and 40,000 non-ballotees will perform Hajj in 2004.

Sources said Bangladesh Biman would control the Hajj flights and no local private airlines would be allowed to ferry pilgrims between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia.

During the last Hajj, Biman carried 25,103 of the 40,000 pilgrims, while Saudia carried the rest.

Biman hopes to carry more than 30,000 of about 50,000 pilgrims next year.

The airline now runs six DC-10s and three Airbuses and another Airbus is expected to join its fleet in a few days. Biman will reschedule its flights on international routes for smooth operation of Hajj flights.

It will run two extra flights from Chittagong, if need be, sources said.

Last year 10 direct flights took off for Jeddah from the port city.

## IFTAR-HOUR RUSH



Just as the day waned into afternoon, Paltan crossing was chock-a-block with traffic yesterday. With offices closing early for Ramadan long queues of homeward bound commuters have become a common pre-iftar feature on Dhaka's main thoroughfares.

## marketprice

### Rangpur Municipal Market, Rangpur

#### CEREALS

Rice coarse(HYV)KGS13.60  
Rice Chiniguri (Aromatic)KGS30.80  
**PULSES**  
Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS44.80  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS42.80  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)LBS21.40

#### SPICES

Onion (Deshi)KGS24.40  
Onion (India big)KGS22.40  
Garlic Deshi (common)KGS30.80  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS25.40  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS20.80  
TurmericKGS67.00  
Chili GreenKGS29.60  
Chili Dried (Deshi Bogra)KGS87.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS11.00  
Bitter GourdKGS17.60  
Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS10.80  
Cauliflower Average SizeKGS25.60  
Cabbage Average SizeKGS12.80  
Tomato Ripen (Imported)KGS33.60  
PatalKGS10.80  
Brinjal (Long purple)KGS17.60  
Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS9.40  
Papaya GreenKGS5.40  
Radish WhiteKGS10.40

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS4.40

Apple (Australia)KGS62.00  
Apple (Pakistan)KGS67.00

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS152.00  
HilshaKGS148.00  
Chingri SmallKGS110.00

#### FERTILIZER

TSP (Imported)KGS13.00

#### Comilla Chaka Bazar, Comilla

#### PULSES

Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS45.00  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS37.40  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)KGS21.40

#### SPICES

Onion (Deshi)KGS28.00  
Onion (India big)KGS22.40  
Garlic Deshi (common)KGS35.40  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS27.20  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS35.60  
Ginger (Imported)KGS43.20  
TurmericKGS90.00  
Turmeric (India)KGS63.00

#### Rajganj Bazar, Comilla

#### SPICES

Chili Dried (Deshi Bogra)KGS94.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS13.60  
OkraKGS20.80  
Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS19.20  
Cauliflower Average SizeKGS41.00  
Cabbage Average SizeKGS28.40

Local Bean GreenKGS43.80  
PatalKGS20.80

Brinjal (Long purple)KGS25.60  
Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS16.40  
Papaya GreenKGS12.00

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS8.80  
Apple (Australia)KGS63.00  
Apple (India)KGS47.00  
Apple (Pakistan)KGS67.00  
CoconutKGS9.20

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS156.00  
HilshaKGS176.00  
Chingri SmallKGS136.00

#### Khulna Sadar Bara Bazar, Khulna

#### CEREALS

Rice coarse(HYV)KGS13.30  
Rice Chiniguri (Aromatic)KGS34.80

#### PULSES

Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS44.00  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS41.40  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)LBS22.60

#### SPICES

Onion (Deshi)KGS28.00  
Onion (India big)KGS23.20  
Garlic Deshi (common)KGS38.40  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS29.20  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS30.80  
TurmericKGS71.00  
Chili GreenKGS25.40

Chili Dried (Deshi Bogra)KGS81.00  
Chili Dried (Imported)KGS92.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS14.00  
Bitter GourdKGS30.80  
OkraKGS15.40

Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS18.40  
Cauliflower Average SizeKGS23.60  
Cabbage Average SizeKGS16.00  
Lau (Water Gourd)KGS10.80  
PatalKGS13.60

Brinjal (Long purple)KGS19.20

Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS11.60  
Papaya GreenKGS5.80

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS9.20  
Apple (Australia)KGS62.00  
Apple (Pakistan)KGS52.00  
CoconutPCS11.60

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS137.00  
HilshaKGS196.00

#### FERTILIZER

Urea (Local)KGS6.25  
TSP (Imported)KGS13.50

#### Ghop Market, Jessore

#### FERTILIZER

Urea (Local)KGS6.00  
TSP (Imported)KGS14.60

#### Jessore Sadar Bazar, Jessore

#### CEREALS

Rice coarse(HYV)KGS12.90  
Rice Chiniguri (Aromatic)KGS34.60

#### PULSES

Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS43.60  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS42.40  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)KGS22.00

#### SPICES

Onion (Deshi)KGS28.80  
Onion (India big)KGS23.40  
Garlic Deshi (common)KGS39.20  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS31.20  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS38.20  
TurmericKGS64.00  
Chili GreenKGS22.80  
Chili Dried (Imported)KGS100.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS12.60  
Bitter GourdKGS27.20  
Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS18.40  
Local Bean GreenKGS57.00  
Lau (Water Gourd)KGS13.40  
PatalKGS14.40

Brinjal (Long purple)KGS18.40

Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS14.40  
Papaya GreenKGS5.60

Radish WhiteKGS15.40

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS7.60  
Apple (Australia)KGS62.00  
Apple (India)KGS57.00  
Orange (India)4 PCS22.00

CoconutPCS9.60

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS134.00  
HilshaKGS155.00

#### Barisal Sadar Bazar, Barisal

#### CEREALS

Rice coarse(HYV)KGS13.20  
Rice Chiniguri (Aromatic)KGS34.40

#### PULSES

Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS40.80  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS38.80  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)KGS22.80

#### OIL & OIL SEEDS

MustardseedsKGS36.80

#### SPICES

Onion (Deshi)KGS28.80  
Onion (India big)KGS24.80  
Garlic Deshi (common)KGS39.20  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS30.80  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS42.00  
Ginger (Imported)KGS54.00  
TurmericKGS77.00

Chili GreenKGS42.00  
Chili Dried (Deshi Bogra)KGS94.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS12.40  
Bitter GourdKGS29.20  
Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS22.80  
Cabbage Average SizeKGS20.80  
Lau (Water Gourd)KGS7.40

PatalKGS14.80

Brinjal (Long purple)KGS18.80  
Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS13.40

Papaya GreenKGS6.40  
Radish WhiteKGS12.80

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS6.40  
Apple (Australia)KGS62.00  
Apple (India)KGS52.00  
Coconut4 PCS40.80

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS134.00  
HilshaKGS194.00

#### FERTILIZER

Urea (Local)KGS6.40  
TSP (Imported)KGS13.40

#### Islamia Bazar, Sylhet

#### CEREALS

Rice coarse(HYV)KGS14.20  
Rice Chiniguri (Aromatic)KGS35.60  
Wheat Grain (Local White)KGS11.00

#### PULSES

Masuri Dal (Deshi)KGS43.00  
Masuri Dal (Imported)KGS38.20  
Khesari Dal (Deshi)KGS23.00

#### SPICES

Onion (India big)KGS21.60  
Garlic Big (Imported)KGS27.20  
Ginger (Deshi)KGS25.60  
Ginger (Imported)KGS39.20  
TurmericKGS72.00  
Turmeric (India)KGS78.00

Chili GreenKGS38.00

Chili Dried (Deshi Bogra)KGS83.00

Chili Dried (Imported)KGS87.00

#### VEGETABLES

Potato (Holland)KGS13.40  
Bitter GourdKGS32.00  
OkraKGS23.40

Barbati Green (Long bean)KGS28.00  
Cauliflower Average SizeKGS28.00  
Cabbage Average SizeKGS18.80  
Tomato Ripen (Imported)KGS47.00

Local Bean GreenKGS54.00

Lau (Water Gourd)KGS18.00

PatalKGS18.60

Brinjal (Long purple)KGS29.60

Pumpkin (Sweet)KGS18.80

Papaya GreenKGS9.40

Radish WhiteKGS17.80

#### FRUITS

Banana Sagar (Medium)4 PCS7.60  
Apple (Australia)KGS72.00  
Coconut4 PCS47.00

#### FISH

Ruhi (Deshi)KGS174.00  
HilshaKGS164.00

#### FERTILIZER

Urea (Local)KGS6.50