



## Air pollution deteriorating in the city

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City's ambient air quality has sharply deteriorated with thousands of brick kilns and diesel-run vehicles spewing toxic fumes round the clock, said a Department of Environment (DoE) sources.

Thousands of faulty diesel-run buses, trucks and other vehicles and the 4,000 brick kilns around the city have turned it into a virtual "gas chamber", enveloping the metropolis with thick smog, the source said.

Deterioration of air quality has reached such a level that the newly installed 80-megawatt Tongi power plant had to be shut down recently as its air filters were exhausted much ahead of its life

span, said an official of the Power Development Board (PDB).

World Bank sources said that recent conversion of the brick kiln chimneys into 120 feet tall chimneys has 'not at all helped' the city environment. The kilns use 'worst quality coal', vehicle tyres, fuel wood and even discarded polythene bags as fuel. Fumes from the kilns contain an extremely high count of sulphur dioxide and ash.

Deterioration of air quality has reached its peak in the current lean period with scarcity of rain. People of all ages are exposed to various health hazards due to the toxic haze hanging in the atmosphere, another DoE source said.

City clinics and hospitals are swarmed with patients complaining

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of various respiratory problems.

According to Bangladesh standards the permissible level of particulate matters in the city air is 65 microgram per cubic metre (MPCM). But a recent study shows that the particulate count has reached 200 MPCM. The concentration of fine particulate matter in the air has also crossed its standard limit of 135 MPCM to more than 200 MPCM.

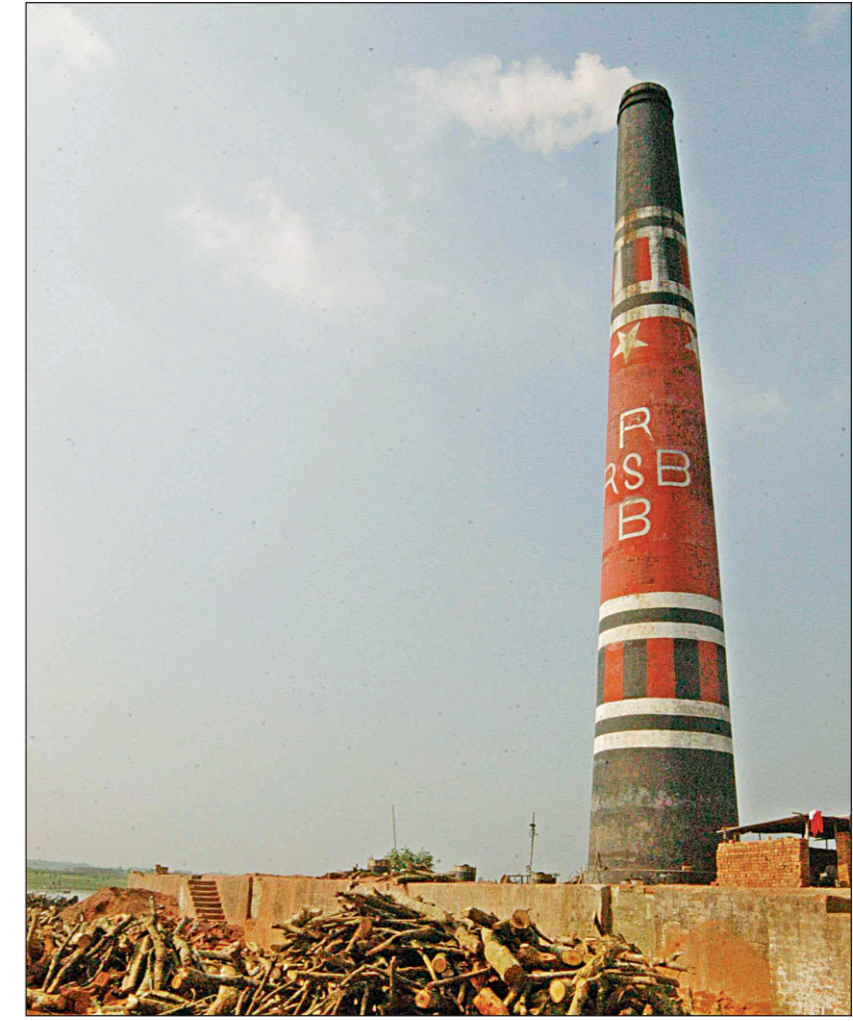
According to air quality experts, constant exposure to such high concentration of particulate matters can cause cancer and related diseases.

"In winter the air is stagnant and therefore the problem is even aggravated," said an expert requesting anonymity.

He added that the Air Quality Management Project (AQMP) of the DoE is currently devising an environment-friendly model for brick kilns.

"There is no alternative other than adopting a new environment-friendly technology," said the expert. "We need bricks, but not at the cost of the environment," he added.

Immediately after the phasing out of two-stroke engines in the late 90s the city's air quality improved temporarily, but soon thousands of vehicles, many of which are old and faulty were added to the roads, polluting the air more and in lean periods, brick kilns largely contribute to air pollution.



### LADY WITH THE ROSES



She sells roses at Shahbagh to earn her living, although she could have found an easy way out. Hardi working, determined, and the will to go on, holding her head high, she prides in the work she does.

## Power cuts relaying to rise in crime

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

The persisting power outage that has been plunging the capital into darkness for hours give an opportunity for muggers to make use of it in conducting criminal activities, city dwellers allege.

All areas in the city are facing blackouts for long hours in five or six spells with each spell ranging from one and half to almost two hours, causing fear in commuting in the dark.

Residents also said that police patrol has not increased during the blackout, which is why the mugging toll is increasing daily.

Most residents said that collapsible gates that usually shut around 10 pm are now shut at 8 pm for fear of dacoits.

"Power cuts are the best time for muggers to get into action. They wait in groups of five at dark spots of the alleys near Lab Aid diagnostic centre and at entrance to Central road," said Akhteruzzaman Ilias, a businessman.

"If anyone pass by alone, he or she falls prey to the muggers losing all valuables. That is not all, the muggers usually put tiger balm on the victim's eyes so that the victim

cannot identify the criminals," Ilias added.

A new type of snatching has begun in the current situation, alleged another resident Salehin Mahmood.

"Muggers now arrive in posh cars with tinted glass or black cabs and attacks the victim plying on a rickshaw," he added.

"They seize items from behind and in a flash drive away," said Mahmood.

Prime spots for such incidents were reported from different roads in Dhanmondi, and the alleys of Banani and Mohakhali. Other famous muggers' haunts during load shedding hours are alleys in Mirpur and Old Dhaka, said many city dwellers.

It is very easy to conduct this crime in the dark as the muggers can catch their victims off guard and also get away without being recognised.

Residents and shopkeepers from Banani and Badda said that the mugging and stealing rate has increased in alleys, taking advantage of the darkness.

"Earlier we heard of only a case or two of mugging in a month, and now the average is at least four a day," said a resident of Banani.

Victims usually end up at a side

shop to wash off the tiger balm or chilli powder from their eyes.

Areas where load shedding is worst hit include Malibagh, Mouchak, Rajarbagh, Maghbazar, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Farmgate, Siddiqbazar, Paribagh, Nakhla para, Badda, Mirpur, and Kalabagan.

Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) control room sources said that they had been able to supply only two third of the demands in last two days.

Duty officer Afsana Afroze from Mirpur police station said they have a total of 11 teams patrolling daily, each team consisting of four to five officers.

Only six patrolling teams from Mohammadpur police station are on duty with four to five policemen in each group, said Sub-Inspector Emdad-Ul-Huq while Sub-Inspector Rokeya from Badda police station said there are patrolling officers in every alley of that area.

Authorities of the police stations said they did not receive any complaints of mugging in the past week that was why, apart from few instructions of increasing security no other steps were taken.

## Renovation of archaeological site going on violating laws

NOVERA DEEPITA

The Department of Archaeology has been carrying out renovation and reconstruction work on archaeological sites without following the proper process, experts say.

According to archaeologists, many archaeological structures like the western portion of Lalbagh Fort, tomb of Ghiasuddin Azam Shah, Shat Gambuj mosque, Galakata Mosque and Bashu Bihar in Mahasthangarh have been reconstructed without any proper guideline and following the original design of the structure.

Shah Sufi Mustafizur Rahman, professor of archaeology at Jahangirnagar University, said, "The authorities have built a dome at the Shat Gambuj mosque which destroyed its original design. Moreover, they used standard materials in its renovation programme."

of Archaeology follows do not allow any sort of renovation or reconstruction work in case of ancient monuments or archaeological structures.

The Archaeological Works Code 1938 says: Three kinds of procedures are permitted by the law - works to new monuments, repairs to ancient monuments, and exploration. The second includes works of special repairs and annual maintenance of ancient monuments and gardens. But there is no provision of reconstruction.

The Archaeological Act 1968 says: It is a punishable crime to destroy, break, damage, alter, injure or mutilate or scribble write or engrave any inscription or sign on any antiquity which has been declared as the archaeological structures by the government.

The Conservation Manual 1922 says: Archaeological Public Works or other officers charged with the execution of conservation work should never forget that the repair of any remnant of ancient architecture,

however humble, is a work to be entered upon with totally different feelings from a new work or from the repairs of a modern building. Although there are many ancient buildings whose state of disrepair suggests at first sight a renewal, it should never be forgotten that their historical value is gone when their authenticity is destroyed and that our first duty is not to renew them but to preserve them.

According to the Management Guideline to World Heritage Sites 1993, restoration is a highly specialised operation based on a critical, historical process of evaluation, and must not be based on conjecture.

In the western structure of the Lalbagh Fort, a couple of cement-built pillars have been constructed to give the structure a base on which it can stand. An official of the Department of Archaeology on condition of anonymity said the pillars do not match with the entire structure or any Mughal architecture, neither the materials used in the

pillars are similar to that used in typical Mughal structures.

In the book *Mughal Dhaka and Lalbagh Fort* by the former director of Archeology Department, Dr. Najimuddin Ahmed, the author wrote, "Lalbagh Fort is an over-enthusiastic restoration."

When contacted, Fazlul Haque, who heads the engineering section of the department, said: "What we have done in the archaeological structures is restoration and conservation, neither reconstructions nor renovation."

"The pillars have been put for a temporary period to protect the structure from destruction. They can be removed any time and replaced by proper and appropriate pillars," he added.

But the source said the pillars were built in 1980s. "So, it's a matter of question what they mean by 'temporary' period."

Mustafizur Rahman said: "There is hardly any coordination between the engineering and archeological sections of the department. The engi-

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neering section controls the budget and the archeological section has no control over the engineering section."



Md Shafiqul Alam, director of the department, said: "We have done all the works under the Archeological Works Code,

National Conservation Act and conservation manuals." However, he didn't give any

further information on this issue, although this reporter repeatedly tried to communicate with him.