

Dust posing serious health hazards in urban areas

BSS, Dhaka

Dust hazard, especially in urban areas, is endangering public health by affecting human respiratory system, damaging vital organs like lung and obstructing normal breathing.

Millions of people are exposed to dust in the country for at least five months in a year from November to March when rainfall is very little.

Director of International Training Network (ITN) and Professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Dr Mujibur Rahman told BSS that dust hazard can be controlled if its sources are identified.

Dust carries physical, chemical and biological particles like carbon, sulphur-di-oxide, nitrous oxide and viruses harmful to health, he said, adding that people suffering from chronic asthma, children and aged

people are most vulnerable to dust.

Prof Rahman, an environmentalist, said dust also causes nose and throat irritation and bronchitis while toxic particles like lead, cadmium and dioxins causes cancer and reproductive problems.

He said open-air construction practices, open trucks carrying dusty construction materials like cement, sand and soil, crushing of bricks and stones in open space, road digging and dumping of soil on the streets, faulty system of solid waste collection, absence of effective road sweeping and vehicular, industrial and brick field emissions are the main sources of dust in urban areas.

Although there is no detailed studies on urban dust situation in the country, it is assumed that at least 20 to 30 percent of dust is produced from construction activities, he added.

About 270 micrograms of suspended particulate matters, up

from the normal level of 150 microgram, have been found in Dhaka's one cubic meter air in January 2003, according to a study.

Sediments in rivers from upstream, river erosion, siltation, deforestation, hill cutting, coastal salt fields and heavy rainfalls produce a huge amount of dust in the rural environment, it added.

With the economic development in Bangladesh, migration from rural to urban areas have been increasing, the study said, adding that at least 24 percent of people are now living in urban areas and they are exposed to dust hazard.

Spraying water on the street is a traditional practice of dust control, Prof Rahman said. To improve dust control system in urban areas, construction sites should be surrounded by CI sheets or other protective fences, he added.

"Construction materials should be covered properly by thick poly-

there or jute sheets while brick and stone crushing should be done outside the city in covered sheds treating it as an industrial activity."

He said sand, cement and soil should be carried by covered vans and soil extracted from road digging should be dressed within the stipulated time.

In most cases, waste and dust are thrown into drains or carried by an open van after sweeping the roads, he said, adding that as a result, these particulate re-enter the environment.

In developed countries, vacuum cleaners are used to clean roads and streets which do not allow dust particles to re-enter the environment, Prof Rahman said and called for improving road cleaning system in the cities.

He said installation of waste treatment plants in the industrial areas and emission-control device in vehicular transports can help check air pollution.



Delhi-based Cuban Ambassador Juan Carretero Ibanez, concurrently accredited to Bangladesh, called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Castro invites Khaleda to attend NAM Summit

UNB, Dhaka

Cuban President Fidel Castro formally invited Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to attend NAM Summit in mid-September in Cuba, saying his country is eagerly waiting to accord her warm reception.

Delhi-based Cuban Ambassador concurrently accredited to Bangladesh Juan Carretero Ibanez, as a special envoy of the Cuban President, formally delivered the invitation letter to Khaleda at her office yesterday.

Thanking Castro through the envoy for the invitation, Khaleda said she will try to attend the Non-Aligned Movement Summit.

The Ambassador said apart from the letter, the Cuban leader, who is seen as a living legend in world politics— personally hoped that Khaleda would attend the summit of the forum of

Non-Aligned countries. "The Cuban government and people are eagerly waiting to accord a cordial and warm reception to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Cuba," the envoy quoted Castro as saying.

"A new dimension in diplomatic and bilateral relations" between Dhaka and Havana had been created during the visit of late President Ziaur Rahman to Cuba in 1979, it was recalled during the meeting.

During the meeting, the Ambassador expressed Cuba's interest in setting up joint venture pharmaceutical plants in Bangladesh.

Welcoming the intention, Khaleda said they can take quality medicine from Bangladesh.

The envoy apprised the PM that Cuba is also thinking of setting up Cuban Chancery in Bangladesh soon.

He conveyed the Cuban president's greetings to Khaleda on the occasion of Independence and National Day of Bangladesh. Prime Minister Khaleda also reciprocated through the Ambassador.

INTRUSION OF SALINE WATER Southwestern region to face environmental disasters Experts warn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water experts yesterday warned that the southwestern region of the country would face massive environmental disasters very soon as lower Meghna is failing to prevent intrusion of saline water because of shortage of fresh water supply from the upstream.

The flow of lower Meghna, which receives combined flow of Brahmaputra, Padma and upper Meghna, has already decreased to a great extent because of diversion of water further upstream through Farakka barrage and other dams constructed by India, they said.

If water is diverted from Ganges-Brahmaputra basin under the proposed Indian river-linking project, the experts said, agriculture, aquatic life and the environment in southwestern coastal areas of Bangladesh will be adversely affected.

"Agriculture, aquatic life and socio-economic condition in the southwestern region are most vulnerable as lower Meghna cannot check intrusion of saline water from downstream," said Jahir Uddin Chowdhury, professor of Institute of Water & Flood Management (IWMF) under Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (Buet).

India's plan to divert water from

Brahmaputra will have greater negative impacts on the environment and socio-economic condition than those caused by the Ganges water diversion as 80 percent of water flow of lower Meghna depends on Brahmaputra, he said while delivering a lecture at a course on 'Water and Flood Management for Journalists'.

The Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and IWMF jointly organised the three-day course at the PIB auditorium in collaboration with the Institute of Water Modelling

(IWM) and Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS).

MH Siddiqi, former additional director general of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), said that reduced flow of water from the upstream has badly affected the agriculture sector, wetlands, groundwater level and fisheries resources, causing ecological imbalances.

Dr Rezwan Hossain Siddiqui was also present.



Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil exchanges views with journalists at a meeting at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and Awami League leader Obaidul Kader.

Journo Gofran passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Executive Editor of the Independent Abdul Gofran passed away due to cardiac arrest at the Birdem Hospital in the city last night at the age of 64.

Gofran was taken to the hospital after he complained of chest pain and he died there four hours after admission.

He left behind his wife, two sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Tk 3.2cr Danish grant for Offshore Graphic Service Centre

BSS, Dhaka

As a part of the Danida Private Sector Development (PSD) Programme, Niels Sever in Munk, Danish Ambassador to Bangla-desh, approved Tk 3.2 crore to cover a grant for training and technical assistance and export promotion to support the establishment of an Offshore Graphic Service Centre.

The Offshore Graphic Service Centre will be using sophisticated processes and IT systems to ensure smooth flow of graphic processing tasks to Bangladesh from a large number of small customers in Europe for processing images and plan drawings in the real estate and desktop publishing market.

The global market for the graphics and publishing BPO is currently estimated at three billion US dollar per annum and is expected to go up to five billion US dollar by 2007.

The Offshore Graphic Service Centre will be established as a Joint Venture with equity investments from Mindworking Asia A/S Denmark and Graphic Associates Limited, Bangladesh.

The overall objective of the Danida PSD Programme is to contribute to the economic and social development of Bangladesh by attracting Danish technology and investment in the private sector in Bangladesh. PSD Programme supports the establishment of profitable, long-term and mutually binding commercial ventures between Bangladeshi and Danish companies.

Danida PSD Programme provides Advisory Services, Grants and Loan facilities during the pre-project and the project implementation phase of the cooperation between Bangladesh and Danish companies qualifying for assistance.

Live endoscopic brain surgery at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Endoscopic brain surgery, the most modern method in neurosurgery, is being conducted in the country since last one year.

Prof Mainul Haque Sarker, head of neurosurgery department of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), is conducting this endoscopic surgery to remove brain tumour and for Third Ventriculostomy Operation.

"This advanced method is much effective and less risky and less time consuming. It is entirely free from different complexities that prevailed previously under 'Shunt' operation system," said Mainul Haque.

To popularise the new method, a two-day workshop titled 'Live endoscopic surgery in neurosurgery' began at Prof Ata Elahi Khan Library adjacent to the ICU of emergency department at DMCH yesterday.

Three patients were operated under 'live endoscopic brain surgery' on this occasion and three more are to be operated today.

Dr Shigeki Kubo of Japan, Prof Naveed Ashraf of Pakistan, Prof Mainul Haque and Dr Raziul Haque

are taking part at the live surgery. Attendants for the patients told reporters that each operation costs Tk 3500 to 5000.

NDI delegation meets CEC

UNB, Dhaka

A delegation of National Democratic Institute (NDI) yesterday called on Chief Election Commissioner at his office to discuss the issues of voters' list, upcoming national election and election monitoring.

The delegation included NDI Bangladesh resident director Dr Owen P Lippert, South Asia senior programme officer Terry Hovarter, Bangladesh senior programme manager Debora Hilly and senior election advisor Melissa Eastcock.

One killed, 50 injured as villagers clash in B'baria

BDNEWS, B'baria

At least one person was killed and 50 others were injured in a clash over realisation of loan at Joydarkandi village under Sarail upazila in Brahmanbaria, police said yesterday.

The dead was identified as Abdul Khaleq, 35. Police and witnesses said the clash erupted between two groups of villagers at Joydarkandi under Pakshimul Union.

Of the injured, 10 were rushed to Sarail Upazila Health Complex and Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Schoolboy killed in Magura road accident

UNB, Magura

A schoolboy was killed and 10 others were injured in a road accident at Madhabpur village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mehedi Hasan, 8, son of Lata Biswas of Laskerpur village in the upazila.

Police said the accident took place in the morning when a bus hit a school van on its way to school at the village, killing Mehedi on the spot.

Outraged by the accident, local people set fire to the bus.

On information, police and firefighters rushed to the spot and put out the blaze.

The injured were admitted to Sadar Hospital. The body was also taken to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

One killed in clash in Nawabganj

BDNEWS, Dhaka

At least one person was killed and four others were injured in a clash over a trifle matter at Galimpur under Nawabganj upazila in Dhaka, police said yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mahubur Rahman, 35. Police and local people said Firoz and Zahid, two students of class X of Galimpur School engaged in an altercation over the programmes of Independence Day on Sunday and it turned into a clash.

Injured Jaynul Abedin, 50, Jalil Khan, 45, Santu Khan, 20 and Aminul Islam, 29 were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

After being informed, police rushed to the spot and arrested one Tutul in this connection.

Death anniversary



Today is the first death anniversary of Quazi Fazlul Haq, eminent philanthropist and industrialist, says a press release.

Founder of Sonargaon Quazi Fazlul Haq Women's College, Haq was the founding trustee of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), past president of Rotary Club of Dhaka North, life member of Bangladesh MBA Association and IBA Alumni Association.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held on Sonargaon Quazi Fazlul Haq Women's College campus. Milad and doa mahfil will also be held at his Gulshan residence after Magrib prayers.

15-minute token hartal observed in Rajshahi for gas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

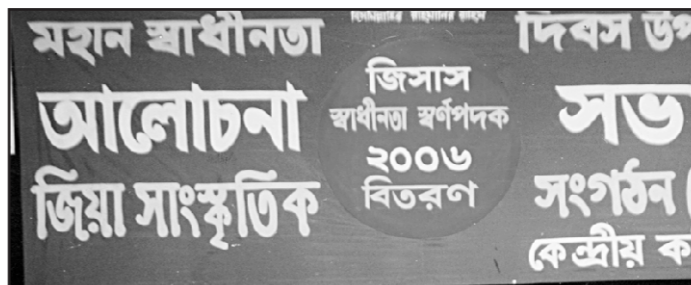
Rajshahi city dwellers observed a token 15-minute hartal yesterday to press home their demand for gas supply in the region before the next general election.

Rajshahi Gas Andolon Parishad enforced the hartal ahead of the prime minister's visit to Rajshahi, scheduled to take place tomorrow.

During the token hartal that started at 11:00am, traffic came to a halt and business establishments kept their shutters down. Students of schools and colleges also came out of their schools.

The Parishad convenor journalist Mahtab Uddin, ward commissioner Sirajuddin Ahmed Manik, Rezaun-nabi al Mamun, Nazrul Islam, Waliur Rahman and Shariful Islam Babu addressed a rally at Shaheb Bazar during the hartal.

Mahtab Uddin said that if the city dwellers do not get gas supply before the election, they will hold the ruling BNP responsible for it.



Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar addresses a discussion on Independence Day at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Zia Sangskritik Sangathan organised the event.

Advertisement for DHAKA TODAY with details for various societies and seminars.

25 shops gutted in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Some 25 business establishments and shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Sutbari market in Dimla yesterday.

Six people were also injured while trying to extinguish the blaze that started at around 4:00pm.

Witnesses said the fire broke out at the hut of Abdul Mamud, a landless, in the area and engulfed the entire area, but the market authority claimed that an electrical short-circuit sparked off the fire.

Abdul Mamud alleged two influential businessmen set fire to his hut in a bid to grab the land.

The market authorities estimated the loss at about Tk 60 lakh.

Local people brought the fire under control after three hours of frantic efforts. Later, fire fighters from Nilphamari and Domar reached the spot.

34 students receive merit scholarship

The Merit Scholarship Awarding Ceremony of East West University for Spring Semester 2006 was held at the university auditorium in the city on March 23, says a press release.

Twenty-seven students from undergraduate and three from graduate programmes received full-year tuition merit scholarships.

Besides, four students were awarded scholarship for securing top position in the admission test in undergraduate and graduate programmes.

Last year, 800 students received a total amount of Tk 2.60 crore in merit scholarship and other forms of need-based financial assistance.

Syed Manzur Elahi, former adviser to Caretaker Government and founder director and treasurer of the university, attended the programme as chief guest and distributed certificates among the recipients.

He extolled the university authorities for patronising the meritorious students in pursuing their higher studies in the form of scholarship and financial assistance.

Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, founder vice-chancellor and president of the Board of Directors, said the scholarship programme of the university is the largest among the private universities.

Prof Dr Mohammad Musa, acting vice-chancellor who presided over the function, highlighted the commitment of the university in imparting quality education.

The programme was attended by deans, chairpersons, faculty members, officers, guardians and students of the university.



Recipients of Merit Scholarships for Spring Semester 2006 of East West University pose for photograph with the guests -- Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, Syed Manzur Elahi and Prof Mohammad Musa -- at the scholarship award ceremony in the city recently.