

Diesel-run vehicles cause air pollution in city

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diesel-run vehicles plying the city streets are contributing to air pollution to a large extent, posing serious health hazards to the city-dwellers, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

Such vehicles emit various types of pollutants, including Particulate Matter (PM), which cause damage to lung function and chronic respiratory illness, they said and called for immediate steps to check emission of air pollutants from motor vehicles.

The workshop on a follow-up air quality management project was organised by the Department of Environment (DoE) at the IDB Bhaban in the city, with its Director General Dr Khandaker Rashedul Haque in the chair.

The project is the extension of Air Quality Management Project (AQMP), which started in 2000 with financial assistance of the World Bank to reduce

air pollution in the country.

The objectives of the follow-on project are to develop the infrastructure and update institutional and regulatory framework for air quality management system and to reduce emissions of air pollutants from major sources such as industry, transport and household fuel.

The Air Quality Management Project (AQMP), which started in 2000, helped phase out two-stroke 'autorickshaws' from the city, leading to about 30 per cent reduction in the emission of Particulate Matter a day, said the speakers.

Under the project, a basic air quality monitoring system has been put in place and basic institutional capacity for air quality monitoring and management has been built, the added.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Project Director Dr Mohammad Nasiruddin suggested regular servicing of vehicles, which will help reduce emission of pollutants.

He also called for changes in the vehicle import policy, saying that some unscrupulous businessmen import very old engines, which are found to be gross polluters.

Secretary to the environment and forest ministry Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury was present as the chief guest while Dr Jeffrey Racki and Dr Sameer Akbar of World Bank also spoke.

A study jointly conducted by the World Bank, Dhaka office, and the AQMP in November last year on the perception of air pollution of different stakeholders was presented at the workshop.

The study recommended disseminating information on air quality, involving the people in the campaign against polluting vehicles and conveying air quality related messages through the mass media.

RU syndicate meet called off after threat by pro-Jamaat teachers

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University authorities postponed yesterday's syndicate meeting following threats by some Jamaat-backed teachers over appointing another pro-Jamaat teacher.

RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain, however, told the reporters that the meeting was postponed due to a technical reason and another meeting will be held soon.

But the VC admitted that a group of Jamaat teachers made threats about the syndicate meeting.

Sources said a selection committee of Law and Justice department last week regularised six candidates as permanent teachers, excepting Shahal Uddin, a teacher working in the department on temporary basis for past couple of months.

Shahal Uddin was also an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

A teacher of the department seeking anonymity told the newsmen that the selection committee members did not regularise him as he failed to satisfy them as a teacher.

But the pro-Jamaat teachers of the university have been pressing the selection board members to appoint him as a permanent teacher through a fresh selection, otherwise they won't let the syndicate meeting to take place.

Pro-Jamaat teachers are the majority in the Rajshahi university teachers' organisations and other teacher groups.

The selection committee, however, regularised the appointment of Abdur Rahim Sagar, another 'controversial' teacher loyal to Jamaat, at the same department.

Department sources said Abdur Rahim misappropriated admission test duty money by forging the signature of an administration employee of the department.

A probe committee, formed to investigate the incident, found Rahim guilty and suggested taking punitive action against him. But the department chairman at that time Prof Asma Siddika, also loyal to Jamaat, did not any take any action against him.

Earlier, Department Chairman Prof Rabiul Islam told the newsmen that nobody could complain or take action against Rahim due to his Jamaat background.

Some senior teachers of the department and Progressive Teachers' Association members expressed deep concern over appointing the 'controversial' teacher Abdur Rahim as a permanent teacher. They also questioned how a teacher already proved guilty of a charge could be regularised.

They also demanded immediate removal of him from the Law and Justice department.

Woman murdered, another beaten to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An unidentified woman was found slaughtered at Lalbagh while a sweeper beaten to death for theft yesterday, police said.

Police recovered the body of the woman aged about 35 from an under-construction tin-shed house at Shaheednagar area at Lalbagh.

The body was sent to the Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Sekandar Ali, caretaker of the house, said three days ago the local extortionists—Aziz, Badshah, Azim and Harun—demanded toll from the house owner and threatened him to be prepared for unwanted circumstances if he failed to comply.

Sekandar, who stays beside the under-construction house, suspects that the woman was brought to the house at night and slaughtered to harass the house owner.

No case was filed in this connection, police said.

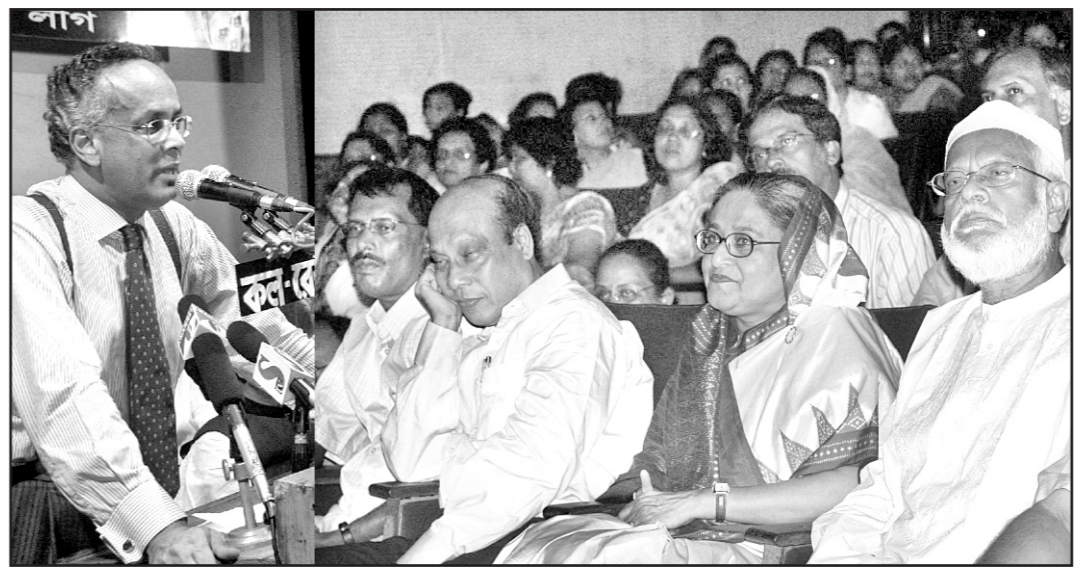
Meanwhile, an alleged thief was beaten to death near the Sutrapur Sweeper Colony.

Ashok Roy, also a sweeper of the colony, was caught red handed while trying to steal a gate of a nearby house early in the morning, police said. Local people beat him to death, police added.

The body was taken to the Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Political science alumni reunion postponed

The annual general meeting and reunion of Dhaka University Political Science Department Alumni Association (DUPDAA) scheduled to be held on May 19 at TSC has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances. Fresh date will be announced later, says a press release.



Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, speaks at a discussion marking the Homecoming Day of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at the IEB auditorium in the city yesterday. Hasina was present in the audience.

HASINA'S HOMECOMING DAY TODAY AL demands cancellation of new voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders yesterday reiterated their stance that they would not allow any election unless reforms are brought to caretaker government system and the Election Commission (EC).

They also demanded cancellation of the draft voter list, terming it fake.

They vowed to realise the demands through street agitation in order to ensure a free and fair election to establish people's rights.

The AL leaders were speaking at a discussion marking the Homecoming Day of AL President Sheikh Hasina at the IEB auditorium in the city. Hasina was present in the audience.

The Homecoming Day will be observed today.

Hasina returned home during the rule of Major General Ziaur Rahman on this day in 1981 after she had been elected AL president unanimously at the party council.

At the discussion, AL presidium member Zillur Rahman MP said the prime minister, who was forced to meet the demand for caretaker government system in 1996, would have to meet the demand for reforms this time as well.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said the alliance government has handed over the national flag and sovereignty to the anti-liberation forces.

Abdur Razzak said the government has drafted a 'fake' voter list to return to power through conspiracy, fearing that they would not be able to get people's mandate for another term if a free and fair election is held.

Tofail Ahmed vowed to topple the alliance government through a mass upsurge to ensure a free and fair election.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, said the professionals would support Sheikh Hasina in intensifying movement to realise the demands for electoral reforms.

Shamsul Huda Harun, Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman, Syed Shamsul Haque, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader and Asadu-zzaman Noor also spoke.

BNP cadres beat AL man to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushiya

Cadres of ruling BNP beat to death an Awami League activist at village Balirmath in Meherpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Babar Ali, 45, had rivalry with Abul Kalam, organising secretary of Kutubpur union BNP, over a piece of land, police said.

On Monday afternoon, Abul Kalam accompanied by some BNP cadres went to the house of Babar and took him to local Kutubpur High School in the name of solving their dispute in arbitration.

A sub-inspector of police was present there at that time, sources said.

At one stage, the ruling party cadres swooped on Babar and beat him up mercilessly. Babar returned home injured.

At about 10:00pm yesterday, the BNP men again went to Babar's house and beat him dead.

Obituary

M Tanzul Islam, father of Biplob Shahid, senior reporter of private television channel RTV, passed away due to cardiac arrest on Monday at the age of 65, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

Tanzul Islam was buried at Ibrahimpur Bazar Mosque graveyard on Monday night.

A milad mahfil will be held at North Kafrul Baitun Noor Jamaat-e-Mosque and Ibrahimpur Bazar Mosque after Asr prayers today.

CTG PORT BATTLE Akbar agreed to stop privatisation Says Mohiuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday said the withdrawal of his entire agitation programme followed the shipping minister's assurance that the government move to privatise the new mooring container terminal (NCT) will be stopped.

The mayor said this while making his stance on the NCT privatisation issue clear at a news briefing in the CCC auditorium yesterday afternoon.

However, the mayor said his movement is in the greater interest of the nation and it has not ended.

Unless everything went on as per the shipping minister's assurance of stopping the privatisation process he will enforce more vigorous agitation programme, cautioned the mayor.

Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury, in an apparent retreat from his previous stance, called off the continuous blockade of Chittagong port, scheduled to start on May 19, and a daylong strike at the port scheduled for May 18.

The mayor said Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain first sent him a letter Monday afternoon and later made a phone call to him around 8:00pm.

In both the letter and the phone call the shipping minister urged the city mayor to withdraw the agitation programme and to hold talks to solve the crisis.

"The minister phoned me once again around 9:30pm and after a long and heated debate on the issue the minister at last assured me of stopping the privatisation," said the Chittagong city mayor adding that it was only then he agreed to call off the entire agitation programme.

"But, I will take to the street once again if the commitment is not kept," he said.

"We had and still have every thing prepared to make our movement a success," he added.

Besides, while calling off the programmes he also considered the

huge losses the businessmen feared to suffer during the strike and blockade, said the mayor.

The mayor said he held meetings with experts and others concerned with the port operation and has already prepared a draft on how to make the new handling process efficient.

He hoped that the proposed talk will start soon.

Meanwhile, fresh tension was brewing in the city over announcements of holding two rallies at the same place and time today.

Mohiuddin is scheduled to address, as chief guest, a pre-scheduled rally of Chittagong Dock Bandar Sarbadaliya Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad on the Dock Sramik Booking Office premises at 3:00pm today.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman is also scheduled to address, as chief guest, another rally announced by Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, a front organisation of the ruling BNP, at the same venue at the same time.

Referring to this, Mohiuddin at the news briefing called for postponement of the Sramik Dal rally.

Otherwise, he warned to give a 'befitting reply' to any bid to counter his rally.

Replying to a question Mohiuddin said though the agitation programmes were called off the rally requires holding to make the people clear about his stance and the reason for the withdrawal of the programmes.

Among others Gano Forum Chittagong unit President Advocate Kafil Uddin, CPB Chittagong city President Mirnal Chowdhury, Islami Front Chittagong unit President Professor Mamtaz Uddin and Awami League Chittagong (north) district unit General Secretary Moslemuddin Ahmed also replied to the queries of journalists at the briefing.

My only dream is to serve people: Hasina

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Leaders of Mohila Awami League paid a courtesy call on party President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence yesterday.

"I am working for the organisation. I have never dreamt of becoming the party president," Hasina said, adding, "I had a dream to serve the people only."

Hasina, also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said, "I have only one dream and that is to serve the people and I am always ready to sacrifice my life for this."

AL presidium member Begum Motia Chowdhury, the party's relief and Social Welfare Secretary Prof Nazma Rahman, and Women Affairs Secretary Dr Dipu Moni were present.

MEMO TO DU VC Students demand construction of 3 underpasses

DU CORRESPONDENT

Several hundreds students of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday submitted a memorandum to the vice-chancellor to press their three-point demand, including construction of underpasses at three intersections around the campus to protect the students from road accident.

The agitating students, mainly from management department, demanded immediate construction of underpasses at Chankharupul, Nilkhet and Shahbagh intersections.

At the Shahabag intersection, Mobarak Hossain, a first year student of the Department of Management, was injured seriously on May 8 when a speeding bus hit him while he was crossing the intersection.

Mobarak succumbed to his injuries on Monday after fighting for life for a week in the incentive care unit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

The students also demanded Tk 15 lakh as compensation to Mobarak's family. The agitating students also demanded life insurance for all students.

Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Fiaz received the memorandum. He said all the demands are logical and he will take measures to set up underpasses at three intersections as early as possible.

Bogra cops sue 33 more opposition activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police yesterday filed another case against 33 leaders and activists of 14-party opposition alliance including Shazanpur Jubo League president yesterday for their alleged involvement in ransacking vehicles on Dhaka-Bogra highway Sunday evening.

Sub-inspector Masudur Rahman, the complainant of the case, said a group of opposition activists blocked the highway and ransacked a number of vehicles. Sources said the opposition party leaders and activists were protesting the filing of false cases against them.

Earlier, SI Abdul Latif and Jubo Dal leader Haroon-ur-Rashid filed four cases against more than 600 activists of the 14-party opposition alliance.

World Telecom Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The 38th World Telecommunications Day will be observed in the country today along with 189 other member countries of International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

"Promoting Global Cyber-Security" is the theme of this year's World Telecommunications Day.

Kaiser takes oath as MP

UNB, Dhaka

Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui yesterday administered oath to newly elected MP M Shamim Kaiser at Sangsad Bhaban.

Parliamentary Secretary Ehsan ul Fattah conducted the swearing-in ceremony of Kaiser, a candidate of the ruling 4-party alliance who was declared elected in the by-polls to Gaibandha-4 constituency recently.

Quikhwani

Quikhwani of Jahanara Begum, director of Phoenix Insurance Company Ltd, and wife of Late Nurul Islam, will be held at her residence at 15/9/1A, Madhubagh, Maghbazar in the city after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the quikhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses the inaugural function of National Imam Conference 2006 at China-Bangladesh Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

BAIRA vice-president Firoz on 2-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed BAIRA Vice-president Shafiqul Alam Firoz on a two-day remand in connection with the mayhem at the manpower agency in Hatirpool on Sunday evening that left one dead and five injured.

The officials of the manpower agency, Turki Associate Ltd, said Joy, one of the 23 most wanted criminals of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, asked its owner to hand the toll over to Firoz.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) termed the arrest of Firoz a 'conspiracy' and demanded his unconditional release.

Detective Branch (DB) of Police yesterday produced Firoz before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate around 2:30pm praying for a 10-day remand.

The investigating officer (IO) of the case Sub-Inspector Emdadul Haque Sheikh in the forwarding report said Firoz along with two of his armed accomplices went to Turki Associate around 6:15pm and sprayed bullets indiscriminately.

Ramzan Ali, 37, a client of the company, along with several others was wounded. Ramzan succumbed to his injuries later. The police report prayed for Firoz's remand to learn more about the whereabouts of the rest of the criminals.

In a separate forward report placed before the same court, DB said a criminal named Joy, suspected to be in India, demanded a large amount of money from Shahabuddin, the proprietor of Turki Associate.

Failing to realise the money, Joy sent several criminals to attack the manpower agency, the report said. It also mentioned the DB took up investigation to learn more about Joy and his whereabouts.

Meanwhile, BAIRA President MAH Selim MP yesterday at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity office said vested quarters 'intentionally' implicated Firoz in the case.

He also condemned the law enforcement agencies for arresting him without valid grounds and not producing Firoz before the court even after 24 hours of his arrest. Police arrested Firoz in the early hours on Sunday at Zia International Airport.

Turki Associate in a press conference yesterday at Crime Reporters Association, Bangladesh office said they suspect Firoz of being involved in the attack as Shahabuddin told them that Joy asked, in his last conversation with him over telephone, to give the money to Firoz.

Turki Associate officials said their employer Shahabuddin does not have any rivalry with Firoz and they expressed their surprise at BAIRA's stand.

'Make EC independent'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and civil society members yesterday called for making the Election Commission (EC) independent and impartial to ensure voting rights of all, including women, minority communities, indigenous people and the poor.

They also demanded cancellation of the new voter list, terming it controversial.

The new list will create an obstacle to holding a free and fair election as many inconsistencies have been found in it, they said at a rally in front of the Fine Arts Institute on Dhaka University campus.

Carrying posters, banners and placards, environmentalists, members of civil society and children

joined the rally organised by Jana Udyog, a non-governmental organisation.

The speakers called on the EC to collect detailed information about the candidates in the upcoming election and make those public so that people can easily choose competent candidates.

Environmentalist Abu Naser Khan said many fake voters were added to the new voter list, but, on the other hand, many women, members of minority communities, ethnic people and poor people did not find themselves on the list.

Dr Jasmine Sultana Sathi, Subrata Das Khokan and Dilara Rekha also spoke at the rally conducted by Sushanta Sarker Shanta.

SUST INCIDENTS

Judicial probe demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Shahjalal University of Science & Technology Teachers' Association yesterday called for a judicial probe into the police firing on students and vandalism at the residence of the vice-chancellor.

The teachers also called on the government to take immediate steps to end the stalemate prevailing in the administration of the university following the resignation of the VC.

Association President Mostafa Hasan chaired the meeting, which strongly condemned the killing of a student, Mosharaf Hossain Shamim, in police firing.

The teachers also decided to contribute their one day's salary for the treatment of critically injured students.

SUST Officers' Association at a meeting also condemned the death of Shamim and condemned the vandalism at the VC's residence.

The meeting alleged that the VC was forced to resign while some unruly students went on a rampage at his residence.

The ruling party-backed teachers at a meeting under the banner of 'SUST Family' strongly condemned vandalism at the VC's house by unruly students. They will take out a mourning procession and hold a protest rally on the campus today.

WEATHER TODAY Dry weather likely UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country, Met Office said. Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country. Highest temperature 35.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 23.4 degree Celsius at Srirongal and Sayedpur. The sun sets in the capital at 6:35pm today and rises at 5:14am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Max Min Humidity in percentage Morning Evening Dhaka 34.7 25.8 63 45 Chittagong 33.2 26.1 67 72 Rajshahi 35.5 24.5 67 62 Khulna 34.5 26.2 76 72 Barisa 33.6 26.0 80 71 Sylhet 34.4 23.9 48 51 Cox's Bazar 32.2 -- --