

Piling up medical waste discarded thoughtlessly at landfills in city corporation areas pose serious threat to public health. Divisional cities, excluding the capital, have around 1,380 healthcare establishments -- public and private -- that produce over 20 tonnes of medical waste every day. To draw attention to this alarming issue, The Daily Star is highlighting medical waste management in major cities across the country. In this instalment of the series, we look at medical waste management in Sylhet city.



**MEDICAL WASTE MANAGEMENT**

With no safety gear, a woman holds a discarded blood bag at Parairchak in Sylhet, putting herself at high risk of being infected.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

# Deadlock over incineration fee delaying proper disposal

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

While proper disposal of medical waste continues to be a matter of concern in Sylhet city, a trilateral deadlock over fee is putting the process on hold.

Even though a longstanding mechanism is ready for operation, disagreement among the city corporation, an NGO and healthcare facilities over the charge fixed for incinerating such waste remains.

According to Sylhet City Corporation, daily produced medical waste is around two tonnes. SCC only collects those from healthcare centres and dumps them in a 12-acre landfill at Parairchak where there is a 20-acre marshland.

To dispose of the waste, SCC signed an agreement with PRISM Bangladesh Foundation, an NGO, on November 15, 2017 as the government agency has no means to do so on its own. Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen inaugurated a medical waste management processing centre at Parairchak on August 31, 2019 -- around two years after the deal.

At the landfill, PRISM has installed an autoclave and a boiler, and dug two pits on



Unabated dumping of medical waste continues at this landfill with a marshland “Bharera Beel” nearby -- contributing to pollution.



A signboard declaring medical waste disposal programme being implemented by PRISM. But the operations are yet to begin in full scale.

nearly one acre of land given by the SCC, said Moinul Islam, district coordinator of PRISM.

An incinerator is ready to be set up, he said, adding that they are conducting operation in this situation to some extent.

The full operation process has remained halted for five months as over 30 percent of the total 122 healthcare facilities are yet to agree with the fee, said SCC Mayor Ariful Haque Chowdhury.

The healthcare centres will have to pay the NGO Tk 1,400 to Tk 55,000 monthly to dispose of their medical waste, said SCC Chief Engineer Nur Azizur Rahman. “We have prepared a rate chart of the monthly fee for all hospitals, clinics as well as diagnostic centres,” he said.

Private Hospitals and Diagnostic Centre Owners Association is not agreeing with the proposal. Its president Dr Naseem Ahmed said,

“We are already paying the city corporation for collecting all types of waste. And now, we will have to pay the NGO for medical waste and SCC for general waste collection?”

Dr Naseem, also chairman of Noorjahan Hospital, said, “The move will eventually double our costs. We asked the city corporation to consider it.”

In this regard, Mayor Ariful Haque said they will hold a meeting soon.

Many of the government and private healthcare centres have agreed with the payment till now, said PRISM Coordinator Moinul Islam, adding that a negotiation among the remaining ones, PRISM and SCC is going on.

Among the 37, five large hospitals -- Women’s Medical College Hospital, North East Medical

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## DHAKA AIRPORT 3 cleaners held with 20 gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn) yesterday arrested three cleaners of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with 20 gold bars weighing around 2.32 kilogrammes.

The arrestees are Sumon Shikdar (34), Md Shahin Hosen (27) and Md Belal Akand (28), said Alamgir Hossain, additional superintendent of police (ops and media) of Airport APBn.

The trio went to clean an aircraft of Biman Bangladesh that reached Dhaka airport around 10:25am from Abu Dhabi via Chattogram. As they got off the plane around 11:20am, the APBn officials wanted to search them but they resisted, Alamgir said.

At one stage, officials searched them and recovered the gold bars worth Tk 1.16 crore hidden inside Sumon’s shoes.

During primary interrogation, Sumon said a technician named Kalam handed him the gold bars inside the plane. He said he was offered Tk 20,000 to carry them out, said the additional superintendent.

“We’re looking into the matter,” he added.

## Dhaka’s wetlands shrunk to 4.38pc: study

UNB, Dhaka

Wetlands in the capital city declined to 4.38 percent from 14.25 percent in the last 20 years due to unplanned urbanisation, a new study finds.

According to the study carried out by Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), open space in the city came down to 4.61 percent in 2019 from 14.07 percent in 1999.

On the contrary, areas covered by concrete shot up to 81.82 percent from 64.99 percent during the period, it said.

BIP General Secretary Dr Adil Mohammed Khan presented the study findings at a press conference titled “Air, environment and livability of Dhaka city: State of green, water, open space and concrete cover” at its conference hall in the city.

He said although ideally a city must have 10-15 percent wetlands, those have now shrunk to only 4.38 percent in Dhaka which is a matter of concern.

In contrast, concrete-covered areas are on the rise, Adil said, adding that the livability of a city depends on environmental management.

He underscored the need for striking a balance among greenery, water reservoirs and built-up areas.

The BIP general secretary also put forward 10 recommendations to overcome the situation.

The suggestions include developing location-based green areas; creating green belts around the city; preserving existing water reservoirs and reclaiming occupied ones; ensuring urban forestation; formulating necessary laws and policies for not expanding the built-up area of the city; and reviewing environmental, social and other impacts before making infrastructure plans.

BIP President Dr Akhter Mahmud presided over the function while its vice-presidents Muhammad Ariful Islam, Dr Chowdhury Md Zabeed Sadek; former president Prof Dr AKM Abul Kalam; and former vice-president Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon were present.

## Eighth grader dies at ICU Father claims she was raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

An eighth-grader who was allegedly raped in Narail’s Lohagara upazila, and later attempted to take her own life, passed away at the ICU of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) yesterday.

According to her father and locals, she was raped by three local youths last Sunday (December 29, 2019), when she went to fetch water from a pond near her home.

The main accused in the case, Eman Sheikh (18), was arrested after the victim’s father filed a case against three local youths with Lohagara Police Station on Monday.

Other two accused, Nasir Sheikh (21) and Sajib Sheikh (22), have been absconding since the incident.

The victim’s father Salim said his daughter attempted to kill herself following the incident. She was rescued and taken to Lohagara Health Complex, and later shifted to Narail Sadar Hospital. From there, she was admitted to KMCH ICU on Thursday.

She had been undergoing treatment at the hospital after being referred from Narail Sadar Hospital.

Lohagara Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Alamgir Hossain said, the father of the girl filed a case under Women and Child Repression Prevention Act, accusing the three. Police are trying to arrest the other two accused. He added an autopsy was completed at KMCH, and the girl was buried near her home on Friday night.

## 12-year-old run over by bus in Tangail

Three killed in other road accidents

STAR REPORT

A 12-year-old was killed and his parents were injured after a passenger bus ran over their motorcycle at Bhatkura area in Tangail Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased is Md Fahim (12), son of Al Mamun.

Quoting relatives, Sub-inspector Md Nobin, on-duty officer at Tangail General Hospital, said the accident occurred around 10am when the three were returning home from their relative’s house.

Fahim died on the spot while Mamun and his wife Sumi were seriously injured. They were undergoing treatment at Tangail General Hospital.

The passenger bus managed to flee after the accident.

Meanwhile, at least three people were killed in other accidents in two districts yesterday, report our correspondent and a news agency.

In the capital, an unidentified pedestrian, aged around 55, was killed after a covered van hit him on West Kalshi Road in Pallabi yesterday, reports UNB.

Md Mizanur Rahman, sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station, said the accident occurred around 9:30am, initially leaving him severely injured.

He was immediately taken to nearby Islami Bank Hospital and was later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead.

The body was kept at DMCH morgue and police are trying to identify the deceased.

In Manikganj, two people were killed after a bus hit the rickshaw carrying them at Baniajuri area of Ghior upazila yesterday.

The deceased are rickshaw-puller Ijuddin (40) and passenger Selim Mia (38).

Sub-inspector Basudeb Sinha, in-charge of Balgail Highway Police Outpost, said the two were killed on the spot when the collision occurred around 1pm.

Police seized the bus but its staff managed to flee, he said. The bodies were sent to Manikganj District Hospital’s morgue for autopsy.

## Samson H Chowdhury’s death anniv today



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Today is the eighth death anniversary of Samson H Chowdhury, the founder of Square Group.

On this day in 2012, the visionary entrepreneur and industrialist passed away at Raffles Hospital in Singapore at the age of 86.

Samson Chowdhury left behind an unmatched legacy of entrepreneurship and industrialisation.

He built up from scratch Square Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, and set an example of ethical business that is certain to inspire many others in the years to come.

Born on February 25, 1926 in Pabna, Samson H Chowdhury was the eldest child of Eakub H Chowdhury and Latika Chowdhury. Educated in Mymensingh and Kolkata,

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Remembrance

We are forever grateful for your immortal achievements; without which we would never have been able to come this far. Know that you will always be our guiding light. Know that on this day we will always remember you with the heartfelt love and respect.

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