

DOWN TO EARTH

Smoke beyond allowable limit

By A S M Nurunnabi

Smoke pollution arises mainly from two sources—motor vehicles and industries. The pollution caused by motor vehicles by their black smoke emissions is of greater concern for us at the moment. With the steady growth of motor traffic on the roads in the city, the threat from pollution keeps on increasing at an alarming rate.

According to knowledgeable sources, most of the vehicles plying in the country are threatening public health by emitting black smoke beyond allowable limit. Though the owners of mechanised transports know it well that such excessive black exhaust is harmful to health, they do not generally take corrective steps in this regard.

In a recent survey with a vehicular exhaust instrument, it has been found that 14 per cent buses, 10 per cent trucks, 20 per cent tempos and 7 per cent jeeps of Metropolitan Dhaka run pollution free. This reveals a sad fact that most of the vehicles plying on busy Dhaka streets are polluting the capital's air at random.

A further survey conducted with Asian Development Bank's help of 900 vehicles is understood to have shown that about 86 per cent buses, 90 per cent trucks, 80 per cent tempos, 93 per cent jeeps and 82 per cent microbuses emit poisonous exhaust. The smoke of various vehicles cause serious diseases including heart and respiratory problems. The children are the worst sufferers.

To create public awareness of the dangers from the harmful exhausts the Department of Environment, observe from time to time 'Environment

Week' during which anti-exhaust fumes propaganda is made and seminars and discussion meetings are held at which the adverse effects of black exhausts are highlighted.

But it appears that, in spite of observance of environment weeks, pollution of environment from this source has not abated. Rather an increasing trend is noticeable.

The sources in the Department of Environment said that they can not take direct action against the owners of delinquent vehicles. The Department has to seek help from the police administration and for this a number of formalities need to be performed.

The Police take action against the defaulting vehicles under the Motor Vehicles Act, and start a case which later goes to a Magistrate's court for decision. The penal provision of the law is not stringent enough in as much as the maximum penalty that can be imposed on the owner of a faulty vehicle is only Tk 200. However, within the limitation of the present law, an ad-hoc arrangement has been currently adopted under which representatives of the Police, the Road Transport Authority and the Department of Environment carry out checks once every week on vehicles on roads in particular areas.

It is felt that the existing provisions of law do not act as an adequate deterrent. Moreover, there are certain points which are not covered by the law. For example, there is no definition of offending black smoke. Also no equipment or laboratory is available for collection and examination of black smoke. Observers believe that the law should be

suitably amended to provide, among other things, for stringent measures and also for joint responsibility of the Department of Environment with the Police administration. The Road Transport Authority should be more punctilious, while giving fitness certificate to a vehicle, in ensuring that its exhaust system is in order.

According to the authorities in the Department of Environment, vehicle owners can stop emission of exhaust fumes by incurring a small expenditure. The problem can, however, be tackled in a more effective way and with a little more cost if the vehicles could be fitted with Catalytic converter, a mechanism for ensuring clean fumes. To adopt this system, it is necessary to ensure easy availability of that mechanism, either by import or by local manufacture.

The problem of smoke pollution from the source of industries has not reached an alarming state in general except in some isolated pockets, as opined by a knowledgeable source.

The prime need of the hour is a genuine desire of the owners of vehicles to extend their co-operation in the betterment of environment and in preservation of public health. It is futile to think that mere observance of environment weeks or adoption of arrangements for periodic checks will automatically preserve our environment. What is needed is that everyone of us, as well as vehicle owners, should be alive to the gravity of the situation and should be helpful and co-operative in ensuring a better environment for the present and for the future.



Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya brought out a procession protesting the killing of Moin Hossain Raju (inset) on DU campus Friday. — Star photo

DU : One more killed

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 tivities of BCL (S-A) and JCD were locked in an exchange of fire near the TSC. JCD activists took position behind the Dhaka University Snacks (DUS) while the BCL workers were in front of DUS and near the Shamsunnahar Hall. Both the rival groups fired over hundred rounds of shots. A contingent of police stationed nearby tried to intervene in the battle and lobbed several rounds of tear gas canisters. The whole area was enveloped by gas and filled with screams of the scared students, male and female.

The GCO, a platform of eight left-leaning student organisations, brought out a procession, as the gunbattle came to a lull, to protest violence and police role during the incidence.

The BCL workers who pulled back near the Jagannath Hall also brought out a separate procession in the same area. When the two processions went near the Rokeya Hall, a single shot was heard, witnesses said adding that a second round of battle began with it.

The processions were dispersed after JCD activists, along with some recently expelled BCL activists who took position near the Modern

Languages Institute, opened fire on the procession.

The marchers broke up and ran for safety while the body of Raju laid in a pool of blood. It was about 6-15 pm.

When the battle quelled some of the comrades rushed mortally injured Raju to the DMCH where doctors declared him dead after dogged attempts to save his life.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah, the DU Proctor, the Provost of the Shahidullah Hall and Chairman of the Soil Science Department went to the hospital, where a heart rendering scene took place. Thousands of mourning students to the university also visited Raju where relatives, class mates and friends awaited.

Speaking at a hurriedly-called press conference at the Jatiya Press Club the GCO leaders condemned the incident and held the workers of JCD responsible for the killing of Raju. They termed the killing "pre-planned and conspiratory" and said it had been done by the Government to divert the ongoing movement for the public trial of Golam Azam on March 26 at the Suhrawardi Uddyan in the capital.

BCU President Nasrullozha, other GCO leaders Belal Chowdhury and Razekuzzaman Ratan, spoke at the press conference.

The GCO leaders alleged that the student wings of both the Awami League and BNP were engaged in destabilising the harmony on the campus. They also condemned the "mysterious silence" of the police during the incident.

Earlier, the GCO activists brought out a procession from the DMCH and rallied in front of the Press Club.

Several vehicles were damaged by the protesters. Angry students set ablaze a microbus near Chankharpool at about 8-33 pm.

The body of Raju was taken to his Shyamoli residence last night.

His nama'je-janaza will be held at the University Central Mosque and a mourning procession on the campus will follow.

Death of baby The child's death was 'natural', says DCC

The Dhaka City Corporation authorities said Friday it was unfortunate that a section of the press tried to pass off the natural death of a child as an unnatural one, reports BSS.

Describing the report of the death of a child in a section of the press yesterday as misleading the Dhaka City Corporation authorities said in a press release that the death was attributed to cold by the father of the child in the record book of the graveyard. It was unfortunate that a natural death was tried to be passed off as an unnatural one with an ulterior motive, it added.

Referring to the strike of the corporation employees for implementation of the pay scale, '91, the press release said they (employees) went on strike illegally. It described how the leaders of the corporation employees broke off negotiations abruptly and stayed away from the dialogue with the corporation authorities for resolving the problems. Instead of resolving their problems through negotiations, some employees resisted steps taken by the corporation to remove garbage from the city streets during the holy month of Ramzan for the convenience of the city dwellers, it said.

The press release further pointed out that implementation of the pay scale, '91 was not within the jurisdiction of the city corporation authorities.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities said Friday the news item published in a section of the press yesterday, stating that a seven-day-old child died of suffocation after police lobbed tear gas shells was not based on fact, a DMP press release said.

After proper investigation, it was revealed that the infant died of illness as it was mentioned in the register of the Azimpur Graveyard by the father of the deceased, the press release said.

Therefore, the press release said, there was no scope for confusion regarding the cause of death of the child.

DCC employees

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 drivers on ad-hoc basis to face the crisis arising out of the strike.

The officials said that the rest 5,000 permanent workers will be served show cause notices shortly and other legal actions including termination will also be taken against them.

The source said that a small number of cleaners would be recruited now as the authorities is planning to hand over conservancy services to the private sector.

Quotations may be invited from private companies in this regard within a day or two, the source added.

The corporation currently spends Taka one crore per month for conservancy services but the expenditure may be reduced to half if it is handed over to the private sector, the officials said.

The authorities, however, have made alternative arrangements to run emergency services though it was not sufficient, the source admitted.

The official said Friday that additional measures would be taken to step up cleaning operations from Saturday.

On the other hand, the Pura Karmachari Federation in a press release Friday said that the employees would continue their strike until their demand was met.

The Midnight File

US Senate body okays envoy to Myanmar

WASHINGTON, Mar 13 : The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved appointment of Parker Borg to be ambassador Myanmar, but will issue a critical report on Myanmar government before he's confirmed. The report, expected in several days, is likely to reflect congressional and State Department concern that the appointment not be viewed as endorsement of Myanmar government, which US officials have been pushing to step down. Several Senators have criticized the nomination, saying appointment of an ambassador now would send the wrong signal to a government they accuse of illegitimacy and widespread human rights abuses, reports AP.

Politics remains a 'no-woman's land'

GENEVA, Mar 13 : Women remain underrepresented in world politics, and two governments — Bahrain and Kuwait — still deny them the vote, according to an international parliamentary group. Inter-Parliamentary Union, an umbrella group of 96 national parliaments, said only four countries — Bangladesh, Dominica, France and Norway — have governments led by women. Nine have female heads of state. "Although substantial progress has been made in the years since World War II, politics by and large remain a 'no-woman's land' almost everywhere," a summary of study said, reports AP.

WB links aid

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 Government department responsible for external aid mobilisation.

In recent discussions with the Government, according to a highly placed source, the World Bank has indicated that Bangladesh's need for aid is not sufficient justification for the WB and other donors to continue giving aid at "historically recorded levels".

The draft report observes: "It is essential that the Government demonstrate its ability to absorb project aid more efficiently before a case can be made for higher levels of donor commitments."

Officials say with the political changes in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe, Bangladesh has come to face a "swan or sink situation".

Officials say WB has indicated that its recommendation on the level of aid that Bangladesh should get in the forth coming Aid Club meeting will depend on what steps the Government takes to install a competitive atmosphere. The steps include: (1) reduction in the tariff rates to a maximum of 75 per cent from the current maximum of 100 per cent; (2) elimination of quota restrictions; (3) further depreciation of taka and (4) political commitment to the improvement in industrial relations.

According to a seminar ERD official, the emphases is now on turning around the style of economic management to a "market-friendly approach. The market-friendly approach, a new term coined by the WB in

recent years, requires that Bangladesh leaves everything, except building of infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals, communication, bridges etc. to the private sector. However, says the official, the private sector may not be given any protection in the form of tariff or quota. They would be required to compete in the international market. The report contends that low productivity of workers in Bangladesh is a major constraint to competitiveness in the international field. "... labour costs in Bangladesh the report says, at the end of the eighties were ... higher than labour costs in Sri Lanka, whose per capita GDP is some 2.5 times higher than that of Bangladesh".

Industrial relations are dominated by highly politicised labour unions; the antagonistic labour-management-government relations constitute the most serious threat to Bangladesh labour market competitiveness, the report observes.

The report observes that the contribution from the gross domestic product to investment has shown substantially decline over the past ten years.

According to the report, the ratio of gross domestic investment (GDI) to GDP from 59.9% in 1980-81 came down to 11.6% in 1990-91 means that the economy has reached a point. This means that the economy has reached a point where there is no net addition to capital. This, the report argues, is a serious threat to the future growth of Bangladesh.

PM Asylum bill won't be okayed in UK before polls

LONDON, Mar 13: The controversial asylum bill, aimed at stopping the entry into Britain of "bogus" refugees, will not become law ahead of the general election in April, observers said here early Friday, reports AFP.

The government bill, opposed by church leaders and opposition party politicians, faced debate over a series of wrecking amendments proposed in the House of Lords and will not be able to pass into law before parliament dissolves on Monday.

Opponents of the bill claimed it would mean genuine political refugees would be turned back from entry into Britain despite conservative claims that true refugee rights would be safeguarded.

World Cup

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 the semis.

New Zealand, with 12 points from six matches, and England with 11 from six, both are certain of playing in the semis.

South Africa and the West Indies both have eight points from seven matches and can clinch semifinal berths with wins in their final matches.

Pakistan, which have five points from six matches, and defending champion Australia, with four points from six games, both have only faint hopes of surviving.

South Africa play Pakistan in their final first round match in Adelaide on Sunday, while the West Indies play Australia in Melbourne next Wednesday. (Details on Page 10)

Non MPs

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 uphold the privilege notice when the parliament goes into session around mid-April.

BNP sources say, the matter has already been discussed at the policy planning level. The party leaders, sources say, are working out a formula by which people falling under the category of 'experts or technocrats' could be appointed to serve the government.

Under the new arrangement, according to sources, individuals will be appointed as advisors to the Prime Minister. Their status will be above the secretaries but below that of a minister.

To compensate for the status, the advisors will be entitled to enhanced honorarium and other perks.

EC assistance

From Page 1 Col 5
 However, on the question of food aid, the government has expressed some reservations.

The EC plans to reduce its food support in the public food distribution system (PFDS) for Bangladesh. The support in the PFDS is highly monetized. The food supply on this account is sold in the open market and used for different projects.

EC in its strategy plans to reduce food support on this account and wants to divert the support to multi-year programmes which will be less monetized and more target oriented, sources said. The money proceeds from the monetised food support will have to be spent on the specific projects for which the support is intended.

However, government will request the EC to continue its food support for PFDS saying that decrease in the amount will hamper food security for Bangladesh. Government will also ask the EC to increase its overall food support towards Bangladesh.

In the new EC strategy, there will be better co-ordination between, the government and the NGOs, sources said.

The EC will also assist Bangladesh in land accretion through crossdam construction in the coastal area. It will also assist in the soil and

4 hurt in clash at Tejgaon

By Staff Correspondent
 At least four people were injured as a group of people Friday night attacked on a slum area near the Central Press staff quarter at Tejgaon in the city.

CU: Peace

From Page 1 Col 8
 The interim government formed an inquiry-committee to look into the matter. The inquiry, among other findings, held the former Vice-Chancellor Prof Alamgir Sirajuddin responsible. Subsequently, Prof Sirajuddin was removed by the Chancellor and Prof R I Chowdhury was appointed VC on December 30 last.

The agreement stipulates that, once the university re-opens, the students will not hold rallies and chant slogans on the corridor. They will organise meeting in the Shahid Minar only after prior permission is taken.

Besides, the residential students will vacate the halls on March 15 and will be allowed re-entry after proper identification. The system of roll-calls for the students of halls will be reintroduced.

The rising salinity problem has threatened the southern region of the country.

As part of its strategy to strengthen the social sector, the EC will also support in activating rural markets and rural roads. These scheme will come under the programmes to eradicate poverty.

Montu

From Page 1 Col 8
 while talking to The Daily Star last night said that they would talk to the leaders of all the seven district committees of AJL of the greater Dhaka district before staging such a big demonstration.

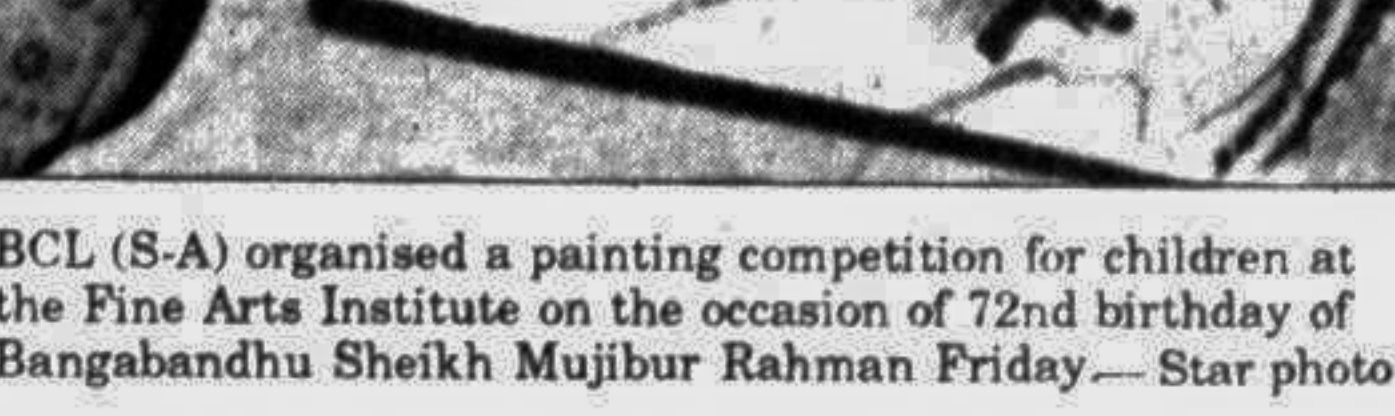
Earlier, a three-member delegation of the Montu-led faction of the Dhaka district unit of AL met the party chief Sheikh Hasina on Thursday and reportedly urged her to forgive Montu and withdraw the charge against him. Hasina, according to sources, assured the team of conveying the request to the ALWC to consider the appeal.

An influential ALWC member informed The Daily Star last night that Montu must embrace punishment, whatever may be the degree of the punishment, for the arrogance he showed against the ALWC decision.

The ALWC member also said that AJL had postponed the public meeting in front of the Press Club at the advice of some of the ALWC members sympathetic to Montu.

The Awami League, however, according to sources, will take final decision on Montu issue only after he gives a reply to the letter issued to him last week by the party high command.

BCL (S-A) organised a painting competition for children at the Fine Arts Institute on the occasion of 72nd birthday of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Friday. — Star photo



Notice for Plot Allotment (2nd Phase) in Syhampur-Kadamtali Industrial Area

It is hereby notified for general information that the time for submission of application for allotment of industrial plot (2nd phase) in Syhampur-Kadamtali Industrial Area is extended up to 30-4-92.

It may be noted that other terms & conditions of the original notice will remain unchanged.

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