

# DOWN TO EARTH

## City's Environmental Conundrum

Dhaka is in danger of dying from the road-side pollution that has been a notable feature of city roads. The bigger issue that emerges from the suffocating conditions on the roads is the extent of the conditions that the city dwellers are forced to go through everyday. New vehicles including anything from reconducted cars and autorickshaws to motor cycles are hitting the roads everyday. This inevitably involves the smoke factor which has taken or is beginning to assume ominous proportions, with the result that all those places in the city where traffic is forced to come to a standstill owing to jams every now and then, it is not unusual for people to come up against the smoke pollution arising from the myriad stalled vehicles.

Noxious fumes from those vehicles are slow-acting poisons from which every city dweller caught up in them would never escape their horrendous consequences. Admittedly, it is not an easy task for the authorities to grapple with these health hazards, but the regrettable aspect of the thing is that no serious attempts have yet been taken to deal with the situation, except for some fitful efforts to take the owners of defective vehicles to task. In the end, it has always been a return to square one, as

By A S M Nurunnabi  
some observers have commented.

Looking back to history, it has been seen that smoke pollution involving lead poisoning is known to be a factor in causing decay of great civilisations, apart from moral decay. Leaving aside the latter causative factor, it seems that we, in Bangladesh, especially at Dhaka, are treading, with great vigour, the path of destructive environmental pollution.

The extent of such pollution has gone so far that one observer has lately lamented "Pollution, thy name is Dhaka." According to his experience, after a single trip through the streets of Dhaka, an unsuspecting visitor will not only be able to feel but actually see the blue and black pollution for himself. Autorickshaws, trucks and buses spew out exhaust in an uncontrollable frenzy, but no one seems to care.

There are some who could argue that traffic congestions and resulting pollution are an almost world-wide phenomenon. They may be right, but up to an extent. The difference is that in other countries when social conditions go wrong, effective measures are rigidly taken to correct the wrongs. In our case, the wrongful situations, requiring prompt attention and rigid ap-

plication of relevant laws and rules, are almost taken with a peculiar kind of equanimity. The result is a total mess that rocks our social life.

In the opinion of observers, we can only begin to entertain thoughts of a positive nature if the authorities concerned keep two things in mind. First, it is time to come down hard on people who put defective vehicles on the roads. Secondly, it should be decided whether it is at all judicious to allow an uninhibited number of vehicles on roads that have not expanded over the years.

There are other suggestions worthy of serious consideration. A city must take into account not only its physical expansion aspects, but also its sustainability as an economic and environmental entity. Though sometimes economic considerations are found to get the better of environmental concerns, it seems very important to keep in view that environment be not undermined and that, to take care of the economic aspects, employment opportunities be dispersed away from the city, so as to help reduce the exodus of rural people to the capital or other cities.

The bottom line is, however, that we pay attention and rectify the problem now, or we perish later.

### 7 injured in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least seven people were injured in separate incidents of violence in different parts of the city yesterday.

Of them, five people sustained bomb injuries when a gang of extortions attacked the Gulistan Adarsha Market in Fulbaria at around 1 pm.

The gang hurled bombs at the traders at the market refused to give them tolls, witnesses said.

Of the injured, Amrit Hossain, 40, Siddiqui Rahman, 30, and Roni Akhter, 55, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

One Amritunnesa, 25, wife of Kader Miah, was injured in bomb blasts at a slum in Tejgaon area in the morning. hospital sources said.

In another incident, one Farid Ahmed alias Moni, 35, received bullet wound in his leg in the Film Development Corporation (FDC) premises. police said.

Moni, an assistant film director, was shot during a row with a person inside the FDC at around 4 pm. However, no case has been lodged with Tejgaon police, police said.

Another report from Belgrade says the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said today it had asked the Yugoslav government to immediately release 13 Bosnian Muslims being held in Serbia.

Belgrade has accused the 13 Muslims of war crimes, and barred them from joining 211 other Bosnian refugees who were repatriated to Bosnia on Wednesday.

A UNHCR plane was on standby at Belgrade Airport awaiting the green light from the Yugoslav interior ministry to transfer the refugees to

# Donors' confce on Bosnia begins

BRUSSELS, Apr 12: A key donors' conference opened here today with officials from 55 countries ready to tackle how to finance the huge task of Bosnia's post-war reconstruction, reports AFP.

The two-day conference, sponsored by the European Commission and the World Bank, hopes to raise 1.8 billion dollars for 1996.

The Bosnian Serb delegation, which was to join the Croat-Muslim federation delegation, has refused to participate in the conference.

A total 55 countries and 29 world agencies are taking part in the meeting, against a backdrop of a new flare-up of the Balkans conflict calling for quick economic measures to smooth over the tension still simmering between Bosnia's three people the Croats, Muslims and Serbs.

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They are part of a group of 796 Muslims who fled the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves in eastern Bosnia in July and August last year after it fell to the Bosnian Serbs.

All the refugees were held in two camps in Serbia, Sijivica and Mitro Polje. They started leaving Serbia in waves as of last December.

There are 65 people still in the Sijivica camp, 27 of whom were due to leave for Finao on Sunday, while the rest are still seeking host countries.

### AL gheraoes Bera thana

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Apr 12: Awami League workers gheraoed Bera thana today demanding recovery of illegal arms, arrest of terrorists and immediate withdrawal of cases against its leaders and activists.

Later, in a procession, they also paraded main roads of the Bera Pourasabha and held a public meeting.

Presided over by Mohamad Abdul Latif, the rally was addressed by party's Information and Research Secretary Prof Abu Sayeed and Dr Mirza Abdul Jalil. S M Ameer Ali, Al-Mahmud Sarkar, Abdul Mazi, Golzar Hossain and Fazlur Rahman Masud.

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# The Midnight File

## Nepali PM to visit China

KATHMANDU, Apr 12: Nepali Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba will travel to China next week for talks expected to focus on economic ties, the Foreign Ministry said today. Deuba will visit Beijing between April 18 and 23 at the invitation of Chinese Premier Li Peng, it said in a statement, reports Reuter.

### Probe into arms smuggling demanded

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 12: Some 64 teachers of Rajshahi University in a joint statement today demanded of the caretaker government immediately form a committee headed by a judge of the Supreme Court for investigating the incident of arms smuggling at Cox's Bazar on March 24.

They observed that people of Cox's Bazar recovered the arms in a truck and caught 17 smugglers, all of whom were handed over to the police.

The RU teachers maintained that the countrymen should be informed of the matter for the sake of sovereignty of the country.

The signatories included Hasan Azizul Haq, Sajidur Rahman Khan, Shahidul Islam, Abdul Khaque, Moloy Kumar Bhowmik, Abul Fazal Haq, Ramesh Chandra Debnath, Anand Kumar Shaha, and Mijan Uddin.

### Son of Somali warlord Atto shot dead

MOGADISHU, Apr 12: The son of Somali warlord Osman Hassan Ali Atto has been killed by a sniper believed to be a member of the militia loyal to south Mogadishu and Atto's rival Mohammed Farah Aideed, relatives said today, reports AFP.

Abdisalan Osman Hassan Ali Atto, 18, was shot in the head on Thursday as he sat on the balcony of a building near the spot where Aideed's and Atto's militiamen clashed in south Mogadishu last week.

Two days of fighting between the militias last week left 25 people dead and 250 others wounded.

Abdisalan's killing is said to have infuriated his father's fighters who have vowed to avenge his death.

Osman Atto is the first Somali warlord to lose a son in Somalia's five-year factional bloodletting. He has 19 other children, 18 of the teenage boys. Five serve their father as militiamen.

Osman Atto, a successful Mogadishu businessman, is a former ally and financier of Aideed. The two warlords fell out last year.

Other major warlords, including Aideed sent their children abroad for studies and to escape the war.

### SAARC

From Page 1  
prepared an agreed list of 222 items for preferential trade among them.

He said that the second round of the intergovernmental meeting was due to take place soon.

He said that the recent SAARC trade fair in New Delhi also contributed much to promote trade among the SAARC countries.

Since December, he said, "we have taken a number of important decisions in promoting cooperation in the trade sector."

"Now we need to give some push to SAFTA to take effect," said the Secretary General.

"I have received full support from all the member countries," said the new Secretary General, adding, "I have not met any kind of difficulty."

"As we have entered into the second decade," he said, "we have to strengthen the institution of the secretariat as well as the programme of cooperative activities."

In certain areas, he said, the programme of cooperative activities needed to be consolidated.

SAARC, said the Secretary General, would have to gain from the experiences of the other regional bodies through interaction.

He said that interaction with the out side world would help "us learn from their experiences."

He said that it was not an insignificant achievement that the SAFTA agreement came before the schedule.

A Pakistani career diplomat Naeem U Hasan recently succeeded Y K Silwal of Nepal as the SAARC Secretary General.

He said that he had already been to four SAARC countries on such introductory visits and added after Bangladesh he would be to Bhutan and Pakistan to complete the round.

### BNP : Try

From Page 1

He alleged that certain elements, hiding in the administration, were trying to shatter the neutral character of the caretaker government.

The BNP leader cautioned both the government and the people about an evil design to foil the process of holding a free and fair election.

The meeting was addressed by Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mian, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Shamshul Islam, Mirza Abbas and Nazul Islam Khan.

It was followed by a mourning procession which paraded different city streets.

### 4 new equipment installed at NCHSC

Four sophisticated equipment to detect diseases of ear and any hearing impairment have been installed at the National Centre for Hearing and Speech for Children (NCHSC) in Dhaka, reports UNB.

With the installation of these equipment recently, the NCHSC is now capable of offering better and prompt services to all patients, specially the children suffering from ear, nose and throat diseases.

Of these, Brain Stem Evoked Response Audiometer (BERA), Oto-Acoustic Emission and Vestibulometer - three most modern equipments acclaimed internationally - were installed for the first time in Bangladesh.

BERA is a computerised equipment capable of detecting accurately the type, nature, level and cause of deafness as well as brain tumour arising from the nerve of hearing.

Oto-Acoustic Emission is used to measure and assess the hearing impairment amongst the children.

Vestibulometer is very helpful in assessing the function of vestibule (balance organ of the brain) and identification of various related diseases. It is also capable of testing patients with ear drum perforation and chronic ear diseases.

The other equipment introduced by the NCHSC is: Fiberoptic Laryngoscope helps to view various parts of the throat without making the patient unconscious and without pain.

### Hasan Imam

From Page 1  
dow glass of his car. He left the car and took shelter at the Chittagong Samity Office which also came under attack, he said.

Imam said two police officials came to inquire into the incident after he had informed them of it.

### British aid

From Page 1  
They hoped that any new government in Dhaka would move with the policy agenda, reform process and pursue the efforts for improving the public sector administration.

The officials also underlined Britain's policy of promoting "good governance" through supporting democratic institutions as well as helping to increase the efficiency and accountability of the civil services.

### Fire : 20 hurt

From Page 1  
the extent of damage could not be known immediately, the official added.

The fire originated from an electric short circuit, one source said, adding the godown lacked adequate fire-fighting arrangements.

A total of 16 fire-fighting units from different city stations took around four hours to put out the blaze, sources said.

Local people first informed the fire service after they saw thick black smoke coming out from inside the godown at around 11:20 am.

An explosion occurred inside the warehouse when fire-fighters poured water on the fire. A wall inside the room collapsed and firemen were injured at the time, said an official of the fire service.

In another fire, in a godown at Kazi Alauddin Road in the old part of the city yesterday, leather goods, mostly shoes and sandals, were damaged, fire service source said.

Eight fire-fighting units from different stations took about an hour to extinguish the fire, sources added.

The cause of the fire, the extent of damage and other details could not be known immediately.

### Share prices

From Page 1  
certain items highlighting its significance.

But the following day it was a major mistake in its computer system which had shown the price index as 838.33 points, instead of 813.30 points.

However, as some new issues entered the market last week, the market capitalisation increased by about Tk 129 crore. It reached Tk 5518.31 crore at the closing of the week from Tk 5389.41 crore in the previous week.

The new issues which had come into the market last week were Monno Fabrics, Shandhani Life Insurance and AMLC Pran.

As many as 9 lakh 22 thousand shares and debentures worth about Tk 20.84 crore exchanged hands during the week.

The volume leaders of the week were Beximco Pharma (239400), Monno Fabrics (118550), Chic Text (87500), AMLC Pran (28924), Ashraf Textile (19050), Beximco Synthetic (34620), Chittagong Cement (16821), Eastern Housing (10942), BOC Bangladesh (17842) and Quasem Drycells (16750).

### Publish White Paper on BNP corruption'

FARIDPUR, Apr 12: Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, a member of the presidium of Awami League, today demanded of the caretaker government to publish a White Paper on the corruption of BNP government, reports UNB.

Addressing a huge public meeting at Nagarkanda thana head quarters this afternoon, she alleged that the BNP leaders during their rule had amassed huge amounts of money through corrupt practices.

They are likely to use these money to destroy the sanctity of election," she said demanding immediate investigation into the source of their money.

With the thana Awami League convenor Moazzem Hussain in the chair, the meeting was also addressed by district Awami League leaders Mosharrif Hossain, Bipul Ghosh and Hasina Labu.

Begum Sajeda Chowdhury urged the Election Commission to simplify the process of correcting the voters' list to enable the eligible voters to get enlisted easily.

### CHT peace confce Apr 15

A peace conference, organised by the