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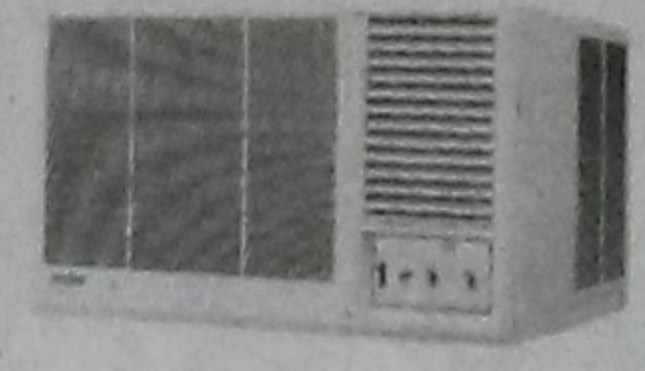
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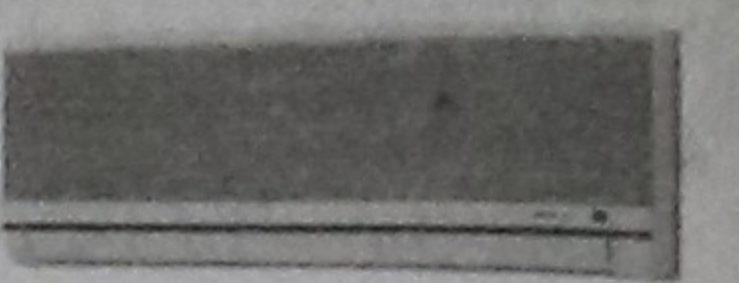


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Dreadful waste dumps

People living near landfills exposed to bladder, lung and blood cancer

By Naimul Haq

Studies show that people living near waste dumps run four times more risk of developing bladder, lung and blood cancer or leukaemia than others.

The risk factor, as several researchers have found out, does not depend on whether the dumpsites hold solid waste or else. Landfill gas consists of naturally occurring methane and carbon dioxide, and forms inside the landfill as the waste decomposes.

As the gas forms, it creates pressure inside the landfill. The pressure forces the gas to move. Some of it makes way through the soil or simply moves upward into the atmosphere.

Understandably, gas that escapes from a landfill is bound to carry toxic chemicals such as paint thinner, solvents, pesticides and other hazardous volatile organic compounds (VOCs), many of them chlorinated.

Long-term exposure to naturally occurring landfill gas can cause numerous detrimental effects on health including breathlessness, gradual loss of appetite and hair, persistent

headache, mental disorder etc. In 1995, a research was carried out on families living near the Miron Quarry landfill, a large municipal solid waste dump in Montreal, Canada. The finds were disturbing. People of that community had a high percentage of cancer patients. Cancer of the stomach, liver, prostate, and lungs were common among the men while the women suffered most from stomach and uterus cancer.

A 1986 study of children with blood cancer in Woburn, Massachusetts statistically linked the disease to drinking water supplies that had been contaminated by a waste site.

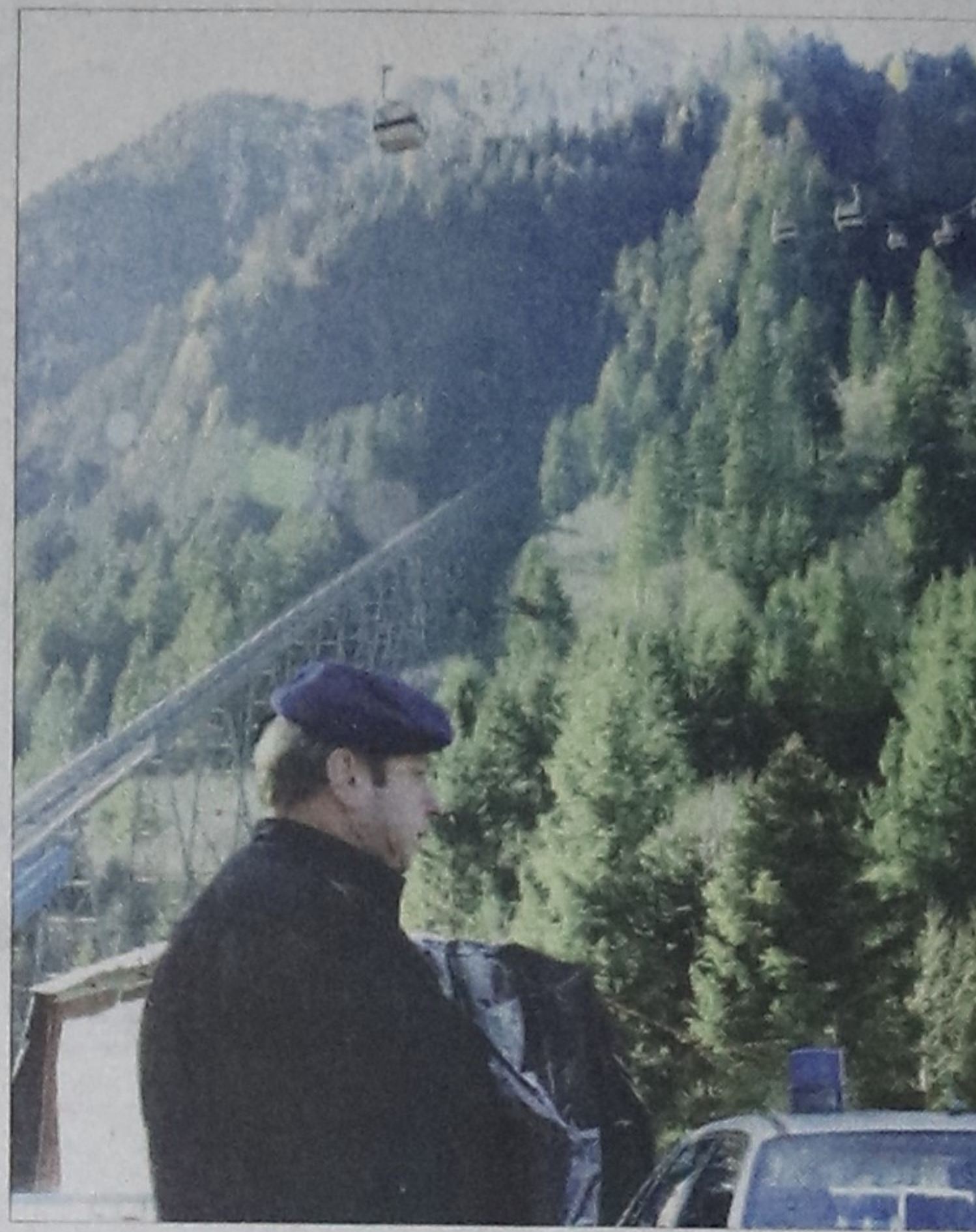
Ralph Ryder, co-ordinator of Communities Against Toxics, a coalition of community groups in the United Kingdom and Ireland fighting industrial pollution and unsafe methods of waste disposal, says, "Landfills are deadly unless they are specially designed to guarantee safety."

those conditions have failed in certain cases to prevent the air, water and land from being poisoned.

There are several dumping sites in the city, the biggest of which is in Matuail. Other sites are in Gabtoli, Amin Bazar and Badda. The most worrying aspect is that the waste dumped at these spots include every type of trash as there is no regulation regarding separate disposal of toxic and non-toxic rubbish.

When inquired about the existence of any specific law that ensures proper waste disposal in the country, Syed Rezwana Hasan, president of the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) said, "The Municipal Law does not specify anything about proper disposal of the waste. The Environment Conservation Act merely classifies waste as liquid, solid, gaseous and radioactive but does not mention about their disposal."

Under these circumstances, the risk of contamination is manifold. The gas produced in such sites has every chance of creating devastating organic and inorganic chemical reactions.



An Austrian gendarme stands at the entrance of the tunnel where a funicular train caught fire on November 11 in the Austrian Alps resort Kitzsteinhorn of Kaprun, killing some 154 people. The driver of the funicular train driving downhill at the same time as fire erupted in an uphill train in Kitzsteinhorn also died. -- AFP photo

170 killed in Alpine tragedy

Cable car crammed with skiers and snowboarders catches fire in mountain tunnel

KAPRUN, Austria, Nov 12: A cable car crammed to capacity with skiers and snowboarders caught fire Saturday while being pulled through a mountain tunnel, killing about 170 people, many of them children and teenagers, reports AP.

One of 18 survivors spoke of "horrible scenes... in the suddenly smoke-filled cabin," as frenzied passengers tried to get out. The cause of the fire wasn't immediately clear.

Most of the victims apparently managed to escape from the compartment but were killed by acrid smoke as they tried to flee by running up narrow stairs leading out of the tunnel, said Manfred Muller, the head of cable car technical operations. Those who survived apparently ran the opposite way, evading most of the smoke being blown upward by strong drafts pushing throughout the tunnel.

The 18 survivors apparently included nine who escaped from the car and nine who were waiting at the top of the tunnel.

All suffered cuts, bruises and the effects of smoke inhalation. Two were in critical condition, while three had left the hospital by evening.

"The crowd of people screamed... and tried desperately to find a way out," one unidentified survivor told the Austria Press Agency. "They tried to rip open the shut doors and to break windows."

"My only thought was to get out, and I could save myself in the last second because a window was kicked in and I could fight my way outside."

Salzburg province Governor Franz Schausberger said that a majority of those killed were "undoubtedly young people."

Volunteers worked late into the night compiling lists of those accounted for among the approximately 2,500 people on the glacier slope at the time

of the tragedy. Austria's president, Thomas Klestil, expressed condolences to relatives, and the government declared Saturday and Sunday national days of mourning. Schausberger also declared Saturday a day of mourning in Salzburg province.

The Austria Press Agency described the tragedy as the worst of any involving skiers being transported by cable-pulled cars to skiing slopes.

The disaster's death toll surpassed the number killed the Italian ski resort of Cavalese in 1976 where 42 people died after a cable carrying suspended cable cars snapped.

The Austrian cable car, pulled by cable under ground for most of the more than 3,200 metres (yards) up the Kitzsteinhorn mountain to the glacier region, caught fire about 600 metres (yards) inside the mountain, in the heart of the Austrian Alps.

Rescuers were unable to reach the compartment where fire broke out at about 9:30 am (0730 GMT) until after nightfall. Those who ventured inside said the car was burned down to the chassis.

Schausberger warned to further potential danger, saying the remnants of the car could slide back down and crash into the valley station where the passengers boarded.

Some survivors apparently escaped after a man smashed a rear window with a ski pole, the Austria Press Agency quoted an unidentified hospital official as saying, after talking to those who escaped.

Reporters near the scene were told that fresh air sucked into the tunnel fed the flames, which apparently broke out in the front section occupied by a cable car attendant. The blaze "spread at a raging speed like in a fireplace," Schausberger said.

Marine reserve on Bay soon

By Shehab Ahmed

The Bangladesh territorial water and economic zone in the Bay of Bengal is going to be declared a 'marine reserve' to protect the dwindling fish resources due to piracy by intruding foreign fishermen.

The Law Ministry has already cleared a proposal by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in this regard, a highly placed official source said.

To start with, the Fisheries Department will send a specially equipped vessel to survey the area to demarcate the 'marine reserve'. The survey will begin in the next couple of months.

Once the survey is completed, necessary legislation will be enacted to protect the marine resources.

Foreign fishermen equipped with 'factory ships' trawl vast areas in the Bay along Bangladesh coast, hauling all types of fish. They net even fish fry and white fish, which are simply dumped as 'waste'. This pollutes the water, endangering regeneration of fish.

Besides, they use explosives to stun and catch fish to minimise their operational cost. All these led to less catch for Bangladeshi fishermen who are not equipped for deep sea fishing.

See page 11 col 1

Withdrawal of cut-off time for vessels irks CPA, users

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Nov 12: A 'cold-war' is continuing between the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and the Ministry of Port and Shipping over withdrawal of cut-off time for container vessels calling at Chittagong Port, sources said.

The cut-off time for loading export cargo into container vessels was withdrawn on November 1 as per decision of the Ministry of Port and Shipping in the backdrop of appeal from BGMEA, sources concerned said.

Sources said the ministry had taken the decision by-passing the opinion of Chittagong Port officials. "The ministry did not even care protests from our side and port. See page 11 col 6

Hardliners out to derail BNP from moderate ways

Bomb attack on JCD's Nov 7 rally could be their act, fear sources

By Rezaul Karim

The BNP hard-liners who have long been trying to influence party leadership and policy decisions are now out to foil constructive efforts by the moderate leaders to streamline the party and its front organisations.

Sources concerned said a number of moves including that for replacement of party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan made by the hardliners in recent months apparently prompted these 'undemocratic' elements to start 'anti-party activities.'

Taking advantage of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's illness, the hard-liners have now decided to 'obstruct and disrupt' party programmes to be attended by the mainstream leaders, popularly known as moderates. They have chosen a faction of the party's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to do some acts of sabotage within the party,

sources said. The JCD faction, led by former general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu has enjoyed blessing of the hard-liners, over the years. Pintu, on his part, has also become 'desperate' as he failed to become the president of the organisation.

The BNP leadership and majority of party leaders and activists last month foiled a move by the hardliners to form a central committee of JCD led by Pintu and his arch-rival Shahabuddin Laitu. BNP and JCD insiders said, Activities of Pintu and his supporters seriously damaged the image of JCD and fuelled intra-organisation conflicts. They have now become 'isolated' from the mainstream BNP and JCD.

The insiders further said that the faction came closer to the BNP hard-liners after a move to make Pintu the JCD president had failed. The faction had a 'secret

meeting with the hard-liners recently.

The meeting allegedly planned to create trouble in party programmes to be attended by moderate leaders, particularly Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Haris Chowdhury and Saidek Hossain Khoka.

As part of the plan, sources said, the JCD faction fired several shots in front of the city BNP's new office at Naya Paltan and exploded several hand bombs at a rally of JCD city unit (south) Thursday afternoon, where Mannan Bhuiyan was chief guest.

The BNP secretary general could not finish his speech because of the bomb attack. JCD sources blamed the Pintu faction for the incident at the rally organised in observance of the 'National Revolution and Solidarity' See page 11 col 8

Great Stupa of That Luang



Thousands of Vientiane residents on November 11 celebrated the annual Buddhist That Luang festival on the square of the Great Stupa, or temple, of That Luang, seen in the background. That Luang is the country's symbol since the abandonment of the communist hammer and sickle placed on top of the temple until 1991. The faithful gather to pray for the wellbeing of their family members during the festival. -- AFP photo

BCL leader shot dead in Feni

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Nov 12: A BCL leader was shot dead allegedly by his party colleagues at village Islampur under Parshuram Upazila of the district last night.

He was identified as Mohammad Yousuf, 19, general secretary of Islampur ward Chhatra League and student of Hasampur College.

Police and witnesses said two activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League took Yousuf to Hasampur College ground at around 5-30 pm and shot him.

He was rushed to a clinic in Feni town where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Police suspected that Yousuf was murdered due to intra-party dispute over sharing of toll money.

Following Yousuf's death activists of the two factions of BCL, one led by Farid and the other by Shantu, clashed at Fulgazi Bazar leaving two injured.

Road accidents kill 11 in two districts

Eleven people were killed in two separate road accidents in Kishoreganj and Gazipur on Saturday, reports UNB.

Six people, including five members of a family were killed in a tragic road accident at Baruipara on Nabinagar-Kaliakore road on Saturday.

The five members of a family were identified as Safuddin, 50, his wife Safura Khatun, 45, sons Sharif Islam, 20, and Mahubul Alam, 18, and daughter Shirin Akter, 22. The other victim was Rafiqul Islam, 30, driver of the microbus.

Police said the Dhaka-bound microbus carrying the family members collided with a bus coming from opposite direction in the morning killing all its passengers on the spot.

The victims, inhabitants of Bawarpara of Mirzapur upazila under Tangail district, were going to Suhrawardi Hospital in Dhaka for treatment of Safuddin.

Another reports adds: Five people were killed and four others injured in a road accident on Kishoreganj-Bhairab road at Rashidabad village in Kishoreganj Sadar upazila on Saturday.

Four of the victims were identified as Ahsan Ullah, 7, and his brother Abu Naim, 8, Khadiza Khatun, 7, and Asar Ali, 32. Identity of another man aged about 20 could not be known immediately.

Ahsan and Naim were sons of Arzu Mia of village Rashidabad while Khadiza was daughter of Golap Mia of the same village. The bodies were handed over to their relatives.

Police and witnesses said four people except Asar Ali died on the spot when a buffalo-laden Bhairab-bound truck fell into a roadside ditch at See page 11 col 6

কুমিল্লা শহরের প্রাণকেন্দ্র রেইসকোর্স-এ ইস্টার্ন হাউজিং-এর
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