

"I can't say I'm happy, I can't say I'm thrilled."
DONALD TRUMP FOLLOWING THE BORDER SECURITY DEAL. (PAGE 10)

"We have to remove the fear of police from people's mind."
IGP MOHAMMAD JAVED PATWARY. (PAGE 4)

"We think we've taken enough people [Rohingyas]...so we can also ask others to help."
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN TO REPORTERS AT HIS OFFICE. (PAGE 2)

Brick kilns top polluter

DoE air pollution survey finds N'ganj most polluted; air quality of 7 cities 'severely unhealthy'

HELEMUL ALAM

Brick kilns are the top air polluter in seven major cities in the country, particularly during dry season when most bricks are made, turning the air quality of these metropolises "severely unhealthy".

Also to blame are construction work that kicks up dust, poorly-maintained vehicles that emit excessive harmful particles and toxic gases, and industrial air pollution, according to the Department of Environment (DoE).

A five-year survey by the department found Narayanganj has the most polluted air, followed by Dhaka. Third is Gazipur, which is followed by Rajshahi, Chattogram, Khulna, and Barisal. The air in Sylhet city, however, is cleaner.

The survey was done between 2013 and 2018 with funds from the World Bank.

Even though Dhaka came out second worst in the country, the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2018 said Dhaka was the world's third worst city in terms of air pollution, behind Delhi and Cairo.

Continued exposure to poor quality air can cause heart diseases, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, and respiratory infections, including pneumonia. It could also cause stroke, according to the WHO.

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A cloud of dark smoke billowing from a chimney at a brick kiln near a reserve coastal forest in Kattoli area of Chattogram. Inset, dust and smoke reduce visibility on a busy road near Postogola Bridge in the capital. The pictures were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN/AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dangerous defiance of kiln law

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

On the banks of the Halda at Uttar Mohra point, within the boundaries of Chattogram city corporation area, a lone brick kiln emits plumes of poisonous smoke.

Whipped up by the wind, the smoke travels steadily towards a school which stands just a few hundred feet away. Some 40,000 who live nearby are also affected.

The dangerous practice is replicated in two other places within the city corporation, in defiance of the law.

As per the Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013, brick kilns cannot be established in areas declared as a municipality, city corporation, reserve forest, or sanctuary.

The law also states that such establishments must be a kilometre away from city corporations and municipalities, and two kilometres away from reserve forests.

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A political mistake

PM on Oikyafront's decision not to join JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday termed the Jatiya Oikyafront's decision not to join parliament a political mistake and urged the MPs-elect from the alliance to join the House.

"Now those who got a few seats participating in the [December 30 general] election are not coming to parliament. They are doing this in a huff. I think they've taken a wrong political decision," she said while replying to a question from Jatiya Party MP Fakhrul Imam (Mymensingh-8).

"I would like to call upon all who got elected to join parliament and speak their words," she said, adding, "If they participate in parliament proceedings, they will get the scope for raising their voice, if they have any issue."



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YABA SMUGGLING IN COX'S BAZAR

500 agents now take full control

Surrender of godfathers on Saturday

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, from Cox's Bazar

A syndicate of around 500 paid agents and carriers, who once oversaw yaba smuggling on behalf of their godfathers and dealers, has now taken control of the trade in Teknaf and Ukhaia, the entry points of the drug to Bangladesh.

They are running the business independently and smuggling in the pink pills from Myanmar. Of them, 30 are big traders, a high official of Cox's Bazar district police told The Daily Star yesterday, seeking anonymity.

"We got the names of the agents and carriers by interrogating at least 80 yaba godfathers and dealers," said the official.

These syndicate members have come up with a new strategy to do business. They no longer demand advance from buyers and now sell the crazy pills on credit.

"They take money from buyers after the pills are delivered. At least 20 hundi traders are helping these agents," mentioned the official, who was involved in the interrogation.

The official further said several godfathers revealed that they had around 40 agents to look after their business.

"We later kept a watch on the activities of the agents and found that 35 of them are now running yaba trade independently," said the official.

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THAKURGAON KILLING

Call for justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Locals of Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila yesterday demanded punishment of the Border Guard Bangladesh members who opened fire during a scuffle with locals on Tuesday, leaving three dead.

They also threatened to launch a tougher movement if their demand was not met.

People from all walks of life formed a human chain, staged demonstrations in Chapdha Bazar area and expressed solidarity with the demand.

Former chairman Abu Taher of Bakua Union Parishad, local teacher Sohel Rana, union unit Awami League general secretary Jahirul Islam,

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Address 'threats to democracy' in Bangladesh

6 US Congressmen urge Trump admin

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A bipartisan group of six influential US Congressmen has voiced concern over the status of democracy in Bangladesh and called upon the Trump administration to address "threats to democracy" in the country.

In a letter to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday, the members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee also highlighted reports of election fraud, rigging and voter suppression over the December 30 polls and urged the Department of State to "take action".

The allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously, says a US Congress press release having a copy of the letter.

The group of the six Congressmen is led by Eliot Engel, US House Representative Michael T McCaul, Ranking Member Brad Sherman, Chairman of the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee Ted Yoho, Ranking Member of the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee Andy Levin and Ann Wagner co-signed the letter.

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The Daily Star CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF JOURNALISM WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

28TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS

The Daily Star has been bringing out a series of diverse and informative supplements around this time of the year for quite some time. And this year too, we are pleased to bring out a five-part 200-page special supplement series, beginning tomorrow, on the occasion of the newspaper's 28th anniversary. Renowned experts from various fields have enriched these supplements with their insightful contributions.

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Bangladesh opener Liton Das was among Bangladesh's top-order failures during their eight-wicket loss to New Zealand in the first ODI at Napier yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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Weary Tigers fall at first hurdle

SPORTS REPORTER

Even before taking the field for the first ODI against New Zealand in Napier yesterday, which Bangladesh lost by eight wickets, the odds were stacked against them as the full squad reached the country only on February 10.

The Tigers' innings of 232 all out in 48.5 overs on what skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza later called a good batting wicket suggested that they were still recovering from the trek to New Zealand. The late arrival, occasioned by the Bangladesh Premier League that ended on February 8, also meant that many of the players could not take part in the one-day warm-up match on February 10.

Therefore, there is not

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