

HEALTH HACK

Surviving a bad air day: Air quality in Dhaka has drastically deteriorated over the last few years due to increasing construction, traffic, and pollution. When air quality is bad, it irritates your eyes, nose, and throat, causes shortness of breath, aggravates asthma and other respiratory conditions. Here's what you can do:

1. Check daily air pollution forecasts in your area.
2. Avoid exercising outdoor when pollution levels are high.
3. Try to keep exposure to a minimum.
4. Wear a mask during peak hours.
5. Inhale steam in the evening/night.

Don't let anti-liberation forces come to power again: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged people of the country to remain vigilant so that anti-liberation forces, terrorists and criminals cannot assume state power again.

She made the call while speaking at a discussion at Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) on the occasion of the 99th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The PM said Bangladesh is the country of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "In Bangladesh, people's rights will be upheld. Inshallah, we'll build a Golden Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty."

She said the government has already declared 2020-21 as the "Mujib Year" and will celebrate the year in a befitting manner. "We've constituted a committee.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

No plan to hike train fare now: minister

BR to buy 20 metre-gauge locomotives from Korean firm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan yesterday said they have not taken any decision to hike train fare as of now, giving a hint that it may rise in near future.

"I can tell you that we are yet to think about increasing fare. This is the main point. However, we have to adjust all things in near future," Sujan told journalists after a contract signing ceremony at Rail Bhaban in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) inked a deal with a Korean company to buy 20 new metre-gauge (MG) locomotives, aiming to replace old ones and operate new passenger and goods trains to meet the growing demand.

Sujan came up with the comments when several newspapers ran reports that BR is mulling hiking passenger and freight fares to improve service and minimise loss.

The railway ministry has formed a committee led by a joint secretary and as per a preliminary proposal, price of passenger tickets would go up by more than 25 percent, said railways sources.

Sujan yesterday said the committee was formed to take information of train fare of neighbouring countries and fares of buses and other carriers, and to evaluate those to prepare a future plan.

"As a minister, I have sought report for better understanding so that a concrete decision can be taken. However, neither railway nor the ministry has taken a decision to hike train fare as of now," he said.

Mentioning that train fare from Dhaka to Gazipur is Tk 18-20 while bus fare is Tk 100-120, he said people want facilities but raise questions when issue of raising train fare comes to the fore.

The minister said railway is a mode of transport for the masses and they will keep that in mind when taking any decision.

20 NEW LOCOMOTIVES

As per the deal, Hyundai Rotem Company, Korea will

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

REVATI MOHAN LODGE

Remnants of opulence

|| MH HAIDER ||



DHAKA VIBE

The grand mansion of Revati Mohan Das, a businessman and philanthropist in early 20th-century Dhaka, provides a sneak peek of his life and what the city used to be.

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

As one stands in front of the century-old Revati Mohan Lodge in Sutrapur, one cannot help but be in awe of the building's grandeur. Splendid pillars rise from the floor to the rooftop, where the parapet is crowned by decorative finials. Behind the pillars is an elegant veranda. The windows boast Venetian arches. The magnificence of this mansion in Old Dhaka makes one wonder about the man after whom it was named.

A good starting point is the fact that the road itself in Sutrapur, on which the mansion is located, is also named after him.

Revati Mohan Das was an affluent businessman and landlord in early 20th century Dhaka. His letterhead, as quoted by Azimushshan Haider in his book, "Dacca: History and

Romance in Place Names", reads: "Revati Mohan Das, Banker and Zemindar, Brick, Tile and Soorkey Manufacturer, Proprietor, Alexandra Steam Machine Press..."

He donated a large sum of money to Mitford Hospital. He also contributed generously in the electrical installation of a part of Dhaka.

All these give us sneak peeks of Revati Mohan's affluence and influence. The lodge is arguably a prominent and well-fitting embodiment of both.

Let's delve more into it. It is not just the impressive facade one sees from the front yard. With graceful motifs, large windows, intricate ornamentation, courtyards, and ceilings with wooden beams, the mansion is indeed fascinating. And even though the entire complex was



not built at the same time, the entire premises will not fail to transport one into early 20th-century Dhaka.

So much so, one side of the compound used to open up to Dholai Khal. Today, we can only imagine how beautiful the building must have looked when the canal flowed next to it.

Taimur Islam, CEO of Urban Study Group (an organisation that campaigns for the protection of architectural heritage of Dhaka), says that there was once a "ghat" (pier) here. "The benches of the ghat survived into the 21st century, but they ceased to exist in relatively recent times," he said.

The compound is now used by the fire service department.

The government allocates funds for maintenance of the building, he added.

"However, the maintenance works that are carried out are sometimes unsympathetic to the building's historical importance. Hence, let alone restoration, important elements are actually getting ruined or deteriorated in the process."

Buildings like Revati Mohan Lodge lack the special attention that needs to be given to them because of their heritage value.

"In 2014, a decision was taken that a shed would be built in front of Revati Mohan Lodge and a building would be constructed in the back," Taimur said.

"We protested against it; our volunteers and local people formed a human chain and submitted a petition. And finally we were able to stop it," he added.

For now, the legacy of Revati Mohan lives on.

'This is autocratic behaviour'

Sultana Kamal says about govt's continuation of Rampal project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is continuing the Rampal power plant project in an "autocratic manner" by abusing power and its impact on the Sundarbans is now visible, said Sultana Kamal, convener of National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans, yesterday.

"The government seems stubborn and is not paying heed to anyone. This is autocratic behaviour," Sultana Kamal said while informing the media on the latest state of the Sundarbans in the perspective of Unesco decisions 2017.

National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans (NCSS) and Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) arranged the briefing at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital.

Sultana Kamal said governments of Bangladesh and India have been continuing work on the 1,320 megawatt Rampal power plant despite protests of millions of people, violating UN environmental law and directives.

"All the decisions government made regarding Rampal are perhaps from political consideration, not from any scientific ground," she said while reading out a written statement.

She said Unesco World Heritage Centre will hold a meeting this year to assess what the Bangladesh government has done in the last two years following the Unesco decisions 2017. Bangladesh government is supposed to submit a report in this regard.

Sultana Kamal said they have also written a letter to the Unesco World Heritage Centre calling for action in view of continued disregard of the decisions by the Bangladesh government.

Unesco has made it clear that no large-scale industrial or infrastructural development should be allowed in the vicinity of the Sundarbans before Bangladesh carried out a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for its south-west region.

On July 9, 2017, briefing the media about the outcome of the Krakow session in Poland, Prime Minister's Energy Affairs Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said the government would continue building the Rampal power plant and do an SEA as per Unesco's request.

The High Court on August 24, 2017 also directed the government not to approve any factory within 10 kilometres of the Sundarbans, declaring the zone an ecologically critical area (ECA).

As per Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 (amended in 2010), no one is allowed to set up any factory in the ECA.

However, going against its own policy, the government over the last few years permitted setting up of 190 industrial and commercial units in the ECA, which, according to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

DHAKA TODAY

SEMINAR

Bangladesh Pragatisheel Columnist Forum will arrange a seminar titled "Manobik Bangabandhu".
Venue: VIP Lounge, Jatiya Press Club
Time: 3:00pm

DISCUSSION

EMK Centre and US Embassy Dhaka will hold an interactive discussion on "The American Comic Book Superheroes: A Reflection on Modern US History".
Venue: EMK Centre, Dhanmondi
Time: 3:00pm

CAMPAIGN

One Billion Rising will organise "From a Campaign to a Way of Life", a movement against inequality and injustice.
Venue: Rabindra Sarobar
Time: 4:30pm

TRADE SHOW

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Service will organise three-day BASIS Soft Expo, showcasing IT and ITES services.
Venue: International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB)
Time: 9:00am



Fourth-grader Akhi joins her mother every day after school to lend a hand in the risky job of breaking bricks, just so her mother can go home a little sooner, after earning a daily income of Tk 250-300. Many workers in the profession are forced to use improvised protective gear as they are given none, leaving them susceptible to frequent injuries. The photo was taken from Bakchor area near Jurain recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN