



A woman cooks on a smoky mud stove indoors in Tejgaon Railway Station area. The government is formulating standards on maintaining indoor air quality.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Move on to control

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change ministry will finalise the draft of the act by this month. It is likely to be passed within this year.

Under the proposed act, the government aims to ensure "effective management of indoor air quality" as part of a time-bound National Air Quality Management Plan.

Md Ali Ahammad Shoukat Choudhury, a professor of chemical engineering at Buet, who was a technical consultant for drafting of the law, said the guidelines of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and World Health Organization have been taken into consideration in writing the draft.

To combat outdoor air pollution, DoE monitors presence of particulate matters (PM10 and PM2.5) and toxic gases including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulfur dioxide in cities with a concentration of industries. The monitoring is done through continuous air monitoring stations (CAMS) installed in the cities.

In the case of indoor air quality, the monitoring agency would see the

presence of these particulate matters, toxic gases as well as a few other pollutants including formaldehyde, radon, and naphthalene, according to the draft standards.

Officials, however, said monitoring of indoor air quality at any level is difficult all over the world, and they took the challenges in consideration.

"This is a new idea in Bangladesh," said CASE Project Director Munjurul Hannan.

On the monitoring side, he said, they would set devices known as "compact air quality monitoring" machines inside factories to measure air pollution.

Once the pollution level and its sources are known, the factory authorities would be given the data and asked to take preventive measures, the official said, adding that similar steps could be taken for other establishments like hospitals.

He, however, laid stress on extensive research for combating indoor air pollution, and said the success of the law would depend on collaboration between different ministries including environment, health, and energy.

Md Ziaul Haque, director (air quality management) of DoE, said monitoring measures could be taken at industrial surroundings like knitting or cement factories, and iron reolling mills where workers are exposed to health hazards.

This would also allow the government to watch large commercial kitchens where firewood and coals are used as fuel and can cause air pollution.

Indoor and outdoor air pollution led to 1.23 lakh deaths in Bangladesh in 2017, according to the State of Global Air 2019 report. As per the study, the major sources of pollution are household solid fuels, dust from construction, coal power plants, brick kilns, vehicle emissions, and diesel-powered machines.

Among the contaminants, PM2.5 poses the greatest health risk and its concentration in Dhaka well exceeds the standard limit of 65 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). Its density is $97.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in Dhaka and highest $113.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in New Delhi, according to the 2018 World Air Quality Report prepared by Greenpeace and AirVisual.

Six held for raping two RMG workers

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The arrestees are Md Raihan, 23, Shahin, 25, Md Nazim, 22, Sujan, 25, Nazim Uddin, 25, and Shahin, 25. All of them are residents of the Bandar upazila.

One of the victims filed a case with the port police yesterday morning accusing eight named and three unnamed people.

The victims were aged 18 and 15.

They work at two different garment factories in the upazila.

The girls, along with their two male friends -- Riyad, 20, and Joynal, 20 -- went to hang out in Sabdi area on Saturday evening, said Rafiqul Islam, acting OC of Bandar Police Station.

"Some three to four men attacked Riyad and Joynal and drove them away. They dragged the girls to a

nearby field where some seven to eight men raped them," the OC said, quoting the case statement.

"Locals heard the girls screaming and informed police. Police reached the spot and caught three of the perpetrators. Three more were arrested later on the same night," he added.

The girls were sent to the Narayanganj General Hospital, the OC said.

Conservatives riding high into Greek local election

AFP, Athens
Greeks voted in municipal elections yesterday, with the conservative opposition set to make more gains against Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's ruling left just a month before they face off in general elections.

The New Democracy party will be hoping to repeat its performance in last month's European election when it took 33 percent of the vote -- nine points more than the ruling Syriza party.

That unexpectedly poor result prompted Tsipras, a socialist who has overseen austerity measures since the Greek debt crisis, to call parliamentary elections for July 7, three months earlier than scheduled.

Yesterday saw the second round run-off of voting for city mayors and regional governors.

In the first round of local and

regional elections in May, New Democracy won five of Greece's 13 regions, while the left took just one.

Analysts say the leftists appear set to lose control of the capital, Athens, and the second city of Thessaloniki in the north. Another key region at risk is Attica province.

Polls closed at 1600 GMT and preliminary results for cities were expected around 1900 GMT.

"Hope has returned, it is revenge... against the populism of Tsipras," the opposition-leaning daily To Vima wrote in one of its front page headlines.

Tsipras urged voters to chose the "mayors of progress" calling yesterday's vote a "crucial" choice in a statement to reporters after voting in Kypseli, a working-class neighbourhood in Athens.

Costas Bakoyannis, a former provincial governor, is expected to win the Athens mayor's office, held by

a leftist mayor. He won 42 percent of the votes in the first round, beating his rival, leftist Nassos Iliopoulos by more than 25 points.

The third generation of a right-wing political family, Bakoyannis is the son of Dora Bakoyannis, the first woman elected as Athens mayor in 2003.

For the Attica province, which includes the capital, conservative Yiorgos Patoulis, a former mayor, is also poised to win. In the first round he won 37.6 percent against his Syriza rival Rena Dourou with 19.7 percent.

In the Thessaloniki region, conservative Apostolos Tzitzikostas already won in the first round by taking 62 percent of the vote.

Observers attribute the conservative resurgence in part to a controversial renaming deal between Greece and its neighbour which is now called North Macedonia, formerly Macedonia.

4 cops closed

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superintendent of police (Dinajpur Sadar circle), arrived at the scene and tried to tame the crowd by assuring them that the officials would be penalised.

"I talked to Dinajpur SP Syed Abu Sayem who ordered me to close the policemen. Later, the BCL leader left the police station with his motorcycle," he told this correspondent.

SI Nazrul said a clash had taken place but it was the BCL man who started it. "Sarwarul Islam first pushed me when I tried to take his key," he told The Daily Star. The SI added that he had been in office for a year now but never saw Sarwarul before.

Sarwarul denied the SI's claim when asked over the matter. "I have valid documents of my motorcycle. I didn't push the SI. He slapped me after barring my way."

For a colourful

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throughout the year," she told The Daily Star.

Different sizes and colours of artificial Gerberas, Dahlias, Tulips, Roses, Marmalades, Merlots, Peach blossoms, Cherry blossoms, along with many other kinds of flowers and decorative plants are found in these stalls.

The prices range from Tk 300 to more than Tk 1,000.

Rafiqul Haque, a vendor at one of the stalls, said their business reaches its peak on the eve of Eid.

"People generally rent artificial flowers for different events from decoration companies. Very few buy these from our stalls. But during this occasion, we see some fortune," said Rafiqul.

Like Afni Plaza, the fourth floor of Lucky Plaza at Agrabad is also full of such customers. The place is filled with stalls selling such decorative items.

Mosharrif Hossain, a seller at Lucky Plaza, said, "In the previous years, our sales would remain the same all year long. But recently, Eid-shoppers seem to prefer buying such items. It is definitely a good sign for our business."

Nasa plans

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Each company has developed lunar landers of different sizes and shapes: one is tall, and the other two are more compact.

The landers will deliver up to 23 small payloads of equipment provided by Nasa. That should include materiel that will gather information to help astronauts later on to land, navigate and protect themselves from radiation.

Orbit Beyond will land in Mare Imbrium, a lava plain in a lunar crater, by September 2020, after being launched by one of SpaceX's Falcon 9 rockets.

Intuitive Machines will try to land by July 2021 in Oceanus Procellarum, a dark spot on the Moon visible from Earth. SpaceX will also facilitate that launch.

Astrobotic, which is based in Pittsburgh, will target Lacus Mortis, a large crater on the near side of the Moon, by July 2021. It has yet to choose a delivery rocket.

Nasa awarded the companies \$77-97 million each for development of their landers.

"Next year, our initial science and technology research will be on the lunar surface, which will help support sending the first woman and the next man to the Moon in five years," said Nasa administrator Jim Bridenstine.

"Investing in these commercial landing services also is another strong step to build a commercial space economy beyond low-Earth orbit."

The United States last sent a crewed mission to the Moon in 1972, the year of the final Apollo mission.

Nasa regularly sent lunar probes into orbit, but it only has two active missions today: the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter and the ARTEMIS probes.

China has meanwhile landed twice on the Moon in recent years: in 2013, and in January on the far side.

The Chang'e 4 probe and its motorized robot Yutu-2 are the only probes active on the surface right now.

Eid journeys hassle free

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Rajshahi-bound Dhumketu Express ran three-and-a-half hour behind the schedule and Khulna-bound Sundarbans Express an hour and 40 minutes.

Besides, Chapainawabganj-bound Rajshahi Express was scheduled to leave the station at 12:20pm, but it did not leave until 2:30pm.

Rajshahi-bound Silkcity Express was also delayed by 45 minutes.

These trains, except Dhumketu, were also delayed on Saturday.

Kamalapur Station Manager Aminul Hoque said people taking longer to embark and disembark were causing the delay.

He added that 55 trains, including three special ones added to cope with the rush, were scheduled to leave the station yesterday.

"We are trying to our best to... make the trains ready to leave for their destinations within 30 minutes after they reach the station," he said.

SMOOTH JOURNEY ON HIGHWAYS AND WATERWAYS

Most buses left Gabtoli bus terminal on time. Only a few buses were delayed by about half-an-hour in the morning, operators said.

Several transport workers claimed there were fewer passengers than they had expected.

"We just canceled two trips due to passenger shortage," said Alamgir, manager of Subarna Paribahan counter.

However, ferry operations on Paturia-Dauladia and Shimulia-Khathbari routes that link Dhaka with south-eastern districts were suspended for nearly two hours due to stormy weather.

Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association Chairman Romesh Chandra Ghosh said no major tailback was reported at any highway.

Although the three-day public holiday begins tomorrow, a large number of government and non-government employees have been

leaving Dhaka since Thursday, taking leave for the Monday before the Eid and securing a nine-day holiday at a stretch.

Meanwhile, operation of all types of vessels from Dhaka's Sadarghat to 43 destinations in the southern districts began around 12:30pm due to unfavourable weather in the morning.

Kazi Wakil Nawaz, secretary of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, said the two-hour suspension could not make much impact.

3 workers

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OC Rony said the workers were hired by one Parvin Akter, teacher of a local primary school, for the construction works of her building.

Parvin lived in a house with her two children in the uphill area adjacent to the spot, the police official said, adding that she started the construction work without any permission.

However, none of Parvin's family members was found when this correspondent went to the house.

Police said she had gone to her father's house in Noakhali following the incident.

Muhammad Mamunur Rashid, deputy commissioner of Rangamati, visited the scene immediately after the incident.

He told this correspondent that the landowner began the construction work illegally as building a house was not allowed on the bank of Kaptai Lake.

A five-member investigation committee, led by Additional Magistrate Nazrul Islam, was formed, the DC said, adding that they were preparing to file a case against Parvin.

Families of each of the deceased were given Tk 20,000 while the only injured worker was provided with Tk 5,000, he added.

Go for Brexit

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to sever four decades of EU membership.

But Trump said: "If I were them I wouldn't pay \$50 billion. That is me. I would not pay, that is a tremendous number."

May agreed a divorce agreement with Brussels last November, but British MPs have rejected it three times and she has had to reject Brexit twice.

She has now been forced out and her Conservative party is beginning the process of finding a new leader, with 13 candidates already declared.

Johnson, one of the frontrunners, is among several to say Britain should leave the EU on October 31 with or without a deal.

They are under pressure from the Brexit party, the latest political vehicle of anti-EU populist leader Nigel Farage, which came top in European Parliament elections last month.

Trump said he believed Farage should play a role in negotiating Brexit with the European Union, saying he had a "lot to offer".

Large protests are planned and London Mayor Sadiq Khan said yesterday it was wrong to be rolling out the red carpet.

Writing in The Observer newspaper, Khan -- who has had several Twitter spats with Trump -- said the president was "one of the most egregious examples" of a growing global threat from the far-right.

He said leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orban and Farage "are using the same divisive tropes of the fascists of the 20th century to garner support, but are using new sinister methods to deliver their message".

Khan said Trump's "divisive behaviour flies in the face of the ideals America was founded upon -- equality, liberty and religious freedom".

CONSERVATIVES DIVIDED

Three years after Britons voted by 52 percent to 48 percent to leave the EU in 2016, the government and lawmakers are still wrangling over the issue.

Brexit day was originally set for March 29. But May delayed it twice to avoid a damaging "no deal" exit,

under which Britain would separate from its closest trading partner with no new arrangements in place.

Her own Conservative MPs had blocked the deal because they feared it would leave Britain too closely tied to the EU.

Many candidates to replace her want to renegotiate the text on EU withdrawal, although the EU has explicitly ruled that out. If they cannot, several say Britain must leave anyway.

However, one frontrunner, Environment Secretary Michael Gove, was reported yesterday to be ready to delay Brexit again to avoid a "no deal" scenario.

Meanwhile voters across the country are divided.

Although Farage won the most votes in European elections, the Liberal Democrats, who want a new referendum to reverse Brexit, came second.

TRADE TALKS

Britain's future trading relationship with the United States will be crucial to its post-Brexit success and likely discussed during Trump's talks with May at Downing Street this week.

But some here fear Britain would be steamrolled by the far bigger US into accepting an unbalanced accord, especially given Trump's "America First" stance in shaking up trade ties with Mexico, Canada, Japan and China.

US Ambassador to Britain Woody Johnson told BBC television that Washington was already preparing the way for a trade deal and it would be done "as expeditiously as any agreement we've ever had".

He said he would expect Britain to be open to US agricultural products, and when asked about access of US firms to Britain's cherished state-run health service, said "all things that are traded would be on the table".

A wet Eid likely

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rainfall pattern, the BMD, in its monthly forecast for June, said Dhaka would witness a rainfall between 320mm and 390mm throughout the month.

CELEBRATING 20th ANNIVERSARY

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