

Only 9 days of clean air in last 13 months

Study on Dhaka says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in Dhaka breathed in clean air on only nine days out of the last 13 months, according to a recent study by Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS).

Referring to the environmental conservation organisation's report, Dr Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder -- professor of Environmental Science at Stamford University -- at a citizens' dialogue yesterday also said pollution in the city has increased by about 20 percent in 2019, further raising health concerns.

He was delivering a keynote on "Preventing the effect of air pollution on elders and children in the city" at the dialogue organised by Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) at Jatiya Press Club.

Dr Kamruzzaman said the city's air was unhealthy on 107 days, very unhealthy on 82 days, and at hazardous level on five days.

Citing the last two years' ranking of Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) which says Dhaka is the world's "second least liveable city", he blamed ongoing development activities, unplanned industrialisation and rapid rise in the number of brick kilns behind it.

"The concentration of particulate matter (PM 2.5 and PM10) in Dhaka's air

DHAKA'S AIR QUALITY	NUMBER OF DAYS IN LAST 13 MONTHS
Good	9
Moderate	188
Unhealthy	107
Very unhealthy	82
Hazardous	5

SOURCE: CENTER FOR ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION STUDIES

is increasing day by day, raising the risk of people being affected by pollution -- particularly in the dry season," he said.

Referring to a report by United States based non-profit organisation, Health Effects Institute (HEI), Dr Kamruzzaman said due to air pollution, 1,22,400 people die every year in Bangladesh.

The number of children born with physical disabilities are increasing for the same reason, he said.

"The number of people with various respiratory diseases is also on the rise," the expert added.

In his speech, Poba Joint General Secretary Dr Lenin Chowdhury presented a set of recommendations to reduce air pollution.

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A child looks up at a picture of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed as wreaths are stacked up at a memorial space. This photo was taken yesterday in front of Brac Centre in Mohakhali.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Eminent citizens condemn attack on Nur, associates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sunday's attack on Ducusu VP Nurul Haque Nur and his associates yesterday drew strong condemnation from eminent citizens, rights activists and organisations.

Twenty-two noted personalities in a joint statement expressed concerns over the attack on Nur and his aides.

They demanded immediate legal action against the attackers, who "belong to an influential student organisation".

"With deep concerns, we are observing that torture and attack on dissidents have been continuing. General and marginalised people have been under attack by people with political influence," the statement said.

A few months back, members of this student organisation were involved with the brutal killing of Buet student Abrar Fahad, the signatories said. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the time had stated that such brutal incident would not recur, the statement said, adding that another heinous attack has taken place -- carried out by the same student organisation.

They also criticised the role of Dhaka University authorities, saying, "With this, Nur and his associates have come under attack for the ninth time, including five times at Dhaka University campus and its vicinity. Unfortunately, the university authorities did not take any action against the attackers in any incidents."

"The statements of the vice-chancellor and proctor in media reports are biased towards a party, which is disappointing and embarrassing. Citizens want to see responsible action from these people who are holding important posts," it added.

The eminent citizens also demanded a high-powered probe body for a fair investigation.

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A recurring rhetoric

Obaidul Quader says bringing discipline to the road transport sector his first priority in 2020

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three days after he took charge of Road Transport and Bridges Ministry for the third term in January, Obaidul Quader had said bringing the road transport sector under discipline will be his first priority.

Taking charge in May after two months of illness, Quader reiterated that ensuring discipline in road transport would be the "biggest challenge in my second innings".

When a reporter yesterday asked him what would be his main challenge in 2020, Quader said: "My first, second and last words would be [bringing] discipline."

Responding to how successful he has been in bringing discipline to the road transport sector this year, Quader said, "No. I haven't. We have to go a long way."

Quader, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, was speaking at a press briefing on current issues at his secretariat office yesterday.

Indiscipline in road transport sector and accidents hogged headlines over the last couple of years, with the country witnessing two major student protests for safe roads.

Thousands of youths took to the streets in the capital after two college students were run over by a bus in July last year.

Terming the protests an "eye opener", different government bodies, police, and transport leaders made many promises and took some hasty steps.

But the situation on the roads remained

almost same with increasing number of road crashes taking toll on lives and properties.

Following the demos, the parliament passed Road Transport Act-2018 in September last year -- aiming to bring the sector under discipline. The government, however, could not start implementation of the act until last month.

Transport workers protested it, forcing the authorities to relax several crucial sections of the law till June next year.

Asked whether they have any deadline to implement the law, Quader replied in negative.

He said they have taken some new initiatives and there are some recommendations to bring discipline on the roads.

A task force, headed by home minister, has already held a meeting and started implementation of those recommendations, he added.

Taking part in a seminar of Roads and Highways Department on Thursday, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid sternly criticised RHD officials for poor planning and maintenance of roads -- wasting public money and causing immense suffering.

Asked about it, Quader said, "I have spoken to the finance minister. It was actually a misunderstanding."

'Envid the affluent lifestyle'

Security guards confess to murder of Chinese national

JNU CORRESPONDENT

Two security guards yesterday confessed to magistrates that they strangled Chinese national Jianhui Gao to death in his Banani flat and looted Tk 3.49 lakh on December 10.

After a four-day police remand, the accused -- Abdur Rauf (22) of Jhenidah and Enamul Haque (25) of Narail -- were produced before the chambers of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrates Md Tofazzal Hossain and Mohammad Jasim respectively, for recording confessional statements in connection with the murder case.

In their statements, both Rauf and Enamul said they buried the body behind the building to cover up the murder.

Rauf took Tk 1.76 lakh, while Enamul got Tk 1.73 lakh, according to the statements.

Both said they "envied the affluent lifestyle"

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Cabinet approves two specialised universities

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday gave final approval to the drafts of two separate laws, for setting up a science and technology university in Chandpur and an agriculture university in Habiganj.

The decision was taken at a regular weekly meeting, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair at the Prime Minister's Office.

"The drafts of 'Chandpur Science and Technology University Act, 2019' and 'The Habiganj Agriculture University Act, 2019' were given approval at the meeting," Cabinet Secretary Khandaker Anwarul Islam said while briefing media at the secretariat.

He said the meeting also approved on principle the draft of "Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board Act, 2019".

The universities would be like any other university, said Anwarul, adding that when the two universities open, the number of public universities in the country will be 48.

The president will be the Chancellor of the universities, and respective syndicates will be formed. Vice-chancellor, pro vice-chancellor and treasurer for the universities will be appointed in accordance with the laws.

Regarding the draft "Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board Act, 2019", the cabinet secretary said, "The cabinet approved the draft law, making some amendments to the existing Madrasa Education Ordinance, 1978, to make it time-befitting in line with the Supreme Court order that declared all the military-period laws illegal."

Anwarul Islam said the cabinet also approved a proposal for setting up an office of the Consulate General in Florida in USA, in addition to the existing two consulate offices in New York and the embassy in Washington.

He said the new consulate office will be set up considering the diplomatic interest of the country and Bangladesh's strong partnership with the USA.

Besides, the consulate will be very important to provide

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ONIONS AFTER HOURS... A truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) was seen selling onions in Farmgate around 1am yesterday. The dealer said his designated selling spot was in the Secretariat area, but with the demand for imported onions dropping fast in the last few days, they have been unable to sell their daily allotment of three tonnes. They came to Farmgate around midnight yesterday -- as other vegetable sellers also sit there in the late hours -- to sell off the remaining stock at Tk 45 per kg, as the prices of onion at TCB trucks dropped to Tk 35 from yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH


Tribute To

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed



We, the students, alumni, faculty, staff and the trustees of IUB

We mourn your physical loss. However, you are immortal in your personality and the institutional innovations you have developed. We, as individuals, and as a University shall study your personality and character to learn the qualities that contributed to the personal leadership and wisdom you developed and demonstrated. Our schools and faculty will surely study the phenomenon of a 3 person startup transforming into a 100,000+ employee global organization impacting millions in many nations. Financially enormous Foundations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are studying this structure to model for themselves. Brac is the largest organization in the world of its type. A pride for Bangladesh.



Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

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DHAKA TODAY

<p>LECTURE The Challenge of Sustaining Democracy by Professor Rehman Sobhan Venue: Asiatic Society Bangladesh Time: 4pm</p>	<p>FAIR Housing Winter Fair Organiser: Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh Venue: BICC, Agargaon Time: 12:30 pm</p>
<p>DISCUSSION NRC and CAA in India: Impact in South Asia Organiser: Ganasamhati Andolon Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity Time: 10am</p>	<p>DISCUSSION Eliminating risk of lightning strikes Organiser: Brac Humanitarian Programme Venue: Spectra Convention Center, Gulshan Time: 11am</p>

LAND GRABBING

ACC to sue former AL lawmaker Awal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is going to file three cases against former Awami League lawmaker of Pirojpur AKMA Awal, for misappropriating khas (government) land.

His wife Laila Parvin will also be accused in one of the cases over the same allegations, ACC sources confirmed, adding that the commission has approved the probe report and the cases will be filed soon.

A source said the former lawmaker took lease of a khas land using fake documents and built a three-storied

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