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A landfill in DISARRAY

Short-staffed, ill-equipped Aminbazar landfill struggling to manage solid waste

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

With no segregation and recycling facility, Aminbazar landfill has been struggling to manage daily collection of more than 3,000 tonnes of solid waste.

The landfill, located beside the Dhaka-Aricha highway and around 30km off Zero Point in the capital, is also facing severe shortage of manpower and has only one operational waste management vehicle of its own.

The continuous dumping at the landfill has formed a mountain of garbage, which towers approximately 60 feet above the road.

The Daily Star got the insight of the hard-pressed waste management scenario during a recent visit.

Established with Japanese assistance in 2006, the site was planned as a sanitary landfill. A very few things, however, were done according to the design. The leachate collection pond and treatment plant were non-functional till 2018, while the recycling plant still exists only on paper. There is no heavy equipment to give the daily soil covering.

As there is no manpower for waste segregation and recycling, the landfill authorities allow in hundreds of waste pickers, who collect recyclable materials from the dumped garbage.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

KEY POINTS

- Over 3,000 tonnes of solid waste dumped every day
- Landfill running with less than 20pc of required manpower
- No waste segregation and recycling facility
- Waste segregation done manually by waste pickers with no safety gear
- Of 17 heavy equipment, 16 damaged
- Landfill's capacity exhausts this year
- DNCC to acquire another 80 acres to expand it



Aminbazar landfill on the capital's outskirts is struggling to manage waste due to a lack of equipment and manpower. **Bottom left**, waste pickers collect recyclable items without wearing any safety gear, putting their health at risk. **Bottom right**, several non-operational waste management equipment lie idle at the dumping site. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



Cold wave may hit the country by end of week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first cold wave of this winter may sweep over the country in the end of this week.

During the time, temperature may come down to 10 degrees Celsius in some districts. Light rainfall could also occur in many places, said an official of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) yesterday.

Starting from the northern region, the bone-chilling cold would gradually be felt in other parts of the country, the official said.

Meanwhile, the ongoing foggy weather may continue the next two days. With this, light rainfall may occur in some places, said the official.

In a weather bulletin, the BMD yesterday said, "Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country."

"Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



19th Bangladesh Business Awards ceremony today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 19th edition of Bangladesh Business Awards, an initiative of DHL Express and The Daily Star, will take place today.

The global logistics provider and the country's leading English newspaper have been giving the awards every year since 2000.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi is scheduled to attend the virtual event as chief guest.

Binod Chaudhary, the most successful

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

TRIAL OF ROBBERY CASES

Most offenders go unpunished

Sloppy investigation, lengthy trial key reasons behind low conviction rate

SHARIFUL ISLAM

It was a robbery that caused quite a sensation in Manikganj almost 15 years ago.

A gang of masked robbers stormed the house of one Habibur Rahman in Sidhuhagar of Ghior upazila around 15 minutes past midnight on June 30, 2006. He and some of his family members were watching a World Cup football match at the time.

The robbers shot Habibur, killing him on the spot and wounded four others before making away with Tk 2.31 lakh in cash, gold ornaments, and other valuables from the house.

Moktar Hossain, Habibur's brother, filed a case with Ghior Police Station against 15 to 16 unidentified robbers the next day.

Eleven years later, a Manikganj court acquitted all the charge-sheeted accused in the case.

The Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court in its verdict delivered

on April 18, 2017 observed that sloppy investigation and a faulty charge sheet were among the reasons behind acquittals of the accused.

This is not the only incident of such sloppiness in case investigations.

The majority of the offenders go unpunished and move freely largely due to the absence of witnesses or contradictory testimonies given before courts, sloppy investigation, and improper recording of confessional statements, according to legal experts and senior law enforcement officials.

Khurshid Alam Khan, a criminal law expert, said he thinks between 70 to 75 percent of robbery cases see no conviction.

This is backed by a report of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), which found an alarming 77.33 percent of robbery cases ended up with no conviction between 2016 and 2017.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Pfizer vaccine gets experts' nod in US

Sanofi-GSK vaccine suffers setback

AFP, Washington

The US could soon be the next country to launch an immunization campaign against the novel coronavirus after experts voted to recommend emergency approval for Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine.

The key milestone comes as the world's hardest-hit country logged nearly 6,000 virus deaths in 48 hours with its overall toll approaching 300,000.

President-elect Joe Biden called the FDA experts' decision on Thursday a "bright light in a needlessly dark time", with official approval expected within days.

Inoculation plans are picking up pace around the world, where the virus has killed at least 1.58 million lives since emerging in China last December, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

Infections are spreading fastest in North America and parts of Africa, whereas Europe's second wave has started to stabilise and cases are down in Asia and the Middle East.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BANGLADESH, 10 OTHER ASIAN NATIONS Fast-track vaccine distribution

Urges WHO; ADB launches \$9b Covid vaccine initiative for Asia Pacific

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The World Health Organization yesterday said it wants fast and equitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccine in South and Southeast Asian countries, including Bangladesh, where a second wave of the coronavirus outbreak looms large.

"The vaccine manufacturing and regulatory sectors have a critical role to play in equitable and efficient deployment of vaccines," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director of WHO's South-East Asia Region, at a two-day virtual meeting, according to a WHO statement.

In another development, the Asian Development Bank launched its \$9 billion Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility which will offer rapid and equitable support to its developing members in the hope of breaking the chain of virus transmission, saving lives and restoring economies.

The WHO meeting involved vaccine manufacturers and regulators. There are widespread fears that the poor countries will lag behind in terms of accessing the vaccines.

Dr Khetrapal said all countries in the region are now developing and finalising national deployment and vaccination plans, of which regulatory preparedness is a core component.

She emphasised on effective coordination, collaboration and information-sharing at all stages among the stakeholders.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Number of critical virus cases on rise

59pc of ICU beds at Covid hospitals occupied

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of patients with severe Covid-19 infections is apparently on the rise, as record shows that the occupancy rate of ICU beds at the dedicated hospitals has gone up by 14 percentage points from 45 percent in the last two months.

Five months ago, on July 12, the ICU bed occupancy rate was 56.14 percent, which dropped to 45 percent on October 12.

Out of 374 ICU beds, only 210 were occupied on July 12. By October 12, the number of ICU beds occupied increased to 564. The record shows that 254 ICU beds were occupied by Covid-19 patients on the day.

As the winter begins, the number of novel coronavirus cases has shot up and so has the demand for ICU beds.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, 335 out of 567 ICU beds at the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals were occupied by patients as of yesterday.

Meanwhile, 19 more people died from coronavirus infections in 24 hours ending 8:00am yesterday, according to a DGHS press release.

The total number of deaths has now reached 6,986, and the death rate stands at 1.43 percent.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



A mother and her baby sleep under the open sky amid the bitter cold in the capital's secretariat area yesterday morning. Arrival of winter adds to the sufferings of disadvantaged people, especially those without home, every year. Most of them do not have enough warm clothing to stay protected during the winter months.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Biden, Harris named Time 'Person of the Year'



Joe Biden

Kamala Harris

AFP, New York

US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were named Time magazine's 2020 "Person of the Year" for their election victory over Donald Trump.

"For changing the American story, for showing that the forces of empathy are greater than the forces of division, for sharing a vision of healing in a grieving world," Time said, explaining its choice.

The Democratic pair were chosen ahead of three other finalists: frontline health care workers and Anthony Fauci, the racial justice movement and President Trump.

Time's magazine cover boasts portraits of Biden, 78, and Harris, 56, with the subtitle "Changing America's story."

"Together, they offered restoration and renewal in a single ticket. And America bought what they were selling," the publication said on Thursday.

Biden beat Trump by 306 electoral college votes to Trump's 232 to end the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1