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AIR POLLUTION IN CAPITAL HC issues 3 new orders to reduce it

Asks authorities to spray water on roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing grave concern over the air pollution level in Dhaka, the High Court yesterday issued directives to three authorities concerned to ensure spraying of water on city streets on a regular basis.

Public health will be at risk if the present air pollution level cannot be reduced, the HC said while delivering an order on a writ petition.

In the new directives, the HC asked the director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence to take necessary steps to spray water with its vehicles on roads at the entrances to the capital, including Gabotli, Jatrabari, Purbachal, Keraniganj, and Tongi, on an urgent basis.

The fire service will do the job without compromising their main duty of dousing flames, the HC said.

It ordered the managing director of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to take measures for supplying sufficient water to Dhaka city corporations for spraying on streets.

The court also asked the Dhaka north and south city corporations to spray water on streets in such a way that small trees planted on the central reservations get wet as well.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice

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Pedestrians struggling to navigate the crowds on the pavement at the mouth of the footbridge near Balaka Cinema Hall in the capital's New Market area. With hawkers setting up shops on either side of the pavement, the space for people to walk through is getting narrower by the day. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

21 eminent personalities get Ekushey Padak

UNB, Dhaka

Twenty-one eminent personalities will get the country's second highest civilian award, the Ekushey Padak, this year in recognition of their contributions to various fields.

The Cultural Affairs Ministry announced the names yesterday.

Motahar Hossain Talukdar (posthumous), Shamsul Haque (posthumous), and Advocate Afsar Uddin Ahmed (posthumous) have been selected for their roles in the Language Movement.

Begum Papia Sarwar is being recognised for her contributions to music while Raisul Islam Asad and Salma Begum Sujata are being recognised for their contributions to the performing arts, Ahmed Iqbal Haidar is being recognised for his contribution to the field of drama and Syed Salahuddin Zaki for his contributions to film.

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BB withdraws official over ties with PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday withdrew its executive director Shah Alam from the responsibility of monitoring two departments of his alleged connection with scammer PK Halder.

Shah Alam was discharged of his duties at the central bank's Department of Financial Institutions and Markets (DFIM) and the Department of Banking Inspection 2.

The high-ups of the BB took the decision after Rashedul Haque, a close associate of PK Halder, confessed to a Dhaka court that two high officials of the BB had assisted them to conduct the financial scams.

SK Sur Chowdhury, a former deputy governor of the central bank, also assisted PK Halder, according to the confessional statement.

Approached by The Daily Star, Md Serajul Islam, spokesperson and an executive director of the central bank, said they had taken the decision following the confessional statement made by Rashedul.

As per the latest central bank decision, Shah Alam will supervise three departments instead of previous five.

Asked whether the central bank will form an investigation committee on the matter, Islam said they would consider it if required.

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World faces around 4,000 Covid variants

Says UK; researchers explore mixing Pfizer, AstraZeneca doses to improve vaccines

AGENCIES

The world faces around 4,000 variants of the virus that causes Covid-19, prompting a race to improve vaccines, Britain said yesterday, as researchers began to explore mixing doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca shots in a world first.

Thousands of variants have been documented as the virus mutates, including the so-called British, South African and Brazilian variants which appear to spread more swiftly than others.

British Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said it was very unlikely that the current vaccines would not work against the new variants. "Its very unlikely that the current vaccine won't be effective on the variants whether in Kent or other variants especially when it comes to severe illness and hospitalisation," Zahawi told Sky News.

"All manufacturers, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca and others, are looking at how they can improve their vaccine to make sure that we are ready for any variant - there are about 4,000 variants around the world of Covid now."

While thousands of variants have arisen as the virus mutates on replication, only a very small minority are likely to be important and to change the virus in an appreciable way, according to the British Medical Journal.

The so called British variant, known as VUI-202012/01, has mutations including a change in the spike protein that viruses use to bind to the human ACE2 receptor - meaning that it is probably easier to catch.

"We have the largest genome sequencing industry - we have about 50% of the world's genome sequencing industry - and we are keeping a library of all the variants so that we are ready to respond - whether in the autumn or beyond - to any challenge that the virus may present and produce the next vaccine," Zahawi said.

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13 more die from Covid, 485 infected

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh recorded 13 coronavirus deaths and 485 fresh cases overnight.

The recovery count rose to 481,917 after another 611 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the period, a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said yesterday.

"Thirteen more Covid-19 patients died in the last 24 hours, increasing the death toll from the pandemic to 8,175," the release said.

It said the tally of infections has surged to 537,030 as 485 new cases were confirmed in the last 24 hours.

A total of 15,273 samples were tested at 206 authorised laboratories across the country during the time.

Of the total sample tests in those 24 hours, 3.18 percent tested positive, while 14.48 percent cases

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Earth's 'second moon' about to disappear forever



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Earth's second "moon" is set to leave the space around our planet for the last and final time.

Known as 2020 SO, the object was temporarily captured by Earth's gravitational pull on 8 November 2020 as scientists attempted to identify it.

"Due to extreme faintness of this object following CNEOS prediction it was a challenging object to characterize," said Professor Vishnu Reddy at the time.

"We got color observations with the Large

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ROHINGYA GENOCIDE Gambia not eligible to file case with ICJ

Claims Myanmar

PORIMOL PALMA

Myanmar has raised objection over The Gambia's eligibility in filing a genocide case with the International Court of Justice -- a move that could delay justice for the Rohingya minority.

The Gambia, on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, filed the case in November 2019, alleging that Myanmar's atrocities against the Rohingyas in the Rakhine state violate the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The objection was submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the top UN Court, on January 20, 2021, more than a week before the military took control of Myanmar, when Aung San Suu Kyi was de facto leader of the Southeast Asian country.

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A section of people out to make EC controversial

Alleges Election Commissioner Kabita Khanam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some people are out to turn the EC into a controversial institution by making different allegations against it, Election Commissioner Kabita Khanam said yesterday.

"At work, we always maintained transparency, and after becoming commissioners, we are still maintaining transparency," Kabita told reporters at the

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The Indian roller has its largest population occurring in India and several states of the country have even chosen it as their state bird. In Bangladesh, it is seen almost in every district, albeit in small numbers. The photo was taken in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila recently.

PHOTO COURTESY: SHABBOSACHI DAS



DEPORTED BANGLADESHI STUDENT

He plotted terror attack in France

Planned to travel to Syria to join IS, say cops

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A Bangladeshi recently deported from France for his involvement in militant activities had plans of going to Syria to join Islamic State.

Self-radicalised through various online contents, 24-year-old Saif Rahman was planning to conduct a terror attack in France. He was involved in jihadi propaganda and activities from September to December 2019, claimed Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) officials.

For this reason, the French government deported Saif to Bangladesh after he was arrested by a law enforcement agency of the European country.

The CTTC unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police came up with this info after arresting Saif upon his arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) on January 14.

Later, he was shown arrested under section 54 and sent to jail.

After translating a two-page official document written in French recovered from Saif's possession and through primary interrogation, CTTC officials learned details of his militant activities and filed a case against him under the Anti Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2013.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the translated documents and the first information report (FIR).

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 5
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:15 4:15 5:52 7:15
JAMAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:56 7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION