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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

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 Election Commission office in the capital's Agargaon.

About two weeks ago, 42 eminent citizens wrote to President Abdul Hamid for a second time, asking for the formation of a Supreme Judicial Council to probe allegations of "serious financial corruption and gross election-related misconduct" against the EC.

The distinguished citizens sought to meet the

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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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DEFAMATION CASE Tarique gets 2 years in jail for remark on Bangabandhu

STAR REPORT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman was sentenced to two years' imprisonment by a Narail court in a defamation case over making derogatory comments about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Judge Amatul Morsheda of Narail Judicial Magistrate Court-2 pronounced the verdict, reports our Bagerhat correspondent.

The court also fined Tarique Tk 10,000, in default of which he will have to serve another six months in jail, Additional Public Prosecutor Sanjib Kumar Basu told The Daily Star.

According to the case statement, Tarique made derogatory comments about Bangabandhu at a meeting in London on December 16, 2014.

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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

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 5

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:15 4:15 5:52 7:15
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:56 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Man held for raping woman at gunpoint

STAR REPORT

Two men, including an assistant station master of Bangladesh Railway, were arrested between Wednesday night and yesterday morning in connection with separate rape incidents in Jashore and Rajshahi.

In Jashore, a man raped his neighbour's wife at gunpoint on Wednesday when the victim was alone at home, said police.

Police arrested the alleged rapist Sabdar Hossain, of Dakshinpara village in Sadar upazila, in the night after the victim's husband filed a case in this regard, said Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge Jashore Kotwali Police Station.

Sabdar, on Wednesday, forcibly entered the victim's house in absence of her husband and raped her at gunpoint, the OC said quoting the victim.

After the victim's husband came to know

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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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