

# Tackle land grabbing to ease waterlogging in Dhaka: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As green spaces and water reservoirs, which are essential for proper water flow, are dwindling in Dhaka city, the government must be sincere to tackle land grabbers to resolve the waterlogging issue.

This was said at a virtual press conference attended by city planners yesterday.

It is essential to incorporate the city's entire drainage network into the masterplan to solve the longstanding waterlogging problem, said speakers.

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) stressed the need for the masterplan's proper implementation, and residents and local councillors will have to be involved in the process. Good governance should also be ensured.

"According to standard planning procedures, it is necessary to keep 20 percent of a city's area for road network, but we have only kept seven percent, for which proper drainage system could not be developed," said BIP General Secretary Adil Mohammad Khan, who presented the keynote speech.

He said green spaces play a vital role for water to recede, but in Dhaka, green spaces cover only 10 percent of the total area, whereas it should be 20 to 25 percent.

It is also essential to keep 10 to 15 percent of area for water reservoirs, but only five percent has been kept in Dhaka, he added.

According to building construction rules, 30 to 40 percent of a building area should be kept uncovered for surface water to seep into the ground, but in reality, owners of 80 to 90 percent buildings in Dhaka do not follow this, he said, adding that this is putting huge pressure on the artificial drainage network.

Emphasising proper waste management, Adil also said water-carrying capacity of canals and drainage lines has diminished, as huge amounts of garbage get into the canals and waterbodies. Lack of awareness among residents and authorities concerned not being able to properly manage solid waste are the main causes for this problem.

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A man stands behind a cart full of mangoes inside the gate of Habiburah Bahar University College in the capital's Shantinagar area, with a sign on the gate saying "Mango available inside the college". Shafiqul, the resident electrician of the college, started the business as the college has been closed for over a year and he presumably does not have much else to do.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## 39 dengue cases reported in 24 hours

UNB, Dhaka

Dengue cases continue to gradually rise across the country, as health authorities confirm another 39 cases in the 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The recent spike in dengue cases is increasingly becoming a cause for concern, especially as it comes at a time when the country continues to grapple with the devastating second wave of the pandemic.

As of yesterday morning, a total of 120 patients diagnosed with dengue were receiving treatment at different government and private hospitals, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Thirty-eight of the new patients were admitted to different hospitals in the capital in the 24 hours till yesterday morning, while one patient was hospitalised outside Dhaka during the period.

So far, 504 patients have been admitted to different hospitals with dengue since January. Of them, 384 have been released after recovery.

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# Lockdown not so 'strict' anymore

More people, vehicles out amid lax monitoring

STAR REPORT

The fifth day of the nationwide "strict" lockdown saw an increasing number of people and vehicles out on the streets across the country, especially in Dhaka.

Stores along roadsides and inside alleyways remained opened across many areas in the capital. These stores proved to be a hub for locals to gather, ignoring instructions to stay home unless there's an emergency.

This correspondent witnessed heavy traffic and large crowds in different parts of the city, including Banani, Moghbazar, Rampura, Hatirpool, Bangla Motor, New Market, Nilkhet, and Green Road areas.

There was more traffic on the city's main thoroughfares yesterday compared to the previous four days of the seven-day lockdown. Many people were seen hanging around main roads and alleys without any reason.

This is partially due to the reopening of banks, insurance companies, and stock markets from yesterday. According to a decision of Bangladesh Bank, bank transactions can be done from 10am to 1:30pm. Visiting different banks, this newspaper saw people lined up in long queues.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police detained at least 413 people from the streets, on charge of defying Covid-19 restrictions and health guidelines.

Several mobile courts fined 243 people Tk 98,450, while DMP also fined 526 cars Tk 12.23 lakh.

Moreover, 42 mobile courts of Rapid Action Battalion fined 350 people Tk 2.95 lakh across the country, according to a press release.

There was also a lower presence of law enforcers on different roads, compared to the past four days.

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An executive magistrate fines a man, wearing a scarf as a mask, for violating lockdown guidelines. A number of people were rounded up by law enforcers and fined for the same offence yesterday near Sowari Ghat area of the capital.

# 'No oxygen crisis in the country'

Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said there is no oxygen crisis in the country.

Speaking at a briefing at his official residence, he said, "There may be a lack of coordination somewhere, but the prime minister has already directed the Ministry of Health to take appropriate steps to ensure supply by strengthening coordination in areas where oxygen supply is urgent."

He said the collection of vaccines with the highest priority for the country is a clear reflection of the deep commitment of Sheikh Hasina's government to the people of the country.

The road transport and bridges minister said about 45 lakh doses of vaccine have already arrived in the country and more vaccines will come in time.

He said Bangladesh would succeed in procuring the required number of vaccines under the prime minister's diplomatic skills and visionary leadership.

Saying there is no alternative to raising awareness to curb the rising infection rate, the minister said, "We should take utmost precautions to survive during this pandemic."

COVID-19 SURGE

# Situation worsening due to health ministry's failure

Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairperson and Deputy Leader of the Opposition GM Quader yesterday said the Covid-19 situation in the country is worsening due to health ministry's failure.

In a statement, he said, "The demand for ICU beds is growing fast as Covid-19 cases keep surging, signalling that more worrying times lie ahead."

"But there's still no ICU beds in 35 districts, even though the prime minister specifically asked for ICU beds to be set up in all districts a year back," he said, adding, "The health ministry has failed to do that."

He said 76 percent of the country's total ICU beds are in Dhaka division while 73 percent are in the capital alone.

Referring to an IEDCR report, he said 78

percent of Covid-19 patients in June were infected with the Delta or "Indian" variant, increasing the demand for ICU beds.

Family members are rushing from one district to another with patients as there are almost no ICUs at the district level.

Stating that almost all the ICUs at the government hospitals in Dhaka are filled up, the ICUs at private hospitals are also filling up fast with critical patients.

"The health directorate yesterday (Sunday) said oxygen supply will also become a challenge if the number of patients continues to surge. So, there's going to be an outcry for more ICUs if the situation worsens further, leading to an alarming rise in mortality rate," warned GM Quader.

TRIALS OF GRAFT CASES AGAINST DESTINY MD

# One nearing completion, another stuck for 5 years

CHATANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The trial proceedings of one of the two graft cases filed against Destiny Group managing director Rafiqul Amin in 2012 may take one more month to be completed, after resumption of regular activities of the court, said prosecutors.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Kalabagan Police Station nine years back against Rafiqul and 45 others for misappropriating Tk 1,861.45 crore from Destiny Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd.

Apart from this one, another graft case filed against Rafiqul Amin and 18 others for misappropriating Tk 2,257.78 crore through Destiny Tree Plantation project did not make any headway in around five years after charge framing.

"It may require one month to finish the trial proceedings of the graft case filed against Rafiqul

Amin and 45 others after resumption of the regular activities of the court," Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam told The Daily Star yesterday.

The court has so far recorded statements of 201 out of 303 prosecution witnesses including complainant of the case, he added.

He also said Investigation Officer (IO) Mozahar Ali Sardar, also a deputy director of ACC, started his depositions on January 6 this year before the court, but could not complete it as regular court activities were suspended due to Covid-19 pandemic.

"The prosecution will not produce any more witnesses before the court after the IO's deposition is recorded," the state lawyer added.

The prosecution said only seven witnesses gave their depositions before the court in the other case -- against Rafiqul Amin and 18 others.

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# Rab arrests five for 'home-delivering' narcotics in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With people mostly staying home and law enforcers checking public and vehicular movement on streets to ensure that "strict lockdown" is being enforced, some drug peddlers are using the situation by selling narcotics through home delivery services, said Rapid Action Battalion.

Rab yesterday claimed to have arrested five members of a gang from Hatirjheel and Moghbazar areas, who were involved in various crimes including drug peddling and mugging.

Rab said Anik Hasan alias Hero Anik (25) is the leader of the gang. He is accused in nine cases including murder, narcotics and arms.

"Anik is an identified criminal in Moghbazar area. He is one of the

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SACRIFICING ANIMALS ON EID

# Follow Makkah's system, say greens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmental activists yesterday demanded that the government establish a coordinated system of purchasing, sacrificing and distributing meat during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha like Makkah and Madina, and turning the animal waste into a useful resource.

It is possible to sacrifice animals at slaughterhouses like Makkah, which will reduce time and also cost less, with proper management, speakers at a virtual discussion observed.

The discussion was jointly organised by Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) and Sadaqah Foundation USA.

The government can decide after observing Makkah and Madina's model and will have to modify it for Bangladesh. They must also carry out extensive campaigns, said Poba Chairperson Abu Naser Khan, who presided over the programme.

Naser said it will be good to sacrifice animals at designated places of city corporations, in a suitable open space, or in a playground to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. Otherwise the risk of infection will increase, he added.

He said when people will sacrifice their animals at a slaughterhouse, blood and all other waste can be used for productive means, and it has market value in and outside the country.

"Authorities concerned will have prepare an extensive campaign, making plans for proper management," he said.

Speakers at the programme said the number of animals has increased compared to last year.

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While major roads of the capital were mostly empty in this lockdown, Sadarghat was found full of boats taking passengers to their destination yesterday. Aside from violating the lockdown, those travelling are also ignoring social distancing rules.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Inform PMO, AG about Oxyjet: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked authorities concerned to inform the principal secretary at the prime minister's office (PMO) and the attorney general about "Oxyjet", a device invented by biomedical engineering department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology as an alternative to high-flow nasal cannula to resolve the oxygen crisis for Covid-19 patients.

"Give a representation... through email about the device to the principal secretary and attorney general. Our prime minister is innovative; she considers any good thing placed before her. I hope the premier will consider production of Oxyjet," the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim told lawyer Aneek R Haque.

Earlier in the day, Aneek told the HC bench that the department invented a simple solution called

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