



In front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, bamboo barricades have been put up to prevent people from crossing the road. But despite this, some people still choose to step over the barricade to cross the road, even though there's an over-bridge just a few feet away. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Suspension of in-person classes at DU extended

DU CORRESPONDENT

The suspension of in-person classes at Dhaka University (DU) has been extended till February 21.

Confirming the extension yesterday, DU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "We will extend the suspension of in-person classes for two weeks, following government decision."

"But our crucial exams and laboratory activities will continue in person, maintaining health guidelines," he said.

DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof ASM Maksud Kamal said an official announcement will be made today. On January 21, DU authorities suspended its in-person classes till February 6.

Meanwhile, leaders of Bangladesh Socialist Students' Front held a rally, protesting the government decision and demanding reopening of educational institutions.



Enact 'Clean Air Act', save lives

Say speakers at webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To regulate the country's air quality and reduce air pollution, the government should enact the "Clean Air Act" as soon as possible, after a recent study found air pollution to be a massive health crisis, said speakers in a webinar.

Even though the air is already toxic for citizens, especially city dwellers, they alleged the government is overlooking the crisis, as the draft law has been gathering dust for years.

They were speaking at a webinar jointly organised by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Bangladesh Lung Foundation and The Daily Star yesterday, in the wake of a recent air pollution study published by Stamford University's Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS).

In the welcome speech, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said due to air pollution, people's right to life, as bestowed by the constitution, is being violated. As per the constitution, the government not only must protect the environment but also work to improve it.

"According to the CAPS study, we did not experience fresh air for even one week of a year since 2015. How many years can we sit back and suffer due to such horrific health hazards? The draft of the law to regulate air quality, the "Clean Air Act", has been lying idle for a long time.



The government must enact it as soon as possible," she said.

Chief guest Saber Hossain Chowdhury, president of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment ministry, said they wanted a law to fight air pollution, but the government is framing a rule.

ISSUES

- Draft law gathering dust for years
- Govt framing rule instead of enacting law
- Air pollution behind many diseases, school absence, lost work days
- DoE can't fully enforce environment act due to "unconducive atmosphere"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact law immediately
- Take steps to make rules effective
- Prioritise public health in upcoming budget

"When a rule contradicts a law, the law always prevails over the rule. Hopefully, the rule will be finalised within a few weeks. The framing of rules is not enough, initiatives to make it effective must be ensured," he said.

Quoting former American vice-

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Let our stories echo in every corner of world

Foreign minister says on 'Branding Bangladesh'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the government wants the country's trade and economic relations with global partners to flourish more.

"We have always been open, democratic, inclusive and constructive," he said.

He added the government's priority is to pursue national developmental ambitions with prime objective to ensure people's security, dignity and well-being.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshi's World Conference Series-2022 held at a city hotel, on the topic "Branding Bangladesh".

He said economic and public diplomacy has been important in formulating and executing Bangladesh's foreign policy.

The foreign ministry is already working with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority to design a solid branding initiative for the country, he added.

The minister said his ministry wants Bangladesh's stories to be echoed in every corner of the world. "When people hear the word 'Bangladesh', I want them to see a country of infinite potential."

Momen said Bangladesh's peacekeeping role has already earned the country a "brand name" in UN peacekeeping missions. He also urged Bangladeshis across the globe to uphold the country's achievements against negative propaganda.

Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Mashiur Rahman said remittance has been a significant

source of Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserve, saying its contribution is "critical" to the balance of payment. He said workers who are seeking jobs overseas should be equipped with good skills, while there should be employment opportunity for those who are returning home.

State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam said immediately after the independence, Bangladesh was branded negatively as a "basket case", but the transformation towards development has led the international community to term the country as a "development miracle".

In his speech, Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed said, "Since April 2020, we are the number one troops contributing country in the world [for UN peacekeeping missions]."

MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshi, said the centre has so far held international conferences in more than 50 countries involving Bangladeshi communities.

Physician Prof ABM Abdullah; Kazi Rafiqul Hassan, general manager of Bangladesh Bank; Shahidul Alam, director general of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training; and Sherwan Chowdhury, a British-Bangladeshi politician and mayor of Croydon in the UK, among others, spoke. At the programme, the centre awarded institutions and organisations including the armed forces division and banks for their contribution in upholding the country's image and generating remittance.

PRAYER
TIMING
FEB 6



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:15	5:52	7:15
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:30	5:56	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Hungary keen on boosting ties with Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto has expressed his optimism to further strengthen cooperation with Bangladesh.

"I am confident that we will be able to further strengthen our mutually beneficial cooperation in the years to come," he said in a recent letter sent to Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen.

The 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries is an important milestone, said the Hungarian minister. "We can proudly declare that despite the geographical distance between our countries, during the past decades we built a strong friendship and cooperation based on mutual respect."

"It is my utmost pleasure to note that we have recently re-established our diplomatic representation in Bangladesh," he added.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

A toddler learning to write alphabets from an elderly at a temple in Barishal city yesterday, on the occasion of Saraswati Puja. This comes as part of a ritual that inaugurates the schooling of children.

Propaganda obstacle to country's progress

Says info minister

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said the country will progress further if anti-state propaganda is not spread abroad.

"It is regrettable that a former two-time prime minister wrote an article in the Washington Times newspaper where she urged the United States to stop GSP facilities to Bangladesh...", he said.

The minister said this while addressing the inaugural function of Bangabandhu Corner, Directors Lounge and a music video on Covid-19 awareness of FBCI in the capital.

He said there will be criticism about the government's works. But propaganda against the state and for creating obstacles for the country's business, trade and export are not acceptable, he said.

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