

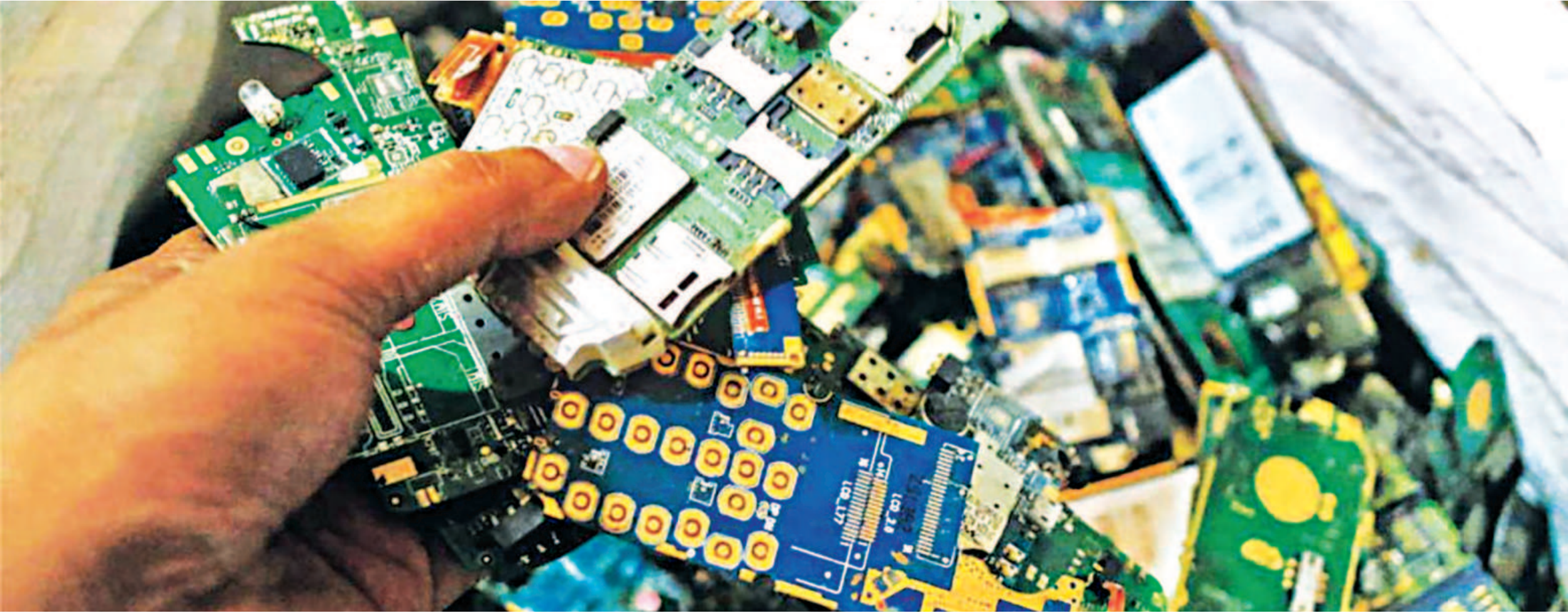


PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Discarded devices: Where does the e-waste go?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

The number was estimated to reach 5.5 lakh tonnes in 2020.

The volume of annual e-waste production – with the growth trend – is projected to be 12 lakh tonnes in 2025. If this goes on, Bangladesh will produce 46 lakh tonnes of e-waste in 2035. Around the country, there are markets that collect and store rejected electronic goods. Bhangariwala, and often children, go from one house to another looking to buy them for a very cheap value. After collection, these devices are broken into for smaller parts

and valuable metals. For those involved in this industry, this acts as the gateway to pollutant contamination. As more and more goods are dismantled and discarded in landfill sites and water sources, the nearby communities become more prone to health and environmental hazards.

The threats posed by electronic waste impact humans directly as they breathe air, drink water, eat food and come in contact with contaminated non-biodegradable particulate matters. Cases of asthma, hearing loss, poor eyesight and forms of cancer have been found among

The World Economic Forum reports that, in 2021 alone, 57.4 million tonnes of electronic waste was discarded, outweighing the Great Wall of China.

workers, even the children. Constant exposure to such activity has stimulated infant mortality rates and put pregnant women and new-borns under severe risk.

Is there a solution to the problem? Can we tackle e-waste pollution? Even in 2022, these seem to be difficult questions to answer. However, we have to look forward.

In 2021, the Government of Bangladesh approved the Hazardous Waste (e-waste) Management Rules under the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995. While there is a lack of information regarding the disposal and processing

of electronic waste and its harmful effects on human and environmental health in Bangladesh, learning about its environmental exposures and health outcomes could provide the knowledge and opportunity to create strategies to increase awareness about effective consumption and recycling.

It is understandable if one wants to switch to a newer or better device. However, it is more important that, when making the choice, we stop to think about the consequences our lifestyles have on our home, our country and our planet.

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