

Dhaka’s air quality remains ‘unhealthy’

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka’s air quality continues to be “unhealthy”, but the densely populated capital of Bangladesh is no longer the world’s most polluted city.

With an air quality index (AQI) reading at 176 at 9:14am, the capital has slipped to the third position in the latest list of world cities with the worst air quality.

Pakistan’s Lahore and India’s Delhi occupied the first two spots, with AQI scores of 190 and 182, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered “unhealthy”. Similarly, an AQI between 201 and 300 is said to be “poor”, while a reading of 301 to 400 is considered “hazardous”, posing serious health risks.

AQI, an index for reporting daily air quality, is used by government agencies to inform people how clean or polluted the air of a certain city is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for them.

In Bangladesh, the AQI is based on five criteria pollutants – Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5), NO2, CO, SO2 and Ozone.

Dhaka has long been grappling with air pollution issues. Its air quality usually turns unhealthy in winter and improves during the monsoon.

A report by the Department of Environment and the World Bank in March 2019 pointed out that the three main sources of air pollution in Dhaka “are brick kilns, fumes from vehicles and dust from construction sites”.

With the advent of winter, the city’s air quality starts deteriorating sharply due to the massive discharge of pollutant particles from construction work, rundown roads, brick kilns and other sources.



To the relief of locals, the Nandipara-Trimohoni Jirani canal was cleaned during a Dhaka South City Corporation drive in 2020. But within a year, the canal is in danger again, as garbage vans of the same city corporation is dumping waste along its bank, while an establishment is being built on the Trimohoni side of the canal. These photos were taken from Khilgaon area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DB INFORMER JALAL KILLING Trial stuck in legal limbo

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

The half-decomposed body of Jalal, who drove the car of Detective Branch (DB) of police, was recovered from the overhead water tank of DB’s Minto Road headquarters on March 25, 1999.

A case was filed in the same year over the murder of the DB informant. But some 23 years on, the trial proceedings of the case is yet to be wrapped up. After running for a while, the case simply got stuck in limbo for the last seven years due to the prosecution’s failure to produce witnesses before the court.

The trial began on March 12, 2001, with 23 out of 49 prosecution witnesses giving their depositions before the court till May 25,

2015. Two key witnesses – investigation officer Munshi Atiqur Rahman and a rickshaw-puller Iman Ali – partially testified during this time. But the case has not seen any further progress since then due to the non-appearance of witnesses and negligence of officials concerned, according to the prosecution.

The court has issued non-bailable warrants several times against rest of the witnesses, including victim’s son Abbas Uddin and daughter Fatema Chowdhury Popi, for failing to comply with court orders, but they still did not show up, said court sources.

Shaiful Islam Helal, additional public prosecutor at the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge’s Court of Dhaka (where the case is now pending for disposal) said, police are the only agency obliged to produce witnesses before the court as per provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

“Despite many summons, police have failed to produce any witness since May 25, 2015, which is delaying trial proceedings,” he added.

The Daily Star spoke to investigator Munshi Atiqur Rahman over the phone on January 27.

Atiqur claimed that he did not get any court summons for testimony for a long time, with no one informing him about the depositions.

“I am now living at my village home in Faridpur.

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Pry schools open till 20th Ramadan

STAR REPORT

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Md Zakir Hossen yesterday said the country’s all primary schools will remain open till the 20th Ramadan to make up learning losses due to school closures during the pandemic.

He was speaking at the centenary celebration of Khanjanmara Government Primary School in Kurigram, reports BSS.

He recommended that students make use of this allotted time.

The state minister also mentioned different development works of the government in education sector. He added the government has been giving new books to students at the beginning of every new year.



With no regard to safety or the consequences of their action, three battery-run autorickshaws run in the opposite direction on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. On top of this, despite a ban on them, these slow moving vehicles have been running on the highway by taking advantage of the authorities’ lack of surveillance. This photo was taken in Tongi area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BRT LINE-3

By any means necessary

As contractors run into financial woe, implementation agencies choose unusual methods to accelerate works of much delayed project



METHODS

- » Project implementation agency will pay contractors ‘retention money’ before completion of works
- » Agencies to work as grantors on contractors’ behalf to secure construction materials supply
- » Aimed to provide cushion to contractors, who are facing financial crisis

TIMELINE

- » Initial completion date by December 2016, at a cost of Tk 2,037.9cr
- » After four revisions, total cost now Tk 4,268.3cr

- » Current deadline set for June 2022, project authorities sought time till December 2023
- » This includes one-year DLP and Tk 268.13cr more
- » Authorities say they want to complete project by December this year

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

It may sound unusual that a project implementation agency will pay contractors the “retention money” while the project is running, as this is supposed to be paid after the completion of the works.

It may also sound unusual that the implementing agencies could work as guarantors on behalf of the contractors to secure supply of construction materials.

But both of these are set to be part of a project taken up to develop the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Line-3, a dedicated bus corridor between Dhaka airport to Gazipur.

Retention money is the amount an employer holds as a safeguard for any defective or non-conforming work by the contractor. The money is usually given back to a contractor once the project’s defect liability period is over.

The implementation agencies said they’ve decided to give this cushion to contractors, who are facing serious financial crisis, in a desperate bid to complete the long-drawn project within the revised deadline of December this year.

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‘It was to occupy land’

Says Radhakanta temple committee on Thursday night’s ‘attack’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The attack on the Radhakanta Jiu Temple’s “land” in the capital’s Wari on Thursday night was carried out in an attempt to occupy it, claimed the temple management committee.

Although it’s an endowment property, local businessman Shams Shafiullah, claiming himself the land’s owner, and his men carried out the attack, they further alleged.

Shah Iftekhar Ahmed, deputy commissioner of Wari division, told The Daily Star yesterday that there is a dispute between the temple and locals over the ownership of the land.

It has to be settled by the court, he said, adding that no one will be able to occupy the land before the court order.

After the attack, a temple volunteer filed a case with Wari Police Station against Shams Shafiullah, his son Sufi and 70 to 80 unidentified people, said police.

Temple authorities alleged that the attackers damaged a portion of the wall and vandalised a room around 8:00pm on Thursday. At the time, the temple committee tried to stop the attackers, they alleged. In the scuffle, two of them got injured. Radhakanta Jiu Temple is a 250-year-old temple, managed by ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) since 2010.

Visiting the site on Friday and yesterday, this correspondent saw a damaged wall next to a dilapidated room. This correspondent also law enforcers at the temple and its surrounding premises.

This newspaper tried to contact Shams Shafiullah and his son, but their cell phones were found switched off. They were also not found at their Narinda residence.

Meanwhile, Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee in a statement yesterday condemned the attack and demanded punishment for those involved. They also demanded that the government enact “Minority Safety Act” and form “National Minority Commission” to ensure safety of the minority communities.

Policies being made to control media: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that journalists and the media in Bangladesh are no longer independent as the government has been formulating different laws and policies to control them.

“Though one of the main objectives of the Liberation War was to establish the freedom of the press, now the journalists and the press in Bangladesh are not independent... freedom of the press is an integral part of democracy. But it’s affected repeatedly by the Awami League,” he said.

Speaking at the annual council of a faction

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PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 20



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-55	12-45	4-45	6-16	7-45
Jamaat	5-30	1-15	5-00	6-20	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION