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AUG 15 AFTERMATH ROLE

PM slams then senior AL leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday came down heavily on the then Awami League front-rank leaders for failing to protest and speak against the brutal killing of the father of the nation and his family members on August 15, 1975.

"Where did all those people go? There was not a single person who showed the courage to protest the bloodshed. Why could not they do that?" she asked.

The PM was addressing a memorial meeting arranged by the ruling AL marking the National Mourning Day and 47th martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina, also the AL president, presided over the meeting, held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

She said the AL was a huge party having so many supporters and leaders, but not a single person had the guts to speak against the killing.

She mentioned that the body of Bangabandhu lay on the floor of Dhamondi 32 number house from August



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CHILD MARRIAGE, LABOUR

Schoolgirls bore heavy blow in pandemic

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

While the Covid-19 pandemic took a toll on almost every sphere of life, one of the heaviest blows was to female secondary school students in the country.

According to a government report, nearly 50,000 female students fell prey to child marriage, while almost 80,000 of them became child labourers in 2021.

The report was prepared by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, based on information provided by 11,769 secondary schools – almost half of all such schools in the country.

This shows how grim the picture may be if all schools across the country are counted.

In 2021, there were 20,960 secondary schools in the country, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

Experts and academics have said the rate of child marriage in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world, and the pandemic aggravated the situation.

Prof Amir Hossain, director of monitoring and evaluation wing of DSHE, said they prepared the report as there were fears among many that large number of students had dropped out and became victims of child marriage and child labour.

"So we wanted to know the ground situation."

Educational institutions were shut down from March 17, 2020, after the pandemic hit the country earlier that month. They resumed partially on September 12, 2021, after one of the longest school closures – 543 days – in the world.

After resumption, school authorities held final exams for students of classes six to nine on three subjects, while 10th graders had to sit for Bangla, English and math exams.

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Overloaded trucks are mostly to blame for the serious rutting on this road in Alangkar area of Chattogram city. This state of the road puts smaller vehicles at risk. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



Locals of Charmukha village in Khulna's Koyra upazila trying to rebuild a dyke along the Kapotakka river as high tide inundated 10 nearby villages and maroon some 15,000 people.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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AIR POLLUTION

Dhaka 5th worst city in the world

Global report says 22,000 died in capital in 2019

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

More than 22,000 people in the capital died due to air pollution in 2019, says a global report.

Dhaka is among the world's top five cities with the most poisonous air, said the report to be unveiled today by two US-based organisations – the Health Effects Institute, and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

The report titled "Air Quality and Health in Cities" said yearly average of particulate matter, called PM2.5, is 71.4 microgram per cubic metre in Dhaka and yearly average of NO2 is 23.6 microgram per cubic metre.

Particulate matter is the sum of all solid and liquid particles suspended in air, many of which are hazardous. This complex mixture includes both organic and inorganic particles, such as dust, pollen, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets.

The other air pollutant, NO2, originates mainly from the burning of fuel often in older vehicles, power plants, industrial facilities and residential cooking and heating. As city residents tend to live closer to busy roads with dense traffic, they are often exposed to higher NO2

pollution than residents in rural areas.

According to World Health Organisation's Air Quality Guidelines, the annual standard is 5 microgram per cubic meter for PM2.5 and 10 microgram per cubic meter for NO2.

The world's biggest cities and urban areas have some of the

RANK	CITY	AAEL*
1	Delhi, India	110
2	Kolkata, India	84
3	Kano, Nigeria	83.6
4	Lima, Peru	73.2
5	Dhaka, Bangladesh	71.4

AAEL*: Annual Average Exposure Levels (microgram per cubic meter)

worst air quality on the planet, said the report which analysed air pollution and its health effects in more than 7,000 cities across the globe, focusing on two of the most harmful pollutants, PM 2.5 and NO2.

The report based on data collected from 2010 to 2019 found

that global patterns for exposure to the two key air pollutants are strikingly different.

Exposure to PM2.5 tends to be higher in the cities in low and middle-income countries, while exposure to NO2 is high across cities in high-income countries as well as low and middle-income ones, it pointed out.

In 2019, 86 percent of over 7,000 cities, included in the report, exceeded the WHO's annual standard of 10 microgram per cubic metre for NO2, impacting about 2.6 billion people.

Poor air quality in Bangladeshi cities often makes global headlines, thanks to fossil fuel combustion, biomass burning, emissions from unfit vehicles, brick kilns and massive development works.

According to the WHO, air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year.

Talking to The Daily Star, Pallavi Pant, senior scientist at Health Effects Institute, said, "Nitrogen dioxide has been linked to asthma and other respiratory effects, and residents in cities, especially those who live close to busy roads can

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NSU Board of Trustees recast 7 members dropped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid yesterday reconstituted the Board of Trustees of North South University by dropping seven of its former members.

The president, also the chancellor of the university, reconstituted the NSU trustee board as some members of the previous board were "found to be involved in anti-state activities, sponsorship of militancy, corruption and arbitrariness" in a probe by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This violates the law and penal code, said the Secondary and Higher Education Division (SHED) in an order yesterday.

It said that four trustees are now behind bars following an order of the High Court in a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission over their involvement in financial corruption in the land purchase process of the university.

Moreover, a supplementary charge sheet has been submitted against another trustee over forging government documents related to the appointment of treasurer to the university, read the order.

In such a situation, it is not appropriate to include the accused persons in the Board of Trustees. Academic and operational activities are being hampered as the trustee board cannot be run fully, the SHED said.

The president also decreased the number of board members to 12 from 16.

The seven dropped previous trustee board

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HISTORIC OSCARS ABUSE

Academy apologises to indigenous star

AFP, Los Angeles

Nearly 50 years after she was booed off the Oscars stage for declining Marlon Brando's award on his behalf in protest at the film industry's treatment of Native Americans, Sacheen Littlefeather has received an apology from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the group said Monday.

Littlefeather, who is Apache and Yaqui, was heckled at the 1973 Academy Awards while explaining at his behest why an absent Brando could not accept his best actor Oscar for "The Godfather."

She later said veteran Western star John Wayne had to be restrained from physically assaulting her, in an incident that has since drawn comparisons with Will Smith's infamous attack on Chris Rock at this year's ceremony.



Sacheen Littlefeather

"The abuse you endured because of this statement was unwarranted and unjustified," said the apology letter sent in June from then-Academy president David Rubin.

"The emotional burden you have lived through and the cost to your own career in our industry are irreparable."

"For too long the courage you showed has been unacknowledged. For this, we offer both our deepest apologies and our sincere admiration."

The Academy released the letter as it announced that Littlefeather has been invited to speak at its film museum in Los Angeles next month.

The museum, which opened last September, has pledged to confront the Oscars' "problematic history" including racism. One display already tackles the issue.

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