

Dhaka ranks 4th among 20 most UNSUSTAINABLE CITIES

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Dhaka has been ranked fourth amongst the 20 most unsustainable megacities in the world, as the capital is reeling from rapid depletion of greenery, water scarcity and exploding population, says a global report.

The third edition of the report, titled “Ecological Threat Report (ETR)” and released yesterday, came up with the ranking. It found that South Asia is home to eight of the world’s 20 most unsustainable megacities, with half of them in India alone.

Dhaka is preceded by Kinshasa, Nairobi and Lagos, as per the report, while the rest of the cities include Baghdad, Lahore, Kolkata and Delhi.

The report projected high population growth, over 50 percent, combined with other factors – including high levels of air pollution, poor sanitation, high homicide rates and substantial ecological threats – in the cities.

Dhaka, Lahore, Kolkata, Delhi, Karachi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad are eight of the 20 cities facing the highest population growth and are the most vulnerable to ecological threats, it said.

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PHOTO: STAR

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HSC exams to start Nov 6
Coaching centres to remain closed from Nov 3 to Dec 14, says Dipu Moni

UNB, Dhaka

All coaching centres across the country will remain closed from November 3 to December 14 as the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations will begin on November 6.

The written examinations will end on December 13 while the practical examinations will begin on December 15 and end on December 22.

The coaching centres will remain shut in an effort to conduct the examinations smoothly, Education Minister Dipu Moni said at a press briefing at the secretariat yesterday.

Replying to a question, the minister said the Deputy Commissioners and police supers concerned will ensure the closure of the coaching centres

One fraudster, 60 cases, 36 warrants
Rab arrests man who raked in crores through fake promises of profit

MUNTAKIM SAAD

He was a local correspondent for a national newspaper, in addition to working for a local newspaper during his student days. In 2003, the man opened an organisation called “Janata Multipurpose Cooperative Society” at his area in Kushtia.

Ten years later, Khandaker Abul Kalam Azad changed the organisation’s name to “Janata Sanchay o Rindan Samabay Samity Limited” and started operations on a large scale, targeting people from lower-income backgrounds in various upazilas of Kushtia, Khulna, Magura, Jhenidah, Pabna, Sirajganj and Rajshahi.

At one point in 2017, Azad closed the company, after embezzling about Tk 70 crore from customers, and went into hiding.

With the money, he bought 15 bighas of land, a six-storey building and a brick-kiln in Kushtia, and 11 bighas of land in Rajshahi. Besides, he bought several luxury flats and cars in Dhaka’s Uttara.

At least 60 cases have been filed against him over fraudulence. Warrants have been issued under 36 cases with different police stations.

Rab disclosed this information yesterday, after claiming to have finally arrested Azad, who had been on the run for almost five years, on Tuesday night from a hotel in the capital.

At the law enforcement agency’s media centre, Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander Khandaker Al-Moin said Azad had appointed himself as the company’s president, while his two brothers and their wives were on the board of directors.

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To increase the number of customers, they used to attract people by announcing special packages and incentives. In 2017, the number of customers exceeded 7,000. Customers would deposit Tk 10,000 to Tk 13 lakh. In 2017, the amount of savings and deposits of the company stood at around Tk 50 to Tk 70 crore.

‘A barrier to LDC graduation’

Speakers concerned about declining funds for civil-society orgs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh’s smooth and sustainable graduation from the status of least developed country (LDC) may be affected by the fund crisis civil-society organisations (CSOs) are facing, said speakers at an event yesterday.

Funds are provided by both the government and international development partners.

A new study, titled “Role of CSOs and NGOs in LDC Graduation of Bangladesh: Opportunities & Challenges”, conducted by Citizen’s Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh showed that the disbursement of official development assistance (ODA), a type of financial aid, among Bangladeshi CSOs declined by 11.30 percent between 2015-2020.

It revealed the findings at an event at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

During this period, ODA disbursement among CSOs in developing nations increased by 16.06 percent. However, in LDCs, it fell marginally by 0.98 percent due to the overall decline of funding, the study said.

In Bangladesh, ODA disbursement for women’s rights organisations increased more substantially than that in other LDCs.

In contrast, disbursements for democratic participation and civil society fell by 53.77 percent between 2015 and 2020.

Grants released by the NGO Affairs Bureau declined between 2016 fiscal (18 percent) and 2022 fiscal (8.2 percent), the study mentioned.

The survey based study was conducted on 109 CSOs and NGOs between September 25 and October 13 this year.

It found that 76 percent of the respondents witnessed a decrease in their annual budget of 2021 fiscal, when compared with the pre-pandemic period. Less than 14 percent experienced an increase, while for 10 percent, it remained the same.

Around 57.8 percent of the respondents saw a decrease in funds provided by international development partners, while 37.3

funding, while some 65.10 percent had to cut down their workforce; 47 percent shut down their operations, and 42.20 percent had to reduce the salary of their workforce.

Only 20 percent of the surveyed NGOs faced no difficulty in obtaining funding from the government and its agencies.

Around 66.19 percent of CSOs had to go through a cumbersome process of attaining funds, while 39.4 percent had to face competition for limited funding from similar organisations, and 29.4 percent reported discriminations in funding.

While presenting the findings of the study, Debapriya Bhattacharya, convenor of Citizen’s Platform for SDGs, said the government should prepare a comprehensive strategy document on the role of the civil society for smooth and sustainable LDC graduation.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, suggested reducing dependency on foreign funds for running CSOs.

While moderating the discussion, Shaheen Anam, core group member of Citizen’s Platform, said fund inflow to small NGOs has been declining gradually. Shaheen Anam, also executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), said MJF had to stop funding 120 small NGOs, while many small CSOs are about to shut down for lack of funding.

Nazneen Ahmed, country economist for Bangladesh, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), suggested a long transition policy for CSOs and NGOs up to 2041 to overcome the middle-income trap after LDC graduation in 2026.

Khushi Kabir, member of the

TOP 3 AREAS WITH LOWER FUNDS
Poverty alleviation (45.8pc fall)
Quality education (22.9pc fall)
Gender equality (20.5pc fall)
REASONS
Cumbersome process
Competition
Discrimination
IMPACTS
Reduction in workforce
Decrease in salary
Closing of operations

percent experienced declining funds from the government, and 33.7 percent witnessed a decrease in philanthropic funds.

Among the top three areas for which funds have decreased, 45.8 percent of funds decreased in poverty alleviation, 22.9 percent in quality education and 20.5 percent in gender equality.

Only 2 percent of the CSOs experienced no impacts of decreased

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ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AT BEACH
HC blasts Cox’s Bazar DC for noncompliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cautioned and blasted Cox’s Bazar Deputy Commissioner Mamunur Rashid for not evicting illegal structures from the sea beach area though it has directed for doing so 11 years ago.

“We go through newspapers and watch televisions to know what you do for implementing this court’s directives over evicting the illegal structures from Cox’s Bazar sea beach. But we see that your performance is not only zero, but also negative in protecting the beauties of Cox’s Bazar as per the court orders.

You must comply with the order of this court, otherwise your career will be damaged. If you have any personal interest, then it’s a different matter,” the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil told DC Mamunur Rashid during hearing a contempt of court petition.

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DSA an additional threat to journos
Says Canadian envoy

UNB, Dhaka



Canadian High Commissioner Lilly Nicholls yesterday said the Digital Security Act acts as an additional threat to journalists in Bangladesh.

She also said the media plays a vital role to ensure democracy and transparency in a country.

“Media freedom is deteriorating all around the world. Media also plays a key role to hear from different sections of the people and represents the voice of the unheard,” said the Canadian envoy while speaking at a dialogue on safety of women journalists.

Discussions also included Barrister Sara Hossain, President of Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendro Nasimun Ara Huq Minu and Coordinator of Women Journalists Network Bangladesh Angur Nahar Monty.

Faruq Faisal, regional director for ARTICLE 19 South Asia, moderated the dialogue session.

Rumky Farhana, senior programme officer of ARTICLE 19, presented the keynote paper, pointing out the objectives and scope of these upcoming series of dialogues.

Journalists, civil society organisations, diplomats, academia, researchers and media actors attended the inaugural session.

‘Little Bangladesh’ in New York

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A section of McDonald Avenue in Kensington of New York has been officially co-named “Little Bangladesh” to recognise the contributions of Bangladeshi community to the neighborhood.

Council member Shahana Hanif, leaders from the local Bangladeshi community, city comptroller Brad Lander, and assembly member Robert Carroll unveiled the new street sign at the corner of Church Avenue on Oct 16, reports Brooklyn Paper, a local newspaper.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

DU to hold research fair for first time

DU CORRESPONDENT

A two-day “Research and Publication Fair” will be held on October 22-23 at the central playground of Dhaka University, first of its kind in the institution’s history.

New innovation and research will be displayed at the fair, DU authority said in a press conference yesterday.

The event will be arranged for encouraging

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PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 20

Fajr

Zohr

Asr

Maghrib

Esha

AZAN 4:50

12:45

4:00

5:36

7:15

JAMAAT 5:25

1:15

4:15

5:39

7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Poverty pushed 11-year-old Rabiul to take up the risky profession of a bus conductor. Struggling to make ends meet, he had to make a living for himself as his rickshaw-puller father was unable to support the family with his income. To employ a child in such hazardous professions is illegal to begin with. On top of that, Rabiul working for a state-owned bus service questions the efforts of the government to stop child labour. This photo was taken in Dhaka’s Asad Gate area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS