

Gulshan noisiest, Shahbagh air most polluted

Find studies on pollution level in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state of Dhaka's environment when it comes to air quality and noise level has been found to be way below standard, as Gulshan-2 is the noisiest neighbourhood, while Shahbagh's air is the most polluted.

Besides, Buriganga river, used to be known as the lifeline of Dhaka, saw a marginal improvement in water quality during the monsoon of 2022. It remained severely polluted the rest of the year.

The data was revealed in a validation workshop titled "State of Dhaka's Environment Report", organised by Waterkeepers Bangladesh at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

Three studies were done separately by the Centre for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS) of Stamford University's Department of Environmental Science (two studies) and Jahangirnagar University's Department of Geography and Environment (one study). The data were recorded in 2022.

In one study, the annual average particulate matter (PM 2.5) in Shahbagh was found to be 91.4 micrograms per cubic metre, six times higher than the standard, 15 micrograms per cubic metre.

The least polluted spot, the parliament area, witnessed 59.4 micrograms per cubic



metre, four times higher than the safe level. Motijheel, the commercial hub, comes in second, with a PM 2.5 concentration of 79.4 micrograms per cubic metre. Industrial zone Tejgaon grabbed the third spot, with 67.0.

Apart from these, Ahsan Manjil ranked fourth (70.6), Gulshan-2 fifth (71.2), Mirpur-10 sixth (72.7), Dhanmondi-32 (73.6) seventh, and Agargaon eighth (74.8). The

annual average air quality of the ten areas is 73.1 micrograms per cubic metre. In terms of PM 10 concentration, Mirpur-10 saw the highest pollution, 48.8 micrograms per cubic metre, while lowest was recorded at the parliament area (37.2).

The air quality varies from season to season, the study observed.

Prof Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, founding chairman CAPS, told The Daily



PHOTO: STAR

Star that construction work at Shahbagh, along with waste burning at Ramna Park and near Shahbagh police station, led to it ranking top.

"The air quality of Dhaka sees an improvement on Friday, as vehicular movement declines. It sees a sharp rise on Thursday, when city dwellers go for vacations in large numbers," he said.

Meanwhile, Gulshan-2 is the noisiest out

of 10 areas in the capital selected for one of the studies.

The annual average noise level there is 95.4 decibels, while Tejgaon is the quietest (89 decibels). The allowable level for residential areas is 55 decibels, as per the national standard set by Department of Environment.

Abdullapur, a mixed area (residential and commercial), recorded 95.4, making it the second-most polluted. For a mixed area, the permissible limit is 60 decibels.

The noise level at Ahsan Manjil and Mirpur-10 is 95 decibels, making them the third noisiest areas in the capital.

Motijheel witnessed 93.6 decibels, while in the parliament area, categorised as a silent area, the noise level is 93.5 decibels. So, they are the fourth and fifth noisiest places, the study summed up.

The standard level for silent areas is 50 decibels.

As per the study, the noise level in Shahbagh is 92.8 decibels, 92.7 in Dhanmondi-32, and 91.3 in Agargaon.

The state of Buriganga did not change much, as pollution continues to worsen its condition, found the study of JU.

The water quality was found below standard. Although during monsoon, the

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Create safe environment for children

Says president

BSS

President **Abdul Hamid** yesterday urged all to work together to make the world safe for children and help their inner potential flourish, irrespective of religion, caste and financial condition.

"Create a safe atmosphere for children with care, affection and love," he said while addressing the award distribution ceremony of "National Children Award Competition 2020 and 2021" at Osmani Smriti Auditorium in the capital.

The head of state added, "Every child has a personality... Let them create an opportunity to express it in a proper manner."

He called upon the government, different

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Ministry forms road-safety branch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road transport and bridges ministry has formed a new road safety branch, headed by a deputy secretary, that will look after road-safety issues.

Road Transport and Highways Division under the ministry yesterday posted Zahirul Islam, a deputy secretary who was transferred to the division recently, to the branch.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the division, confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday.

The development comes at a time when road safety has become a contentious issue and a hot topic as the country is witnessing a gradual rise in road crashes and deaths.

Forming a road-safety cell or branch under the ministry has long been talked about. The branch will work under the estate wing of the division.

Before this, no dedicated arm of the ministry existed to look after road-safety issues.

PRAYER
TIMING

JANUARY 30

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:35	12:45	4:15	5:46	7:15
JAMAAT 6:10	1:15	4:30	5:50	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

US, EU passport, visa FOR TK 3 LAKH!

Transnational syndicate forging the documents to dupe fortune seekers, says CTTC

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

On July 2 last year, Mohammad Asif went to Dhaka airport to go to Nepal. He was carrying two passports, one Bangladeshi and one American.

The immigration desk, noticing his suspicious activities, started quizzing Asif about the American passport. As immigration was not satisfied by his answer, it detained the 23-year-old and sent both of his passports to the Document Analysis Centre (DAC) for checking.

After examination, DAC reported that the Bangladeshi passport was authentic, but the security features of the American passport's biography page were inaccurate.

Later on, police started interrogating Asif, and at one point, he admitted that the passport was fake.

This raises the question -- how did he actually get the fake passport?

Through Asif, law enforcers eventually found out that a transnational syndicate has been selling fake passports and visas of Europe and the US for a hefty sum of money.

Two Syrians, along with a Pakistani, are making these documents somewhere in Turkey and then selling them to gullible people through social media.

What's more, an official of Bangladesh's security agency and a former travel-agent official have joined hands with the syndicate.

The human-trafficking wing of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit disclosed the information to The Daily Star recently. Investigators discovered the syndicate's activities while investigating a case filed with Airport Police Station on July 5 last year.

Asif's account has been recorded in the case's first information report (FIR).

The youngster used to look after his father's business after completing his SSC. Coming across a Facebook post that read "Europe, American passports, and visas are

HOW THE GANG WORKS

- 2 Syrians, 1 Pakistani forging passports, visas in Turkey
- Members sell the documents on social media
- Official of Bangladesh's security agency, ex travel-agent official involved
- Passports sent via courier
- Syndicate has at least dozens of members
- It has been active for 3yrs
- It never sends people to country the forged passport, visa represents

We have so far found that people from three countries are working closely with the syndicate. Once we get information of the suspects, we would send a request to Interpol for their further details, including Ibrahim's (security-agency official) hideout, to take action.

TOHIDUL ISLAM
Additional Deputy Commissioner of CTTC

available", he communicated with a person through a WhatsApp number.

The person identified himself as Emran Ahmed and made a deal with Asif to provide a passport in exchange for \$3,000 (Around Tk 3 lakh). As per the deal, Asif sent Tk 95,000 and Tk 1.80 lakh to the bank account numbers Emran gave on June 15 and June 19 of that year, according to the FIR.

After payment, Asif received the American passport at his address through courier service on June 26, 2022. Intending to change his fortune using the passport, Asif went to Dhaka airport to travel to Nepal first and then to Europe or America from there, the FIR added.

While investigating the case, the CTTC unit arrested Masum Ahmed, 34, from the capital on January 12 this year. Masum has been involved in illegal activities and selling fake US passports, Tohidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of CTTC, told The Daily Star recently.

THE RINGLEADER

According to investigators, Mohammad Solamain, a Syrian national, is leading the syndicate from Turkey, along with another Syrian Taz Aladin.

Besides, a Pakistani national, Mohammad Ali, is also working with the duo as their associate.

Arrestee Masum, who is now in jail, disclosed the details with the investigators, said a high CTTC official, requesting anonymity.

Masum joined as an agent at a travel agency in Sylhet in 2017. The agency's activities halted within the next couple of years due to illegal activities, like defrauding people in the name of sending them abroad, the official told The Daily Star.

"While working in the agency, Masum came in touch with a former official of the security agency -- Ibrahim -- who is now

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As dust pollution worsens in the winter season, specialised trucks of the city corporations are seen spraying water on the streets to curb the issue. This photo was taken on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Will move forward keeping ties with US, India, China

Says Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh will continue to maintain a balanced foreign policy -- noting the importance of the country's geostrategic location.

"My challenge is -- there are three countries -- the United States, India and China. These are powerful countries. I have to maintain the relationship with these three countries in such a way so that we can have an improved relationship with each country," he said. "We need to move ahead maintaining a balance with them."

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a citizens' dialogue on Bangladesh's achievements, opportunities and challenges. Bangladesh Study Group hosted the dialogue at Jatiya Press Club.

Momen said Bangladesh has become a center of interest due to its important geostrategic location. He thinks the future world will be an Asian-led world.

The foreign minister also said the US is a "major power" and Bangladesh will have to pursue good relations with the United States. "You will be

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Islami Andolan opposes content of new textbooks

NCTB rejects claims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh yesterday claimed that the new textbooks are imposing the "debatable" Darwin's theory of evolution on students and demeaning the purdah (veil) system for women.

They also said the textbooks depicted people with beard and wearing cap as anti-Liberation War, although this has no historical basis.

They made the remarks at a press conference in the capital. Amir of Islami Andolan Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim spoke at the event, among others.

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HSC results February 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of HSC and equivalent exams of 2022 session are set to be published on February 8.

Dhaka Education Board Chairman Tapan Kumar Sarkar confirmed this information to The Daily Star yesterday.

All the education boards' chairmen will hand over the copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the day, added Tapan, also chief of the inter-education board coordination committee.

HSC and equivalent examinations were held between November 6 to December 13 last year.

A total of 1,203,407 examinees registered to sit for the HSC exams at 2,649 centres in nine general, one madrasa and one technical education boards.

Caretaker govt only option for credible polls: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said election under a caretaker government is the most suitable system for a country like Bangladesh, and urged eminent personalities and political parties to raise their voices for its restoration.

Talking to reporters at a press briefing at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office after a meeting between the liaison committees of BNP and the 12 party alliance, he also claimed that their ongoing simultaneous movement has gained huge public confidence.

He said the previous elections have proved that no credible election can be held under the AL government and a partisan administration. "We would have been happier if more noted citizens, political parties, and organisations of the country had talked about these things."

Fakhrul also alleged that AL held its rally in Rajshahi yesterday using the state machinery and hiring public trains, but they created various obstacles to the similar programmes of the opposition.