

HONG KONG CONVENTION Dhaka ratifies UN accord on ship recycling

REUTERS, London

An international accord on recycling ships is set to begin within 24 months after Bangladesh and Liberia became the latest countries to ratify the accord, officials said on Monday.

The Hong Kong Convention, a treaty set up by the UN shipping agency – the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety, or the environment.

Much of the world's shipbreaking takes place at sites across South Asia in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and involves dangerous manual labour where workers dismantle ships and are exposed to toxic substances.

Working conditions still remain perilous, including fires and falling steel plates, which kill or seriously injure workers across the breaker yards in South Asia, according to analysis from campaigners with the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, which monitors conditions at sites.

The Hong Kong Convention was adopted in 2009 by 63 countries aiming to boost working conditions.

Nevertheless, it needed to meet various criteria, including having at least 40 percent of the world's merchant shipping by gross tonnage represented by ratifying nations, which had not been met previously despite other large maritime nations such as India already ratifying it.

The accession of Bangladesh and Liberia means the total of 22 contracting states to the convention represent approximately 45.81 percent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping, the IMO said in a statement.

The combined annual ship recycling volume of the 22 contracting states during the preceding 10 years amounted to 23.8 million gross tonnage, equivalent to 3.31 percent of the required recycling volume and above the required 3 percent threshold.

Lenn Eugene Nagbe, chief executive of the Liberia Maritime Authority, said it was “a great and historic day for world shipping”.

Bangladesh had “demonstrated global leadership and commitment as a major ship recycling country to environmentally safe and sustainable ship recycling” by acceding to the Convention, Saida Muna Tasneem, Dhaka's permanent IMO representative, added to the statement.



Bachelors' struggle to find apartments

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

There is no shortage of buildings in Dhaka. So many apartments all around but if you are a bachelor who is looking to rent one of them then truly you are in tough luck. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when it became so difficult to rent an apartment as a bachelor but there's no denying that it's one of the most dreaded things in Dhaka ranking closely behind traffic congestion.

Whether one is a student or a working person, it makes little to no difference. As long as they are bachelors, the chance to get a suitable apartment in Dhaka is staggeringly low.

There are a number of challenges while apartment hunting as a bachelor. The most common one and perhaps often a bit insulting is the fact that landlords will not even speak to a bachelor or show them the apartment just merely for the reason that they are bachelors and he will not rent to bachelors.

Take Saikat Barua for example. Barua has recently graduated, finishing his Master's degree and started working at a private company. So, naturally he had to leave his dormitory and find a new place to live, preferably a place near his office.

“Naturally you start on the streets, browsing through the posters. But

often the posters say nothing about bachelors. So, when you go to see the apartment, the landlord is annoyed at you for being a bachelor even though the poster said nothing about whether or not they are willing to rent to bachelors. Waste of time and energy to go see a place that you had no chance of getting in the first place,” said Barua recalling those tough times.

Even if you manage to find a landlord who is willing to rent out to bachelors, the deals are not exactly reasonable. Chilekotha or attics for example – they are unbelievably warm at any time of the day and the facilities are a bare minimum, yet such rooms go for equal or higher rent as any other apartment in the building.

The bachelors are not allowed to even explore the other apartments but the attic is a take-it-or-leave-it deal and such is the lodging facility in Dhaka that bachelors will jump at the chance.

Shamim, a young man who works at a bank, has recently moved into a place near Jatrabaria after two weeks of exhausting effort.

“You can never find an apartment within the first few floors. The floors above the 5th or the 6th or a single room on the roof; that's what you get for being a bachelor. It's difficult walking up the stairs to the 6th floor a few times a day without a lift. But you have to pick that one because

there's really no other decent places available for bachelors,” Shamim said with a sigh, perhaps recalling the time a landlord asked him for two months' advance even though the common practice is one month's advance.

Bachelor or not, apartment hunting itself is a physically and emotionally demanding task. If one is alienated by the landlords on top of that, it becomes a truly herculean task to find a place. There's also the issue of increased rents for bachelors. And on top of that, comes a set of rules set by the landlord that can be reasonable but often stands on the edge of being unfair.

Why landlords act this way is perhaps not entirely unjustified. They often point out that bachelors leave abruptly; leaving them with empty apartments and it takes a while to find new tenants so they suffer financially. There's also the accusation that bachelors are often irregular with their rents and many landlords strongly disapprove of the lifestyle that some bachelors lead.

It's true that some people truly are terrible tenants but punishing every bachelor in the city for the crimes of a few is a bit unfair. But the reality is this – if you are a bachelor looking to rent a place, you better prepare with your best smile and your suit of armour because this feels very much like a battle.

‘Special reward for clearing waste fastest on Eid day’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waste management will be prioritised on Eid day in Dhaka North City Corporation and there will be “a special reward” for the ward that can complete clearing up waste first, said DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday while visiting a cattle market in Uttara.

He also reiterated that waste disposal in the city corporation will be done by 10:00pm on Eid day.

Mayor Atiqul urged everyone to cooperate in ensuring that the waste-related work is done within the designated eight hours. He also distributed leaflets among cattle traders about cleanliness during Eid-ul-Azha.

“Nearly 11,000 DNCC workers will be involved in the process. Poly bags, bleaching powder, and shovels have been distributed through ward councillors,” he added.

He also said that dung from cattle markets would be collected and used as fertiliser for trees under DNCC's tree plantation programmes.

“DNCC has taken up extensive tree plantation initiatives. This year we are collecting dung from the cattle markets,” said Mayor Atiqul.

“The collection process has already begun. We will use them as organic fertiliser,” he added.

Man drowns in lake of botanical garden

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man drowned while swimming in a lake at National Botanical Garden in Dhaka's Mirpur area yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Hamza, 19, son of Monir Hossain Sarkar and a resident of Rupnagar area in the city.

Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shah Ali Police Station, said Hamza along with his uncle Sumon Sarkar went to the Botanical Garden in the morning.

He drowned while swimming in the lake around 8:00am, said the OC.

On information, divers from local firefighting units rushed to the spot and recovered his body, the police official added.

2 coaches detach from moving train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Two coaches got detached from a moving train while crossing Akhaura Railway Junction Station of Brahmanbaria yesterday morning.

No one was reported injured in the incident that took place around 10:30am, said Senior Deputy Assistant Engineer (Head TXR) Md Shamim Ahmed.

The last two compartments of the Dhaka-bound Intercity Subarna Express from Chattogram were separated from the running train after the buffer shank of the joint between bogie 1305 and 1310 got damaged, the engineer said.

The train left for Dhaka around 11:45am after the joint was repaired.

BNP aims to tap Eid

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They will hold programmes in Dinajpur on July 19, Rajshahi on July 28, Jashore on August 5, Habiganj on August 12, and in Barishal on August 19.

BNP leaders observe that people's involvement in agitation programmes has increased over the last few months and this involvement will increase further if the party can create a momentum.

This is because people are upset with the government for various reasons, including price hike of essentials and load shedding, they added.

“Leaders have been instructed to drum up public support for the party's one-point movement during their visits to their localities,” Rizvi said, adding that most of the leaders have already reached their areas.

The BNP has also instructed its leaders to stand by the family members of those leaders who are now behind bars or have become victims of enforced disappearances.

Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu, organising secretary of the BNP, said he was holding meetings with party leaders in his area and exchanging Eid greetings with the people.

“We are motivating people to join the one-point movement. Most of the leaders are already working to garner public support for the movement,” he said.

EU, Unesco to help developing countries shape AI rules

AFP, Paris

The European Union will help fund a Unesco scheme supporting developing countries as they create laws regulating artificial intelligence, the UN cultural body said yesterday.

Four million euros (\$4.4 million) from Brussels will go towards organising events and advising governments.

A silent revolution waged by farmers

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banana and watermelon production.

Production of mango has hit its highest mark this year since the country's independence, say officials of Department of Agricultural Extension.

The country now holds the second position in annual jackfruit production, seventh in mango and eighth in guava production in the world, according to latest FAO estimates.

Besides, java plum (jaam), litchi, jujube, star fruit (kamranga), wood apple, lemon, pineapple, lotkon (Burmese grape), custard apple and sapodilla (safeda) are also included on the list of fruits being farmed on large scales.

Production of non-native fruits has also reached new heights to meet growing demands for strawberry, dragon fruit and malta.

“A silent revolution has taken place in fruit production. New areas like the Chattogram Hill Tracts have been included in commercial fruit production. We are even exporting fruits now. Foreign fruits like strawberry, rambutan and dragon fruit are also showing good prospects,” Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star.

In addition to a gradual change in food habit towards a healthy diet, people's purchasing capacity has increased, according to agricultural experts. These factors have led to an increase in the demand for fruits, which explains why more and more farmers are showing an interest in fruit production, they say.

“Since rice as a staple food is not as profitable as it was, a large number of farmers have turned to fruit production. The farmers are using every conceivable space for cultivating fruits,” said Sattar Mandal, former vice chancellor of Bangladesh Agriculture University.

Soil condition is also favourable for the cultivation of foreign fruits like malta, strawberry and dragon fruits, he said.

Even a decade ago, most of the local fruits were available for only three months during the hot and humid summer. People eagerly waited for May, June, and July when mango, litchi, jackfruit and the other tropical fruits would appear in markets.

The scene has changed, however. Several fruits are found year-round.

“Fruits are not only available for three months now. We can have guava, banana, papaya and some other fruits round the year. Besides, due to the introduction of early and late varieties of mango, we are trying to create an opportunity to have the popular fruit throughout the year,” said Mehedi Masood, the Project Director of the Year-Round Fruit Production for Nutrition Improvement Project.

The goal of the project is to make fruits available round the year and meet the nutrition demand of the population, Masood told The Daily Star, adding that the DAE has been implementing it since 2014-15.

He said that progress has been made in increasing per capita fruit consumption.

“But there is still a long way to go in attaining the ideal consumption of 250 grams of fruit daily for adults,” he said.

Since the inception of the project, over 1.77 lakh farmers have been given training in fruit cultivation through the horticulture centres, DAE officials said.

Besides, over 47 lakh fruit trees were planted across the country during this period.

According to the DAE, in the 2006-07 fiscal year, fruits were cultivated on 4.74 lakh hectares of land and the yield was 87.86 lakh tonnes.

In 2021-22 FY, agricultural land for fruit farming has jumped to 7.34 lakh hectares and fruit production to 1.43 crore tonnes.

“Due to changes in weather patterns, we are having longer spells of summer. The change is conducive to growing more tropical fruits round the year,” said Mandal.

The agricultural minister, however, said that fruit storage is still a big challenge and that's why the government is focusing on setting up multipurpose cold storage facilities across the country under a project called Programme on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER).

“We are also encouraging scientists to find out the way how the shelf life of the fruits can be expanded,” said the minister.

Meanwhile, Masood said that they have taken an initiative for dried jackfruit, mango and pineapple so that those can be consumed later.

According to the agriculture ministry, the number of fruit varieties cultivated in Bangladesh has increased from 56 a decade ago to 72 now.

Irregularities

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company saved about Tk 1.53 crore.

The CAG, however, said the explanation is valid for the cancellation of the first tender and not the successive tenders.

Subsequently, the report called for taking action against those responsible for the production loss of an important medicine during a public health crisis in the country.

Besides, EDCL also caused a loss of about Tk 18.38 crore by keeping another purchased equipment uninstalled and unused at its Gopalganj pharmaceutical factory plant-3 for two and a half years.

When quizzed, the company pinned the delay on the pandemic. The audit team dismissed the excuse as “illogical”.

The audit also found that the company incurred a loss of Tk 1.58 crore for extending a special allowance meant for employees who were directly involved in treating Covid-19 patients to those who were ineligible.

The CAG audit team called for refunding the allowance to the company fund.

Never had talks with Dhaka

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including by supporting free and fair elections.”

At a press conference on June 21, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vowed not to compromise the sovereignty of Bangladesh as she called the BNP's motives into question, suggesting it would be willing to “mortgage” St Martin's Island in order to assume power.

Hasina said the BNP rose to power in 2001 “promising to sell gas” and questioned whether the opposition party was looking for votes by promising to sell off the country or St Martin's Island.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon MP recently claimed in parliament that the US had eyes on the southernmost island of the country.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu also recently questioned in parliament whether

the US meddling in Bangladesh affairs was for democracy or for the control of St Martins Island.

The US, which has been critical of the 2014 and 2018 national elections for alleged irregularities, declared a visa policy for Bangladesh on May 24, saying that it would deny visas to any Bangladeshi individual believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Top US officials have also been visiting Bangladesh in the recent months and US Ambassador Peter Haas held talks with different political parties stressing the need for free and fair elections.

Twelve Congressmen – six Republicans and six Democrats – also recently wrote to the Biden Administration calling for steps for upholding democracy and human rights in Bangladesh.

World Cup from Oct 5 to Nov 19

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neighbours, who play each other only in multi-team events.

Pakistan responded by threatening to boycott the World Cup if they were not allowed to stage at least some matches of the Asia Cup on home soil.

The stalemate was finally resolved this month when Pakistan agreed to split matches with Sri Lanka, where India will play their Asia Cup matches.

South Asia's arch-rivals meet in the tournament's most anticipated match on Oct. 15 in Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium - the biggest cricket venue in the world by capacity.

However, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) added a caveat saying they would still need government clearance for any tour to India, including World Cup match venues.

India begin their campaign on October 8 against five-times champions Australia in Chennai.

England's opener against New

Zealand is a rematch of the 2019 final in which England prevailed via a now-scrapped boundary count rule.

Among other key fixtures, 1992 champions Pakistan meet Australia in Bengaluru on October 20, while England take on South Africa the following day in Mumbai.

The first semifinal will take place on November 15 in Mumbai with Kolkata hosting the second the following day. Both games, as well as the final, will be day-night fixtures.

There will be a total of 10 venues for the 10-team tournament – Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dharamsala, Delhi, Chennai, Lucknow, Pune, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Apart from hosts India, the teams that have qualified include Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Africa.

Two more sides will join them following a qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe, which will conclude on July 9.