



DHAKA CITY

Air pollution rose by 13pc over 3 years

Says CPD citing 2020-2022 data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Air pollution has increased by almost 13 percent in the capital since 2020, says a study by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Dhaka's air quality index score rose from 145.1 in 2020 to 163.7 in 2022, adds the study released yesterday.

The study titled Reducing Pollution for Greening Cities says plastic pollution has also risen during the period.

The researchers surveyed 500 households in May and June and interviewed people about their perception of air and plastic pollution and thoughts on how to deal with the crisis.

On an average, each resident spends Tk 4,000 a year for diagnosis and treatment of symptoms thought to have been caused by polluted air.

Seven out of 10 suffer breathing problems, cough, runny nose, sore throat, chest pain and eye irritation. Over 50 percent of those who fall sick are women while 20 percent are children and the elderly.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents believe air pollution has worsened in recent years.

Syed Yusuf Saadat, research fellow at the CPD, told a discussion at the Brac Centre Inn yesterday that due to sickness attributable to air pollution, individuals in Dhaka city took 2,117 days off work last year.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents blame vehicular emission for air pollution, 10 percent blame construction work, four percent blame brick kilns, and nine percent blame burning of waste.

Thirteen percent of the women and 32 percent of men say they would have preferred public transport over cars if the system was better.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents think plastic pollution worsened in recent years; 57 percent think their neighbourhood has extreme levels of plastic pollution; 43 percent admit that they litter.

The surveyed city dwellers are ready to shun plastic if there is an alternative.

The residents lack knowledge on waste separation at households; 47 percent of the household waste is collected by the informal sector and 44 percent is collected by the city corporation employees.

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun told the discussion that strict measures like a ban on plastic bags, and penalty for defaulters should be enforced.

She also recommended phasing out single-use plastic by 2028 and establishing a recycling centre.

Begum Habibun Nahar, deputy minister for environment, said everyone must play a role in preventing plastic pollution.



- More plastic pollution in eastern part of Dhaka
- An individual loses 276 hours a year in traffic
- 7 out of 10 suffer breathing problems, coughing
- Each resident spends Tk 4,000 a year for diagnosis and treatment of symptoms caused by polluted air
- Due to sickness related to polluted air, individuals in the city took 2,117 days off work last year
- 13pc of women and 32pc of men say if the public transport was better, they would have preferred it over cars



The Shuvaddya canal in Dakshin Keraniganj has literally been turned into a dumping ground by sweatshops and traders of kitchen markets, leaving no room for water to flow. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

US-BANGLADESH TIES Some quarters trying to whip up bitterness Says Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has described Bangladesh's relationship with the United States as "outstandingly warm and cordial", but noted that some quarters are trying to inject bitterness into this relationship through lies.

The foreign minister said the US believes in democracy and human rights.

"So, there is a similarity in our views and thoughts with the United States. In principle, the two countries have similarities. However, some individuals may not appreciate our development," Momen said, calling upon the Bangladeshi expatriates in the US to be vigilant.

He urged the Bangladeshi diaspora to take a stand, regardless of their political affiliation, to challenge those who lie

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

DENGUE DEATHS, CASES Records tumble every month since May

Experts blame rain, gov't failure to control outbreak

DIPAN NANDY

The dengue death toll has been record-breaking with each passing month since May this year.

While there were 342 deaths throughout August, the number was already higher yesterday with three days till September ends.

This month's number of deaths till 8:00am yesterday stood at 365.

The average daily death rate last month stood at 11.03 percent and has risen this month to 13.51.

The number of cases too has been breaking records each month, with 71,976 people admitted to hospital throughout August and 73,023 patients recorded in 27 days of this month.

According to health experts, the numbers have been rising sharply every month due to the government's failure to control the outbreak, with almost all the measures taken in this regard proving inadequate.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dr Benazir Ahmed, a former member of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group of the health ministry, said that due to intense rainfall this month, many Aedes breeding grounds have been created.

"Another reason is the spread of the infection outside Dhaka."

He added, "Along with these, all our efforts to control

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Tree-hugging AI to the rescue of Brazilian Amazon

AFP, Manaus

Small, artificially intelligent boxes tied to tree trunks in the Brazilian Amazon are the latest weapon in the arsenal of scientists and environmentalists battling destructive jungle invaders.

The boxes, named "curupiras" after a folkloric forest creature who preys on hunters and poachers, sport sensors and software trained "to recognize the sounds of chainsaws and tractors, or anything that could cause deforestation," project manager Thiago Almeida told AFP.

"We recorded the sound of chainsaws and tractors in the forest... then, all the collected sounds were passed on to the AI team to train (the program) so that... it would only recognize these sounds and not the characteristic sounds of the forest, such as animals, vegetation and rain," he explained.

Once identified, details of the threat can then be relayed to a central point and agents deployed to deal with it.



ARMED FORCES 23 types of military equipment bought in last five years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 23 types of modern combat equipment have been added to the Bangladesh Armed Forces in five years between 2018 and 2023, Armed Forces Division (AFD) informed a parliamentary watchdog yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on the defense ministry was also informed that in light of the Forces Goal-2023, those war equipment have been purchased or added to modernise and enhance the capabilities of the army, navy and air force.

The AFD placed a report containing this information before a meeting of the parliamentary watchdog at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

According to the AFD, those equipment were procured from 12 countries. Also, two types of equipment were made in Bangladesh.

However, the report didn't mention how many pieces of equipment were purchased and how much was spent on it.

Armed Forces Division said 11 types of combat equipment have been added to the army between 2018 and 2023.

These include China's Light Tank, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A firefighter checks the damage in an event hall following a fatal fire at a wedding celebration, in the district of Hamdaniya in Nineveh province, Iraq yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Over 100 killed in blaze at Iraq wedding party

REUTERS, Mosul

A fire ripped through a packed wedding hall in northern Iraq late on Tuesday, killing more than 100 people in a Christian town that had survived Islamic State occupation as authorities announced an investigation into the blaze.

Fire fighters searched the charred skeleton of the building in Qaraqosh, also known as Hamdaniya, through yesterday morning and bereaved relatives gathered outside a morgue in the nearby city of Mosul, wailing and rocking in distress.

"This was not a wedding. This was hell," said Mariam Khedr, crying and hitting herself as she waited for officials to return the bodies of her daughter Rana Yakoub, 27, and three young grandchildren, the youngest aged just eight months.

Survivors said hundreds of people were at the wedding celebration, which followed an earlier church service, and the fire began about an hour into the event when fireworks ignited a ceiling decoration as the bride and groom danced.

Nineveh province Deputy Governor Hassan al-Allaf told Reuters 113 people had been confirmed dead. The head of the province's Red Crescent branch said the death toll was not final but that it "exceeds hundreds injured and dozens killed".

The fire tore through a large events hall after flares were lit during the celebration, causing a fire in the ceiling, Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari said, according to state media.