

Pollution claims 2.72 lakh lives in one year

Finds 2019 WB environment analysis on Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alarming levels of air pollution, unsafe water, poor sanitation, and exposure to lead caused over 2.72 lakh premature deaths in Bangladesh in 2019.

Environmental degradation also cost the country Tk 92,081 crore, which was 17.6 percent of its GDP that year, according to the Bangladesh Country Environment Analysis of World Bank.

Pollution disproportionately harms the poor, children under five, the elderly, and women, says the report released yesterday.

Addressing an event where the report was launched, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, minister of environment, said combating environmental degradation was a main agenda of the government.

"We admit that there are many environmental problems in our country. The present government has taken a 100 day programme to address the most crucial environmental issues," he said.

Some environmental problems are caused here while others are caused by the developed nations, he said while speaking as the chief guest.

"Development partners should offer grants, not loans, to resolve the environmental degradation caused by climate change."

The World Bank report says household and outdoor air pollution have the most detrimental effect on health, leading to nearly 55 percent of premature deaths, which alone cost around Tk 43,529 crore or 8.32 percent of the GDP in 2019.

RIVER POLLUTION

About 60,000 cubic metres of toxic waste from more than 7,000 factories dumped into Dhaka rivers per day



The Louhajang river in Tangail is choking on toxic waste from factories in BSCIC Industrial Area. The heavily contaminated water is destroying the aquatic biodiversity and making life difficult for the locals. The photo was taken from Khudirampur in Sadar upazila recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS IN 2019

- Cost Tk 4.8-5.6 trillion
- 17.6% of country's GDP lost
- 5.2 billion days of illness

LEAD POISONING

- 30,800 deaths that year
- 29,900 deaths from heart diseases, 900 from kidney diseases
- Children lost nearly 20m IQ points

IMPACT ON FORESTS

The costs of forest loss, agricultural soil nutrient depletion and natural disasters 2.7-5.9% of GDP

"We have seen around the world that when economic growth comes at the cost of the environment, it cannot sustain."

ABDOULAYE SECK
WB Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan

UNSAFE WATER

- Nearly 85% of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities
- Only 48% of the population had safely managed drinking water
- 17% households had arsenic concentrations in drinking water exceeding WHO guidelines

ELECTION EXPENSES

I will recoup Tk 1.26cr no matter what

Says Natore MP Azad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Natore-1 lawmaker Md Abul Kalam Azad has said he will recoup the Tk 1.26 crore he spent on the January 7 national polls even by wrongdoing.

"I have spent Tk 1.26 crore on the election. I'll recoup the amount by any means. I will commit this much wrong. I won't commit any more wrong," he said.

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ICB Islamic Bank in dire straits

It is likely to be merged with a stronger bank soon

MD MEHEDI HASAN

After Padma Bank, ICB Islamic Bank appears to be the next in line to be absorbed by a stronger bank under the central bank's roadmap to clean up the banking sector and bring in corporate governance.

The Shariah based bank, which took shape from the ruins of Oriental Bank in 2008, is struggling to continue its operations on a fully-fledged basis after running into a severe liquidity crisis at the turn of the year.

At the end of 2023, it faced a capital shortfall of Tk 1,823 crore and 87 percent of its total disbursed loans (investment) of Tk 790.4 crore turned bad, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

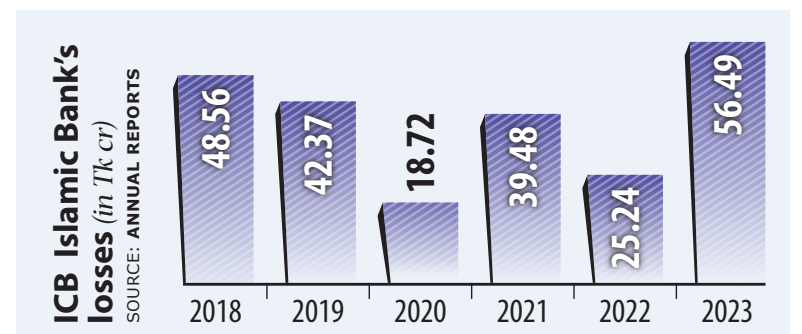
So dire is the situation that the bank has no securities against which it could borrow money from other Islamic banks and the central bank and is paying its employees in phases. The Daily Star has learnt

from BB officials informed with the proceedings.

The BB's Department of Off-site Supervision requested the Banking Regulation and Policy Department

a systemic risk due to its frozen deposits, capital shortfall, high defaulted loans and liquidity crisis," said one of the BB officials.

To ease the fund crisis, the lender



to take corrective measures against the bank as it is practically out of operation due to the liquidity crisis.

"It is likely to be merged with a strong bank under the central bank's Prompt Corrective Action framework soon. The bank is now

on January 31 requested the BB provide Tk 50 crore in collateral-free liquidity support. The plea was turned down two weeks later as ICB Islamic Bank already had Tk 425 crore in liabilities with the central bank.

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Fewer deaths as BSF using non-lethal weapons

Says Hasan Mahmud; teen's body returned

STAR REPORT

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said there were fewer deaths at the border because of the use of non-lethal weapons by the Indian Border Security Force.

"Many more non-lethal weapons are now used than before. That is why many get injured and then return to Bangladesh. Otherwise, the death toll could be higher," he told reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday.

According to rights body Ain O Salish Kendra, 31 Bangladeshis were killed in BSF shootings last year, the highest since 2020 when the number was 47.

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The Ecne-approved government housing project for cleaners in the capital's Gabtoli still remains incomplete. The DNCC mayor in 2019 had announced that it would be completed by 2021. However, it was delayed due to a lack of funds while an extension remains yet to be approved by the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase. With 90 percent of the work already done, it is now expected to be completed in 2025. Four 15-storey residential buildings and a four-storey school building were promised for 784 cleaners, who currently live in small shanties that can be seen just a few feet away from the Tk 284 crore housing project.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SECONDARY SCHOOLS Number of students drops for third year in a row

Shows BANBEIS report for 2023

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of secondary school students has decreased by over 7.23 lakh last year, shows a draft government report.

It also shows the number of students at technical institutions rose by around 36,000, while students in madrasas went up by around 4,000.

Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) unveiled the draft report on education at its office in Nilkhet yesterday.

According to officials, this is the third straight year that the number of secondary school students saw a drop. In 2021, there were 86,528 fewer students than the year before.

The number of students dropped by 40,571 in 2022 and by 7,23,488 in 2023, they added.

"The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the main reasons behind the fall in the number of students," said Sheikh Mohammed Alamgir, chief of the statistics division of BANBEIS, while presenting the report at the programme.

A top official of the education ministry at the programme said many of these students left educational institutions permanently.

"Many parents married their daughters off during the pandemic. Some of them [students] needed to join the workforce," he told The Daily Star.

Due to the pandemic, educational institutions were closed on March 17, 2020, and partially reopened on

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