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Bangladeshis losing 5.5 years to toxic air

Warns study by University of Chicago

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Air pollution is cutting Bangladeshis' average life expectancy by 5.5 years, making it the country's deadliest external health risk, according to a report published yesterday.

The global annual report of the Air Quality Life Index (AQI), published by the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute (EPIC), warns that health toll caused by particulate matter (PM) pollution far exceeds that of tobacco use, malnutrition, or unsafe water. Smoking reduces life by about two years, malnutrition by 1.4.

"Bangladeshis are losing more years of life to dirty air than to smoking or malnutrition," said Michael Greenstone, director of EPIC and creator of the AQI.

The study shows that all of Bangladesh's 166.8 million residents are exposed to fine particulate pollution above both the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline of five micrograms per cubic meter and the national standard of 35.

"Even with full action, it will take years to reduce air pollution. We also need quality fuel, otherwise the air will remain polluted."

SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN, environment adviser

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BORDER KILLINGS BGB chief refutes the self-defence claim of BSF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Border Guard Bangladesh Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzaaman Siddiqui yesterday strongly refuted BSF's claim that BSF personnel only open fire in self defence along the Bangladesh-India border.

Speaking at a joint press briefing after the four-day 56th BGB-BSF DG-level conference in Dhaka, he said border killings was the top issue during the conference.

BSF chief's remark came after Indian Border Security Force DG Daljit Singh Chowdhury defended his force while responding to a reporter's query about border killings, saying that they only fire when attacked by trans-border criminals.



"BSF personnel fight only as a last resort in the face of an imminent threat to their life in self-defence, irrespective of the nationality," BSF DG told reporters.

The BSF DG said the BSF has followed a non-lethal strategy for the last 15 years, but in many cases, criminals launch violent attacks against patrols. "Whenever the criminal activities are thwarted by BSF troops, the criminals respond with abuses, stone-pelting, attacks with sharp-edged lethal weapons, and in complete disregard of

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CHINA VISIT Army chief highlighted Rohingya repatriation



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Support for the repatriation of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals was among the key topics discussed during the Army Chief General Waker Uz-Zaman's official visit to China.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) disclosed the update in a press release yesterday.

General Waker returned home Wednesday night after holding courtesy meetings with senior Chinese civil and military officials, including General Chen Hui, Political Commissar of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Ground Force, to discuss various bilateral issues.

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Sadi pledges to tackle students' problems

GS candidate of Independent Student Unity panel tells Star

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Al Sadi Bhuiyan, a candidate for general secretary from the Independent Student Unity panel in the upcoming Ducus election, said his candidacy is driven by a sense of responsibility toward Dhaka University and its students.

In an interview with The Daily Star, the former president of the Dhaka University Journalists' Association (DUJA) said, "I left behind better career opportunities to contest this election out of responsibility to the university and its students."

He said he was elected cultural affairs secretary of Surja Sen Hall in the 2019 Ducus polls "despite Chhatra League dominance".

"When I first came to campus, I



THE SLOW 'SNAIL-BLAZERS'... A Bradybaenid snail edges carefully along a damp branch in Faticchhori's Hazarikhil, Bradybaenidae, often called Asian land snails, are found across East and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, inhabiting moist forests, scrublands and gardens where shade and humidity keep their delicate bodies from drying out. They are herbivorous grazers, feeding on fresh leaves, decaying vegetation and even fungi, quietly recycling nutrients back into the soil. Beyond their ecological role, Bradybaenid snails have quirky traits -- like producing calcium "love darts" during courtship. Their shells, often beautifully banded, provide camouflage against bark and leaf litter.

PHOTO: TANVIR JUBAIR



Debunking DMP claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police today issued a statement regarding an image showing a protester being restrained, involving Md Masud Alam, Deputy Commissioner of DMP's Ramma Division.

"Recently, an image created using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, has circulated on various media outlets and social media platforms, drawing the attention of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)," the statement said.

"It appears that someone deliberately created this image with the intention of spreading unnecessary confusion among the public. A close examination of the image reveals that it was entirely generated using AI technology and has no basis in reality," said the DMP News report.

DMP News is the online portal of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

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This photograph of a police official muzzling a Buet protester on the capital's Minto Road on Wednesday has gone viral. The DMP dismissed the image as AI-generated, but The Daily Star's photographer, present at the scene, captured the incident as it happened around 2:15pm that day.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Label Gaza conflict as genocide

Hundreds of UN staff pressure rights chief, cite UN's past failure in Rwanda as a warning

AGENCIES

Hundreds of UN staff at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Volker Turk have asked him to explicitly describe the Gaza war as an unfolding genocide, according to a letter seen by Reuters.

The letter sent on Wednesday said the staff consider that the legal criteria for genocide in the nearly two-year Israel-Hamas war in Gaza have been met, citing the scale, scope and nature of violations documented there.

"OHCHR has a strong legal and moral responsibility to denounce acts of genocide," said the letter signed by the Staff Committee on behalf of over 500 employees. "Failing to denounce an unfolding genocide undermines the credibility of the UN and the human rights system itself," it added.

It cited the international body's perceived moral failure for not doing more to stop the 1994 Rwanda genocide that killed more than 1 million people.

There was no immediate response from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Israel has previously rejected accusations of genocide in Gaza, citing its right to self-defence following the deadly October 7, 2023, Hamas attack that killed 1,200 people and resulted in 251 hostages, according to Israeli figures.

The subsequent war in Gaza has killed almost 63,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, while a global hunger monitor says part of it is suffering from famine.

Meanwhile, at least 24 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza overnight and yesterday morning, including a woman and her child in central Gaza's Bureij refugee camp, reports Al Jazeera.

Gaza's Ministry of Health has recorded four more deaths "due to famine and malnutrition" over the past 24 hours, including two children, bringing the total number of hunger-related deaths in the enclave to 317, including 121 children.

No buildings remain standing in the southern part of the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City as the Israeli ground operation launched earlier this month demolished more than 1,500 homes, according to Gaza's civil defence.

Since dawn yesterday, Israeli forces arrested 12 people across the occupied West Bank, targeting journalists, reform activists, and freed prisoners amid intense raids and home invasions, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office (ASRA).

The head of the World Food Programme (WFP) Cindy McCain told Reuters yesterday that more food aid is reaching Gaza but it still remains far from enough to prevent widespread starvation.

ENGINEERING STUDENTS Protests on amid campus shutdowns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BSc engineering students yesterday announced divisional and national rallies from today to press home their three-point demand.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) suspended all undergraduate exams until September 18.

Student leaders declared the programmes at a press briefing at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, in the capital. They said the "complete shutdown" on campuses would continue until their demands were met.

The government has formed two committees to review issues raised by BSc and diploma engineers. However, the students said the committee formed by the government had made no clear decisions over their demands. They also condemned Wednesday's police action on the protesters near InterContinental hotel, which left many injured. Despite the DMP commissioner's apology, no officer has been suspended or investigated, they said.

On Wednesday afternoon, BUET and other engineering students blocked Shahbagh intersection before marching towards the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna. Police intercepted them near Hotel InterContinental, used sound grenades, teargas canisters, water

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Latif Siddique harassed, handed over to cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former minister and expelled Awami League leader Abdul Latif Siddique and Dhaka University Prof Sheikh Hafizur Rahman were detained yesterday after a group identifying themselves as July Fighters harassed the two, among others, during a discussion and handed them over to police.

The discussion, titled "Our Great Liberation War and the Constitution of Bangladesh", was organised by a platform called Mancha 71 at Dhaka Reporters' Auditorium. Dr Kamal Hossain, one of the framers of the constitution and president emeritus of Gono Forum, was expected as chief guest.

The event, scheduled for 10:00am, began an hour late. Soon after Prof Hafizur's speech, the group entered the hall, chanting slogans such as "July weapons, rise again", "Grab the League, fill the jails" and "July fighters, unite and fight".

The group tore the banner and blocked participants inside. Around 12:15pm, they handed over Latif, Hafizur, journalist Manzurul Alam, and at least 15 others to police, who took them away in a van. Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Additional Deputy Commissioner Asaduzzaman was present.

Police later confirmed that Latif Siddique and others were in Detective Branch custody throughout the day. Last night, DB chief Md Shafiqul Islam told this newspaper that a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act would be filed

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