



Air pollution in Dhaka a matter of shame: PM

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday urged people from all walks of life to come forward to protect the environment and forests, calling Dhaka's persistent air pollution a matter of shame for the country.

The capital ranked first or second among the world's most polluted cities for many years, he said at a meeting to review the progress and implementation of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's activities.



"This is a matter of shame for the country," Tarique said, while stressing the need for greater public awareness and collective efforts to build a liveable Bangladesh for future generations.

He urged government officials to take initiatives beyond their assigned duties to protect the environment and forests.

"Allah has given us an opportunity to do something for this country and its people. You may work from nine to five [9am-5pm]. Nobody will say anything if you do nothing beyond that. But if the environment deteriorates, future generations will suffer, because your next generation will also live in this country."

The meeting, held at the ministry's conference room,

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NATURE QUEST



KING OF THE MANGROVES

A saltwater crocodile crawls through shallow water towards a muddy bank in the Sundarbans, Khulna. The world's largest living reptile, it inhabits mangrove swamps, estuaries and rivers across eastern India, Southeast Asia and northern Australia. An excellent swimmer, it can travel long distances at sea. Males can grow over six metres long. Armed with powerful jaws and a muscular tail, this ambush predator feeds on fish, crabs, birds, mammals and occasionally sharks. It can remain almost completely submerged while watching for prey. As an apex predator, it helps maintain ecological balance by regulating prey populations. Although classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, habitat destruction, illegal hunting and human-wildlife conflict continue to threaten its survival. PHOTO: **HABIBUR RAHMAN**

Govt working on new wage board for RMG workers

Move comes ahead of Dec pay review

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government is forming a new wage board within two to three days to recommend a revised pay structure for garment workers, amid demonstrations demanding higher wages.

"The process is ongoing," said a senior official of the Labour and Employment Ministry, requesting anonymity.

Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, president of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation, said the labour ministry had sent him a letter yesterday seeking his opinion and a nomination for a representative on the proposed wage board.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), told The Daily Star that the association had no objection to forming a new wage board for garment workers.

He said the BGMEA had not yet received a letter from the ministry, but one could arrive within two to three days as discussions continued.

Garment workers have been demonstrating in various industrial areas,

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MPO pay hike needs Tk 13,392cr more

Over 6 lakh teachers, employees to benefit; implementation timeline remains uncertain

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

An additional Tk 13,392 crore will be needed to bring 602,359 MPO-enlisted teachers and employees under the new pay scale, according to the National Pay Commission report.

Of the amount, Tk 12,518 crore will be required for salaries and allowances, while the rest will go towards pension support.

Although the government began implementing the new pay scale in four phases last July, allowing government employees to receive revised salaries and arrears this month, the timeline for MPO-enlisted teachers and employees remains uncertain.

A finance ministry official said implementing the revised pay scale for MPO staff took six months in 2015.

"Efforts are underway by both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education to roll out the benefits by this December," the official added.

The government currently spends Tk 19,227 crore annually on MPO-enlisted personnel, including Tk 12,930 crore for secondary schools and colleges, Tk 5,530 crore for madrasas and Tk 767 crore for technical institutions.

Under the Monthly Pay Order system, teachers and employees of non-government educational institutions receive 100 percent of their basic salaries, along with medical and other allowances, through government grants.

- Govt working to roll out benefits by Dec
- Annual MPO expenditure now Tk 19,227cr
- 30,932 institutions under MPO system
- Pay Commission urges inter-ministerial consultations

Last year, their house rent allowance was raised to 15 percent of basic pay from a flat Tk 1,000 per month.

While financially solvent institutions provide additional remuneration from their own funds, most lack the capacity to do so.

Under the proposed pay structure, basic salaries and house rent allowances will increase according to existing grades, levels and subject categories.

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Pay hike demo by RMG workers enters third day

5 factories shut; police use batons, sound grenades to disperse protesters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment workers in Uttara continued their protests for the third consecutive day yesterday, demanding a minimum basic salary of Tk 30,000 and blocking the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, causing severe traffic congestion.

Amid the protests, authorities of five garment factories in the area decided to shut their units indefinitely following three consecutive days of work disruption, said Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

"Owners took the decision in line with the law, as the factories could not operate for the last three days due to the workers' protests," he told The Daily Star.

Workers from several factories took to the highway in the Azampur and Rajlokkhi areas around 10:00am, forcing many commuters to walk to their destinations.

The protesters said rising commodity prices had made it difficult to survive on their current wages, while repeated appeals to the authorities had yielded no results.

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Police step up patrols, surveillance in Dhaka

JS panel reviews crime situation, anti-drug ops

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR *and* **MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN**

Police have increased patrols, set up checkpoints and strengthened intelligence surveillance in Dhaka, alongside regular and special drives to arrest members of teen gangs, extortionists, muggers, and other suspected criminals.

Special drives target teen gangs, extortionists, muggers | Police install CCTV cameras, set up checkpoints | Govt moves to recruit 14,000 more police personnel | 5,381 rape, 2,659 murder cases recorded in Jan-Sept

The measures were presented yesterday before the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs chaired by Zainul Abedin.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed briefed the committee on the activities of law enforcement agencies and the progress made, according to a home ministry press release.

Between January and September, rape cases in Bangladesh soared 30.9 percent year-on-year to 5,381, while murder cases declined 8.7 percent year-on-year to 2,659, according to official statistics placed before the committee.

Police have increased foot, mobile, and motorcycle patrols across Dhaka. CCTV cameras have been installed at important locations, while checkpoints are being used to gather intelligence and monitor suspicious activities.

Regular and special operations are also being conducted to arrest suspected criminals, including those involved in extortion, mugging, drug trafficking and gang activities.

Police have also increased surveillance of known offenders and suspects, while community policing, beat policing and meetings with residents are being used to strengthen crime prevention.

Initiatives have been taken to collect information on house owners and tenants

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A rescuer carries a child during a search operation after a roof collapsed at a school in Peshawar yesterday. At least 27 pupils and a teacher were killed in the incident. PHOTO: **AFP**

IN FOCUS

4 arrested after man beaten to death in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Four people were arrested yesterday over the death of a 21-year-old man who was beaten after being accused of trying to steal from a roadside shop in Chattogram's Bakalia area.

Police recovered the body of Md Emon from beneath a bridge in the Bakalia-Kalpalok residential area on Wednesday afternoon.

Bakalia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Shahinur Alam said Emon was accused of stealing from the shop and was assaulted by a group of people on Tuesday.

"He was beaten severely and died on the spot," the OC said.

Following a murder case filed by Emon's family, police arrested four suspects -- Abdur Rahman Zisan, 21; Yasin Arafat, 23; Md Hasan, 33; and Md Mizanur Rahman, 27.

A video circulating on social media shows Emon with his hands tied, being escorted by several men, some carrying sticks. He is later seen tied up and beaten.

The OC said police were investigating the incident.

KSA executes 2 Bangladeshis for 'immoral act'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia executed two Bangladeshi nationals on Wednesday after convicting them of what authorities described as an "immoral act" inside a mosque in Makkah.

The Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah said it had not been notified of the executions beforehand and had formally sought acknowledgement from Saudi authorities.

"The consulate was not notified by the Ministry beforehand," a mission official told The Daily Star via WhatsApp yesterday.

"In this regard, we have submitted a note verbale to the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting formal acknowledgement of the matter," the official said.

The executed Bangladeshis were identified as Nazerul Islam Abdul Basir and Siti Akhtar, according to a statement issued on October 14 by the Saudi Ministry of Interior and carried by the state-run Saudi Press

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