

Deadly under-the-radar heatwaves ravaging Africa

AFP, Paris

The impacts of extreme heatwaves amplified by climate change are going unrecorded in sub-Saharan Africa, making it nearly impossible to detect patterns and set up early warning systems, researchers said Monday.

While detailed records of hot spells and their aftermath exist for the world's wealthier regions, in Africa scientists and governments are mostly flying blind in assessing the damage to human health and economies, the

researchers reported in the journal Nature Climate Change.

"Both real-world observations and climate modelling show Sub-Saharan Africa as a hotspot for heatwave activity," said lead author Luke Harrington, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute.

"But the consequences of these heatwaves are not being recorded," he told AFP. "It is as if they haven't happened, but we know they have."

Fraudsters like Shahed

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Asaduzzaman said he would ask his party leaders to ensure a thorough verification before anyone got a place in any committee.

The home minister said Shahed was always looking for ways to cheat and as part of his deception, he used to take pictures with important persons at social events.

"He used those photographs for his scheme of cheating."

He continued, "Shahed came forward regarding the coronavirus treatment. But it was not understood [by others] at the time that his intention was to cheat. I have admitted four or five patients to his hospital. But it is now understood that cheating was his intention."

If the health ministry wants, the home ministry would launch a campaign against all hospitals violating rules and regulations, he

said.

Shahed became an important figure in television talk shows, which was also part of his deception, he said, adding, "Our law enforcement agencies are efficient now. We didn't let him deceive for long. We caught him."

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the government would continue the ongoing anti-graft drive against corruption and irregularities.

"No matter how long you hide your face behind a mask, you will not be spared," he told a press briefing after meeting a Japanese delegation at the secretariat.

Wrongdoers have no political identity and party, they will be brought to justice, he added.

The arrests of Regent and JKG officials prove the government's tough stance on irregularities, he added.

Innovation key to overcoming crisis

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summit in 14 panels. Speakers from top corporates to development sector leaders and media personalities from the entertainment industry participated in the webinar.

"I think adaptability is the most precious thing I achieved during this pandemic. There is no alternative of soft skills," Asif Saleh, executive director of Brac, said.

From the beginning of the pandemic, Brac decided to stay on the field to serve the people.

"We ensured safety and security of the employees and then we started making people aware. We now hold a number of virtual meetings to keep employees motivated. Collaboration played a big role to reach the people. Nothing is possible alone," he added.

Echoing the same view, Yasir Azman, CEO of Grameenphone Ltd,

"We were physically distant but socially connected. The way we were collaborating with each other was never seen earlier. This pandemic brought together all that is a good for society," said Yasir Azman, CEO of Grameenphone Ltd.

He said when the pandemic started, they thought of bringing more people in the digital world, connect more people to each other.

"As a responsible entity, we thought and worked from the beginning of the pandemic to reach more people through various collaborations."

Public, private and social organisations worked together to meet the social needs and address the problems, he added.

Tanvir A Mishuk, managing director of Nagad, said soon after the Covid-19 outbreak, various initiatives, including special medical packages, was announced for the employees to keep them motivated.

"Nagad, in collaboration with the government and garments factories, sent money directly to the people. We started with farmers and other such professions," he added.

Arif R Hossain, co-founder of Aamrai Bangladesh, said there was no protocol set to work in a pandemic.

Pathao co-founder

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The alarm was raised after one of Saleh's siblings became concerned after not hearing from him for a day.

She went to the seventh-floor unit to check on her brother only to find him brutally murdered, reports Daily Mail Online.

The electric saw used to cut up the body was still plugged in. The body parts reportedly had been sorted into different plastic bags.

An elevator surveillance camera may have caught the victim's last moments, sources said. It shows the victim getting into the elevator on Monday, followed quickly by a second man, dressed in a suit, wearing gloves, a hat and a mask over his face.

As soon as he walked out into his home, he fell to the floor after either likely being shot or stunned.

The police suspect that the murder was carried out by a professional. Saleh's LinkedIn profile reveals how he, a former website developer, became a venture capitalist.

He has also described his story as an entrepreneur in a series of posts on Medium.com. He got his start creating a prank calling website, then moved on to create Pathao, one of the most successful ride-sharing ventures in Bangladesh, around 2016.

Most recently, he started Gokada, a motorcycle ride-sharing company in

Lagos, Nigeria, but the company faced setbacks and mass layoffs after Lagos banned companies like his in January.

"We are shocked and saddened to hear the reports of the death of Fahim Saleh, one of the founding members of the Pathao team," said Hussain M Elius, co-founder and CEO of Pathao.

"Fahim believed in the potential for technology to transform lives in Bangladesh and beyond. He saw the promise in us when all we had was a common purpose and a shared vision. He was, and will forever remain, an incredible inspiration for Pathao and our entire ecosystem," he added.

Fahim was born in 1986. His father Saleh Uddin is from Chattogram and his mother is from Noakhali. Fahim studied information systems at Bentley University in the US.

He came to Dhaka in 2014 and launched Pathao and became famous as a new generation entrepreneur. Fahim owns another ride sharing app company in Colombia. He also expanded his business to several other countries, including Indonesia.

Fahim also founded a startup incubator in Dhaka called Hackhouse, from which Pathao arose. The venture capital he co-founded, called Adventure Capital, gave seed funding to a Dhaka-based startup aiming to revolutionise the public bus transit system, called Jatri in early 2019.



Samiya, aged 7, knows how to steer the cart to wherever she and her mother Mariam, pushing from behind, have to deliver the barrels of water. The single mother and her daughter supply the barrels to roadside shops at Mawa terminal in Munshiganj. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shahed captured

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belt. Parts of a burka he was in had mud stains.

A video captured possibly soon after the arrest shows some locals trying to assault him. One of them is heard saying, "What if we all beat him."

Then, some varied versions of the arrest started to surface.

One versions was that Shahed was hiding in a drain wearing a burka before being held. Another was he was on a boat when Rab members apprehended him.

Rab disclosed details of the arrest at a press briefing at its headquarters in the capital in the afternoon.

Though Shahed always tried to maintain a clean image, he is basically a fraud and a cunning person. He is greedy, Rab Director General Chowdhury Abullah-Al Mamun told reporters at the briefing.

After his arrest, he was taken to an Uttara flat, which was being used as one of his offices. He was wearing a helmet and a flak jacket.

Rab members raided the flat and claimed to have recovered Tk 1.46 lakh in fake notes. They claimed that they learnt about it after the arrest.

At the briefing, Rab claimed that Shahed was arrested along with a firearm.

After the arrested, Rab members sent some journalists a photograph in which Shahed is seen carrying a firearm.

Asked whether Rab acted responsibly by capturing the photo while Shahed still had the weapon, Mamun said he did not see the photo and that he would look into it.

He said while they were looking for Shahed, he changed his location multiple times. He stayed in Cox's Bazar and Cumilla before going to Satkhira. He also came back to Dhaka.

For travelling, he sometimes used his personal vehicles while sometimes buses and trucks, he said.

Shahed has got a rich collection of photos. He has been photographed with the president, different past and incumbent ministers, top AL



This photo of Shahed being caught was doing the rounds on social media yesterday. Many expressed incredulity towards the circumstances of his arrest.

and BNP leaders, top journalists, and high officials of the government and law enforcement agencies.

The Rab DG said he took the photos to use them to trick others.

Asked how a person like him even got a chance to meet high-profile politicians and government high-ups and whether there was any breach in security, Mamun avoided a direct reply, but said, "That's why he has faced the consequences."

Once a close aide to BNP leaders, Shahed made his way into Awami League politics. He managed an accreditation card as the editor and publisher of a daily.

He frequently claimed to be a political analyst, a regular talk-show panelist, a retired army officer and a high official of the Prime Minister's Office.

Asked whether any influential person patronised him, the Rab DG said it would be looked into by the investigation officer of the case.

According to Rab, Regent hospital authorities, including Shahed, so far issued more than 10,000 Covid-19 test reports.

Around 4,200 samples were tested at different government labs, but they threw away the rest of the samples,

prepared fake reports and gave those to patients without even testing.

The hospital authorities took Tk 3,500 for each test, meaning they embezzled more than Tk 3.5 crore, despite having agreement with the government to conduct tests and provide treatment free of cost, Rab said.

The DGHS signed the MoU with Regent in March, turning it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, in a ceremony attended by the health minister. The DGHS was aware that the hospital's licence had expired six years ago.

Ever since the matter came to light, the ministry and the DGHS have been passing the buck to each other.

Meanwhile, Shahed and Regent Group Managing Director Masud Parvez, who was arrested in Gazipur on Tuesday night, were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 5:30pm yesterday for medical check-ups.

"They had an X-ray and ECG. They are in good condition," said a doctor at the emergency unit of the hospital.

Later, the two were taken to the office of Detective Branch (DB) of police on the city's Mintoo Road. They were then handed over to the investigation officer of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

In a press statement yesterday, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said the mindless forgery by Regent and JKG Health Care on Covid-19 testing, which has surfaced lately, was just the tip of the iceberg of unabated corruption in the country's health sector.

The graft watchdog said feeling complacent about the arrest or legal action against the visible culprits would not result in any long-term solution to the actual problem.

Apart from ensuring punishment of the arrestees, TIB demanded identifying through credible probe the influential quarter whose concerted efforts led to such corruption over people's life and death, and ensure their exemplary punishment.

5 more die with Covid symptoms

STAR REPORT

At least five people died after showing coronavirus symptoms in Cumilla and Chandpur in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Four of them breathed their last at Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

The victims were admitted there with fever, cold, and breathing problems. They were aged between 60 and 96, said Dr Mojibur Rahman, director of the hospital.

With the five, 222 patients have so far died at the hospital. Of them, 186 breathed their last with Covid-19 symptoms and 36 from coronavirus since April.

There are 113 patients at the Covid-19 unit. Forty-nine of them are coronavirus positive and 64 have symptoms.

In another incident, a 40-year-old man died after showing Covid-19 symptoms at the isolation unit of Chandpur General Hospital around 8:00am yesterday.

The victim from Haziganj upazila was admitted to the hospital with fever and breathing difficulties on Tuesday night, said Sujaudaula, a physician of the hospital.

His samples were collected for tests and he was cremated following the IEDCR rules, he added.

[Our Cumilla and Chandpur correspondents contributed to this report]

'GUNFIGHT' BETWEEN GANGS 'Drug peddler' killed in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An alleged drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" among two drug trading groups in Joypurhat Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The dead is Rubel Hossain Dalim, 35, son of Nabibar Uddin, of Khaspohonanda village in Joypurhat Sadar upazila.

He was accused in eight different cases including of drug peddling, abduction and murder, said police.

Shahriar Khan, officer-in-charge of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station, claimed that they rushed to Bhutipara-Kadamtoli bridge on information that a "gunfight" was taking place between two groups of drug peddlers.

The "gunfight" was initiated following a brawl of money distribution among the groups, he further said.

As soon as police reached the area, the drug peddlers fled the scene. While searching the spot, policemen found the bullet ridden body of Dalim.

It was then sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital morgue for autopsy and handed over to the family members after finishing the procedure, he added.

Police also claimed to have recovered a pistol and different types of drugs from the spot.

Meanwhile, relatives of the dead alleged that a group of plainclothes men picked up Dalim in a microbus from a nearby bazar to his home on Tuesday night and placed him on "crossfire".

Contacted, Salam Kabir, superintendent of Joypurhat police, denied the allegation and said Dalim was a notorious criminal and got killed in a "gunfight" between two groups of drug peddlers.

MoU signed

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clinics) Aminul Hasan visited the hospital before signing of the memorandum of understanding, the source added.

The DG has submitted all documents related to his claims over signing of the MoU. He made it clear in the explanation that Health Minister Zahid Maleque was not involved in the process, said sources.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Ashadul Islam over the phone for comment as he did not answer calls.

The DGHS had inked the MoU with Regent in March 21, turning it into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, in a ceremony attended by the health minister and many high officials.

The DGHS was aware that the hospital's licence had expired six years ago.

On July 7, a Rab mobile court raided Regent's Uttara branch and sealed it off on charges of issuing fake Covid-19 testing certificates and illegally charging patients fees for treatment.

Amid widespread criticism, the DGHS on July 11 said it was the health ministry's higher authorities who asked the directorate to sign the deal.

Irked at this, the ministry issued a letter to the DGHS DG asking him to explain in three working days what his office meant by saying "directed by higher authorities".

Ashadul Islam is now the senior secretary at the planning ministry.

Global trials raise vaccine hope

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discharged without "serious adverse events, health complaints, complications or side effects".

The results of the trials "allow us to speak with confidence about the safety and good tolerability of the vaccine", it said in a statement.

The defence ministry did not say whether the vaccine was in fact effective but a doctor working on the trials said the volunteers were now protected against the coronavirus, reports AFP.

"Their immunity is working well, antibodies are being created, they are protected against the coronavirus," researcher Svetlana Volchikhina said in a video released by the defence ministry.

OXFORD VACCINE Positive news on initial trials of the University of Oxford's potential Covid-19 vaccine that has been licensed to AstraZeneca could be announced as soon today, ITV's political editor Robert Peston said, citing a source.

The potential vaccine is already in large-scale Phase III human trials to assess whether it can protect against Covid-19, but its developers have yet to report Phase I results which would show whether it is safe and whether or not it induces an immune response.

The developers of the vaccine said this month they are encouraged by the immune response they have seen in trials so far and were expecting to be able to publish Phase 1 data by the end of July.

The data are expected to be published by The Lancet medical journal.

A spokeswoman for Oxford University told Reuters the team was awaiting confirmation from a scientific journal of a publication date and time for the data, but gave no further details. "(We) are not able to confirm when it will be released," she said.

'GOOD NEWS'

Moderna was the first to start human testing of a vaccine for the novel coronavirus on March 16, 66 days after the genetic sequence of the virus was released.

Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, whose researchers developed Moderna's vaccine candidate, called the results "good news," noting that the study found no serious adverse events and the vaccine produced "reasonably high" levels of virus-killing or neutralising antibodies.

"If your vaccine can induce a response comparable with natural infection, that's a winner," Fauci said in a telephone interview. "That's why we're very pleased by the results."

Moderna shares jumped more than 15% in after-hours trading on Tuesday.

The US government is supporting Moderna's vaccine with nearly half a billion dollars and has chosen it as one of the first to enter large-scale human trials. A successful vaccine could be a turning point for Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Moderna, which has never had a licensed product.

Moderna's shot, mRNA-1273, uses ribonucleic acid (RNA) - a chemical messenger that contains instructions

for making proteins. When injected into people, the vaccine instructs cells to make proteins that mimic the outer surface of the coronavirus, which the body recognises as a foreign invader, and mounts an immune response against.

The results released Tuesday involved three doses of the vaccine, tested in groups of 15 volunteers aged 18-55 who got two shots, 28 days apart. The groups tested 25, 100 or 250 micrograms of the vaccine.

Adverse events after the second dose occurred in seven of the 13 volunteers who got the 25-microgram dose, all 15 participants who received the 100 microgram dose and all 14 who got the 250 microgram dose. In the highest-dose group, three patients had severe reactions such as fever, chills, headache or nausea. One of these had a fever of 103.28 Fahrenheit (39.6 C).

"We didn't see any events that are characterised as serious adverse events," said lead author Dr Lisa Jackson of Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle, referring to reactions that require hospitalisation or result in death.

In June, Moderna said it selected the 100-microgram dose for its late-stage study to minimise adverse reactions.

At that dose, Moderna said the company is on track to deliver about 500 million doses per year, and possibly up to 1 billion doses per year, starting in 2021, from the company's internal US manufacturing site and strategic collaboration with Swiss drugmaker Lonza.