

100 die in India as mercury rises to 50° Celsius

NEW DELHI, June 8: At least 100 people have died across India's Gangetic Plain as a severe heat wave raised temperatures to nearly 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in many areas, the Press Trust of India said today, reports AFP.

Sixteen more heat victims died in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh where the mercury rose to 49.5 degrees Celsius (121.1 Fahrenheit) in the town of Banda for the third straight day, the highest continuous reading in 50 years, it said.

Twenty-five people have died in Uttar Pradesh, 37 in the desert state of Rajasthan, 11 in western Maharashtra, 20 in eastern Orissa province, three in central Madhya Pradesh and four in two other northern states, PTI said.

Unofficial sources, however, said the toll was much higher with many deaths in rural areas going unreported. The scorching temperatures

in northern India are often combined with scarce water supplies in many areas, including New Delhi and Rajasthan. The monsoon rains, forecast in many areas, including New Delhi and Rajasthan. The monsoon rains, forecast by end-June, are expected to provide relief.

New Delhi experienced the hottest day of the year today when the temperature touched 45.6 degrees Celsius (114.8 Fahrenheit).

Meanwhile, strong overnight winds fanned forest fires spreading across several thousand hectares of the Himalayan foothills in northern India, officials were quoted as saying today.

Forest officials in Uttar Pradesh state said the easterly breeze had impeded fire-fighting efforts in the Garhwal and Kumaon ranges where some 45,000 acres (18,000 hectares) of woodland had been affected.

Japanese minister due tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

Hakuo Yanagisawa, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, arrives in Dhaka tomorrow on a three-day visit.

Hakuo Yanagisawa will be accompanied by three officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Japanese Vice-Minister will exchange views with Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Minister for Finance Saifur Rahman and Special Envoy to the Prime Minister Moshed Khan. He will also pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

10000 join BNP

Engineer Nurul Haq Sikder, younger brother of Shaheed Siraj Sikder, along with more than 10,000 people from Shariatpur district, joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party yesterday, reports UNB.

The freshers include leaders and workers of different political parties, elite and elected representatives of local bodies.

Sikder presented a bouquet to Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, expressing total support and allegiance to the 19-point programme of the ruling party and its leadership.



Chief guest Works and Housing Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah speaking at the Daily Star-BUET roundtable on 'Save Dhaka' in the city yesterday. Also seen, from right, are: Prof Meer Mobashsher Ali, Dhaka Mayor Mohammad Hanif, acting BUET Vice Chancellor Prof Dipak Kanti Das and Mahfuz Anam (far left), Editor of The Daily Star and moderator of the roundtable. — Star photo

City needs single, broad-based authority

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Rafiqul Islam Miah said about 15 lakh people are earning their livelihood from pulling rickshaws and although the three-wheeler is a major traffic problem it cannot just be wished away unless alternative employment opportunities are found for those people.

He said at the present prices, one is required to pay 15 to 50 lakh taka for a personal house in the city and upto now no agency or expert has come up with a suitable idea for low-cost housing facility.

Rafiqul Islam Miah said his ministry would seriously consider the recommendations put forward at the Roundtable and, if necessary, those would be placed before Parliament.

Mayor of Dhaka city, Mohammad Hanif suggested the formation of an independent, coordinated body to oversee all development works in the city. "It should be run either by an elected mayor or any other competent body," he said.

The mayor pointed out that city dwellers were frustrated by the frequent and repeated digging up of roads and lanes by different government bodies like T & T, Desa, Wasa and Titas Gas without any coordination. He asserted that only an independent coordinating body can save the city from imminent disaster and continued suffering of city dwellers. "Let the different bodies excavate the roads, say for six months — from July to December. Then the Corporation can repair and carpet the road and lanes and keep them in proper order for a stretch of four to five years. This would not only save precious public funds but also avoid public distress," he said.

Mayor Hanif stated, "I never intend to blame the government. But how do you react when a Japanese grant of Taka 3 crore 70 lakh for mosquito eradication in the city is withheld?"

He also asked how is it that the revenue contribution for smaller cities were increased by the government while the allocation for the largest city was reduced by Tk 9 crore.

The mayor admitted that trade licences were provided for commercial activities in residential areas. "This is something that I inherited. I have not issued any new ones."

He said he had forwarded two suggestions to the concerned ministry. The first was to provide demarcated space or spaces for holding public meetings while the other was for giving some land for rehabilitating the roadside hawkers.

The mayor welcomed suggestions regarding privatisation of garbage collection and dumping. "We are ready to give it to private parties, if that is viable."

Prof Muntasir Mamun of the Department of History, Dhaka University, strongly suggested that more than 6000 acres of prime land under the Dhaka cantonment and the Peelkhana should be vacated to make room for the city's expansion. "No feasible solution to the land crisis in the city can be thought of without relocating these two areas."

Professor Meer Mobashsher Ali, Head of the BUET's Architecture Department strongly opposed Rajuk's policy of land acquisition. He said land should not be acquired except for building roads. Lands are acquired from the poor to be allotted to the rich.

"Rajuk should pay the market price for the land, and not acquire it," Chairman of Rajuk, Humayun Khadem, said that two city areas — Tikatuly and Maghbaraz — would be earmarked for high-rise buildings. There was also a plan to build ten major roads and widening of 1000 lanes. He outlined 10 development projects of the city, including several housing schemes.

Prof Nazrul Islam, Director of the Centre for Urban Studies, Dhaka University, criticised Rajuk for not consulting with local planners and experts. He said, "eighty per cent of the city's population comprises the poor. No plan can succeed without taking the poor into consideration. But all past and present plans have ignored the poor."

Abdul Momen, President of the Real Estate and Housing Association, felt that the horizontal development of Dhaka should stop and vertical development should be emphasised, meaning more high-rise buildings.

Kazi Faruque, Executive Director of Proshika, observed that the existing policies and plans, in fact, tend to exclude the poor. He said that the poor are not nomads. They always want to settle down but are prevented from doing so by constant eviction and the lack of pro-poor policies. He said urban credit programmes, educational programmes are all very successful because of the positive approach of the urban poor.

Pierre Lindel-Mills, Resident Representative of the World Bank, remarked that without proper planning and management of the capital city, the country cannot make progress. "As the political, commercial, cultural and intellectual centre of the country, Dhaka city must lead the way for better urban management," he said.

Lindel-Mills suggested that a series of workshops be held on the proposed Dhaka Master Plan. He said greater participation may take six to 12 months but a master plan prepared with greater popular participation would be appreciated by all.

The World Bank Rep. also remarked: "At present there is no single body or authority which is responsible for the development of Dhaka. This creates confusion of leadership and management."

The World Bank chief said, his organisation is ready to provide between Tk 500 to Tk 1000 crore for urban development provided there are some concrete infrastructural plans.

Dr P. Rana of the Asian Development Bank insisted that Dhaka's problem should be tackled now. "Only three to four per cent of all foreign assistance, since 1972, has been used in the urban areas," he said.

An enthusiastic Rana commented: "The theme of the Roundtable should not be understood as to Save Dhaka from the Poor rather, to Save Dhaka for the Poor."

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed, Co-ordinator, the Post-Graduate Centre of the BUET's Department of Architecture, felt that Dhaka has become an unsafe city. Citizens, he said, are held hostage by criminal activities. Safety of the citizens, and security for all sorts of commercial and social activities is a precondition for healthy development of Dhaka.

Moderator of the Roundtable, Mahfuz Anam, said The Daily Star would continue its effort to provide a forum to debate and highlight the problems of the capital. "The combined efforts of conscious citizens can definitely provide the impetus to the authorities to improve the living conditions of the capital city."

He said The Daily Star's campaign to SAVE DHAKA was intended to create public awareness and trigger community actions to improve the city. "The Daily Star wants to become the vehicle for all sorts of public action to improve Dhaka."

Deepak Kanti Das, acting Vice Chancellor of BUET, in his welcome address, thanked the participants and hoped the Roundtable would contribute towards making Dhaka a better city to live in.

The Midnight File

N-related material bound for Iraq seized

NEW YORK, June 8: Federal authorities seized seven tons of zirconium — vital for the operation of nuclear reactors — that was destined for Iraq, US Customs said Thursday. It was the largest seizure ever of nuclear-related material in the United States, the agency said. Three people were arrested, said Customs spokesman Pat Jones. He said the material came from Ukraine and was headed for Iraq, reports AP.

Efforts on to open BUET soon: Acting VC

By Staff Correspondent

The authorities of the Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET) say they were forced to close the university sine die on Sunday to avert further trouble on the campus following the murder of a student.

The acting Vice Chancellor of the BUET Prof Dipak Kanti Das, at a press briefing yesterday said, "We are assessing the situation and trying to resume classes as early as possible."

The unfortunate incident had hindered the efforts of the authorities to remove session jam from the university, he said.

Ahmed Ullah, a final year student of civil engineering was shot dead on the campus on Saturday morning.

12 killed

College Hospital.

Identity of those killed instantly could not be known immediately. Among the three who died at DMCH, two were identified as Fatema, 50, and Abeda, 45.

Ten of the injured were admitted to the DMCH in a critical condition while 30 others to different hospitals in Narsingdi and Narayanganj.

In another road accident, five people were killed and 10 others injured when a truck rammied into a road side passenger-shed in Madhukhali thana on Magura-Faridpur highway.

Witnesses said the accident occurred at Kamarkhali bus stand at 7 pm.

They said four people died on the spot while Sarna Biswas, 20, succumbed to her injuries at Magura Sadar Hospital.

US pilot

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some three and a half hours after O'Grady finally made voice contact, US Defense Secretary William Perry said.

Two Marine CH-53 helicopters were dispatched from the USS Kearsarge in the Adriatic, and landed about 50 yards from O'Grady, who ran to one of them, said NATO commander Adm. Leighton Smith.

Brig Gen. (Sel.) Marty Berndt, who helped coordinate the rescue and was aboard the helicopter, hailed O'Grady aboard.

Wage Board

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Acting president of BFUJ Manjur Ahmed, Secretary General Amanullah Kabir, DUJ President Zahurul Huq and general secretary Ruhul Amin Gazi, president of Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Press Sramik Federation Fzle Imam, vice president Md Wares Ali, president of Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Karmachari Federation Jahangir Kabir and secretary general Mir Mozammel Hossain attended the meeting.

Secretary of the Information Ministry Dr Ekram Hossain, Principal Information Officer Abdur Rahim, and senior officials of the ministry were also present.

BSS adds: Leaders of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) yesterday hailed government's decision to constitute the fifth Wage Board.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Shahjahan Miah, President and General Secretary respectively of BFUJ, expressed the hope that after constituting a full fledged wage board comprising representatives of the owners, journalists, press workers and general employees, "the authorities will immediately announced dearness allowance for the industry and take steps for implementation of Wage Board Award."

"We also demanded 60 per cent dearness allowance in the newspaper industry", they leaders said in a statement.

Chid prostitutes

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created the trade, but growing numbers of tourists from industrialised countries are now travelling to developing world for the purpose of sexually exploiting children," the report pointed out.

The report further said few children, even those running away from unhappy and violent homes, readily become prostitutes. Many are kidnapped, sold by relatives or tricked into brothel captivity by promises of legitimate employment. Girls employed as domestic servants may become prostitutes after years of sexual abuse by their employers.

After the killing, a section of students damaged and burnt a large number of important documents at the Institute of Appropriate Technology, the Institute of Flood Control and the Drainage Research and Centre for Continuing Education.

Prof Das said property worth about Tk 12 lakh was damaged. The students damaged window panes, furniture and administrative offices of at least four residential halls, the council building and other academic buildings of the university, he said.

He urged all to help restore normalcy on the campus.

In reply to a question whether the students went on the rampage to force the authorities to rescind the terms examinations scheduled to begin on Sunday, a BUET teacher said, "It might be."

Deans of different faculties, provosts, the registrar and other senior officials of BUET were present at the press briefing.

Hasina

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history continued under government patronisation.

She accused the government of turning the electronic media into a party propaganda machine and betraying the joint declaration of the three alliances signed during the anti-Ershad movement and reiterated the demand for autonomy of radio and television.

The AL President also demanded that radio and television channels be allowed in the private sector to project the truth, including corruption and misuse, and real history of the liberation war.

The meeting was attended, among others, by party leaders Abubus Samad Azad, Abdul-Jalil, Prof Abu Sayeed, Abdul Mannan, Nurul Fazal Bulbul, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan and Mrinal Kanti Das.

Shipping

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mediately brought from Mongla port and all delinquent containers lying un-stuffed for months should be emptied, the meeting recommended.

It further suggested that empty containers which have overflowed the storage capacity of the container yard be allowed to be removed by the shipping lines to private stack-yard and the permission, in this regard, should be given on the strength of a letter of undertaking from the shipping lines to the Customs authority without requiring bank guarantee.

The BGMEA said that delay in release of containers was caused primarily due to inadequacy of modern mechanised handling facilities at the port.

Moudud

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statement Tuesday, condemned Moudud's comments against Ershad. He termed the comments and observations "fictitious and fabricated with some ill-purpose."

Earlier, acting Chairman of the JP Mizanur Rahman told newsmen that he would give his reactions after reading the book.

Meanwhile, quoting JP Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju, UNB reported that Moudud had expressed regrets that his book had embarrassed the party and hurt the sentiments of innumerable JP leaders and workers throughout the country.

Asked if there was any word on the matter from Ershad himself, Manju told UNB that as far as he knew, there has been no communication with Ershad yet.

When contacted over telephone for his comments about the controversy created by his book, Moudud told The Daily Star that those who were giving their reactions on the book, should first read the entire book. "Otherwise, making comments for propaganda purposes by quoting one or two lines from a chapter or two, taken out of context, will be doing a great injustice to the book," he said. "I find various newspapers are making comments on isolated observations without going into the substance of book. It seems that instead of the main aspects of the book, some peripheral, insignificant and irrelevant words or phrases have become more important to the press," he added.

Tk 12100 cr ADP okayed

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cent with greater mobilisation of internal resources, including self-financing by different organisations.

The 1995-96 ADP will focus on poverty alleviation, reduction of illiteracy and lay emphasis on social sectors. Education got the highest allocation while funds for women welfare and food for education programme will double.

Tk 2213 crore, including a Tk 1108 crore local currency component, was allocated for different sub-sectors (such as rural development, social welfare, women and youth development, labour and manpower, agriculture and health) relating to poverty alleviation activities.

The allocation for the poverty alleviation programmes, a cornerstone of the government's development strategy, is 20 per cent of the total allocation.

A total of Tk 1605 crore, including Tk 515 crore in project aid, has been earmarked for education sector, which is 14 per cent of the sectoral allocation in the proposed ADP.

The amount for the sector in the revised development budget of 1994-95 is Tk 1553 crore. The highest priority has been given to universal primary and mass education in order to enhance literacy rate and strengthen the basic structure of the education system, according to the summary.

Around 56 per cent of the development allocation for the education sector went to universal primary and mass education sub-sector.

Steps have been taken to introduce vocational courses for the first time at the SSC level and computer course in HSC level in some selected educational institutions for rapid expansion of vocational training.

The meeting noted that the results of Food for Education Programme had already been reflected through increased enrolment and decreased dropout rate, with a sign of expansion of education.

An amount of Tk 290 crore has been allocated for the education-incentive programme in the 1995-96 development budget. The allocation was Tk 150 crore in 1994-95.

The Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge project, country's biggest ever development scheme, has been given Tk 1135 crore or 10 per cent of the total ADP allocation to ensure its completion on schedule.

Tk 516 crore has been allocated to rural electrification programme. It was Tk 507 crore in the outgoing ADP.

The oil, gas and mineral resources sector has been allocated Tk 559 crore, keeping an eye to special investment in the hardrock and coal extraction projects.

Tk 2424 crore, including Tk 1108 crore in local currency, has been allocated to agriculture, rural development and water resources sectors. The figure is 22 per cent of the sectoral allocation.

Measures have been taken in the ADP for expansion of the agriculture sector, including crop diversification, seed development, non-traditional fertiliser and modern agri-technology, and for integrated water, fertiliser, pesticide and seed management as well as development of fisheries and livestock, and conservation of ecological balance and sustainable development.

An amount of Tk 841 crore or 8 per cent of total ADP size went for rural development sector. Different projects have been outlined for supply of water in rural areas and hygienic sanitation system. Tk 674 crore or 6 per cent of ADP was allocated for the sector.

An allocation of Tk 220 crore has been made for voter registration and providing identity cards to all voters to ensure free and fair elections.

A salient feature of the development programme for 1995-96 is its structural flexibility.

Adequate lump allocation were made in the programme to finance various projects with special importance, emerged from natural calamity or unforeseen reasons.

The requirements can also be met by refixing inter-sector and inter-project priorities and restructuring allocations, after review at different stages.

The Prime Minister expressed her satisfaction over the 77 per cent implementation of the current year's ADP till May.

She directed all concerned officials to ensure further increase of ADP implementation and gear up supervision and monitoring of the development projects.

Welcoming a proposal for promoting the 'Grameen chek' and 'Dhaka chek' the Prime Minister said promotional steps would be taken in this regard.

State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan delivered the welcome address in the NEC meeting while Planning Commission Secretary Dr Shah Mohammad Farid shed light on various characteristics of the proposed ADP.

Almost all the cabinet members, including Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Housing and Public Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah and Shipping Minister MK Anwar spoke in the meeting.



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina speaking at a seminar in connection with the 'Buddha Purnima' at the Shishu academy auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo.

FM holds meetings

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drew the attention of the envoys to the proposals made by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh at the recently held social summit in Copenhagen.

He told the envoys that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia attached great importance to the need for exchange of views between the leaders of the G-7 countries and developing countries in order to effectively implement the programme of action adopted in the Copenhagen summit.

He informed them that in her letter, the Prime Minister had requested the leaders of the G-7 countries to start the process of interaction as soon as possible as per her proposal.

The foreign minister also handed over a letter of the Prime Minister addressed to the UN Secretary General to Resident Representative of UNDP here Eimi Watanabe when he called on Mostafizur Rahman.

Saifur for plan of action to preserve rainy season water

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Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday called for a pragmatic and comprehensive plan of action for the preservation of rainy season water for its use in dry season, reports BSS.

Inaugurating a symposium on 'water resources development and management in Bangladesh' at the auditorium of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Centre (BARC) in the city, the finance minister said such a plan of action must be harmonized on the basis of soil, human and water resources of the country.

Organised by the Bangladesh Association for the Advancement of Science, the inaugural session was presided over by its president Dr M A Wazed Miah.

Minister of State for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan and general secretary of the Association Prof M M Haque also spoke.

Recommendations

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sectors to work as a watchdog group. Such a council would approve major projects, stop those which have negative impact and promote democratic culture in planning:

4) Launch a massive civic awareness programme so that each and every inhabitant can participate in the running of the city. All information about the city's development should be made available to the city dwellers;

5) Hold public debate on the proposed national housing policy;

6) Policy of acquisition of land and eviction without rehabilitation should be abandoned and a comprehensive land use plan be formulated;

7) Set up an urban-poor bank to allow the poor to save and have access to credit;

8) Youth groups and students should be involved in the city cleanliness drives. They should be encouraged to learn about environment issues;

9) Air and noise pollution should be checked; and

10) Policy for solid waste management should be formulated. Privatisation of the garbage collection process should be examined.

Manzur murder

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The investigators claimed that they interrogated the former army chief on the basis of information gathered from the arrested army personnel.

Former BDR chief Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdul Latif, Lt Col Shamsur Rahman and Major Kazi Emdadul Huq are now detained in different jails in connection with the case.

Gen Latif and Col Rahman were senior officials at the time while Major (then a captain) Emdad was sent to Hat-hazari thana to take custody of Gen Manzur following his arrest by the police on June 2, 1981.