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Hot spell to run until April 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The heat wave is likely to continue until a nor'wester along with rainfall sweeps through the country between April 23 and 26, meteorology department officials said yesterday.

The heat wave, combined with persistent load-shedding, has paralysed normal life in the city and businesses in the northern districts. People across the country, especially in the cities, are struggling to cope with the scorching heat in absence of monsoon rain.

"The weather trend this year suggests that a nor'wester might hit during this course of time," Sujit Kumar Dev Sharma, the assistant director of the meteorological department said.

A westerly system now exists above Meghalaya, Arunachal and

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People pay Tk 6,796cr in bribes a year

TIB survey finds the sum goes to 25 service sector entities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People pay corrupt officials and employees of 25 service sector institutions an estimated Tk 6,796 crore a year in bribes, according to Transparency International Bangladesh, a chapter of the Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog.

The amount accounts for roughly 2 percent of Bangladesh's GDP.

On an average, every citizen pays Tk 485 in bribes to these sectors, the anti-graft watchdog said in a survey released yesterday.

The TIB identified land and land-

related departments, police stations and lower courts as the most corruption-prone sectors. The other areas are health, education, power, the tax department, arbitration and relief of local government and pensions.

It suggested stronger political will of the policymakers, steps to make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) an effective organisation, transparency and accountability, introduction of exemplary punishment, appointment of several ombudsmen, and administrative reforms to fight against corruption.

The TIB also emphasised an

active and conscious role of the civil society, research, and active mass media as well as the inclusion of morality-boosting and an honesty-based curriculum in textbooks to raise awareness against the all-pervading evil.

The TIB conducted 'Corruption in Bangladesh: A household survey' to find out the nature of corruption, the broad spectrum, depth and losses made by corruption between September 10 and October 24, 2004 in approximately 3,000 households of 55 districts -- 2,100 households in villages and 900 in towns.

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Govt friendless for wrong foreign policy

Say AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said the present government has become friendless in the international arena due to its wrongful foreign policies.

It asked the government to take confidence-building measures to improve deteriorating relations with other countries, especially its South Asian neighbours.

Bangladesh as a country is not friendless, but the present government is losing friends due to its wrongful policies, said AL leaders at a press briefing.

"The government has seriously damaged Bangladesh's image as a progressive, liberal and secular state," AL Advisory Council Member and former diplomat Farooq Chowdhury said, reading out a written statement.

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Border tension simmers down after talks

India withdraws extra border force but decides to speed up fencing

STAR REPORT

The border tension brewing since Saturday's Akhaura skirmishes has simmered down following discussions between Dhaka and New Delhi at diplomatic and other planes, said Foreign Minister M. Morsheed Khan yesterday.

India has already pulled away the extra war muscle it built up along the border after the April 16 BDR-BSF shootout that killed a Bangladeshi girl and a BSF company commander, a top official at the home ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

India, however, has decided to

speed up fencing along its border with Bangladesh to complete it as early as possible, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Meanwhile, export of Indian goods to Bangladesh through the Benapole Land Port resumed yesterday afternoon after a two and a-half-day suspension, our Jessore correspondent writes.

PEACETALKS
Talking to the press yesterday afternoon, Foreign Minister Morsheed Khan termed the Akhaura incident unfortunate and regrettable, and said, "I believe the tension is now defused and hope it will not escalate again."

Khan said the state ministers for home affairs and the chiefs of border guards of Bangladesh and India had fruitful talks by telephone and both sides have agreed to take steps to remove tension and maintain peace and harmony along the border.

He said, "I personally held a meeting with our state minister for home, the director general of Bangladesh Rifles and chiefs of intelligence agencies and advised all to show maximum restraint on border issues."

"We have handled it very well," he noted, adding, Bangladesh and

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Diarrhoea patients cram the ICDDR,B in Mohakhali as the disease is seeing a sudden surge in the scorching summer heat. At least 350 patients were admitted to the hospital yesterday.

HABIGANJ ATTACK CASE Quaiyum, nine other BNP leaders charged

BDNEWS, Habiganj

The police yesterday submitted a chargesheet under the Explosives Act accusing 10 leaders of the ruling BNP of the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj that killed former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted

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Pak bank GM, others charged with locker embezzlement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A client of National Bank of Pakistan yesterday charged the bank's general manager (GM) and other officials with embezzling around Tk 46.5 lakh from a locker he rented

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ACC finally adopts draft organogram

1,369 staff, 70 offices proposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has finally succeeded in drafting an organogram overcoming a prolonged stagnation due to internal conflicts and legal loopholes since its inception five months ago.

Earlier, the ACC worked on three sets of organogram but did not accept any as its chairman and commissioners held differing views.

Against this backdrop, the ACC last month decided to forward all three sets of organogram to the Cabinet Division so that the government could pick one. The ACC did not, however, act on its decision as this would expose its internal conflicts.

In its first meeting without any disagreements, the ACC yesterday decided on a 1,369-staff draft organogram, which will be sent soon to the Cabinet Division.

The proposed organogram comprises a secretary, five executive directors, six directors, 14 joint directors, 21 public prosecutors, 39 deputy

directors, 10 senior assistant public prosecutors, 131 assistant directors, 11 assistant public prosecutors, 170 deputy assistant directors, 13 class two officers and 945 class three and class four staff.

It proposed six divisional offices, 19 regional offices and 45 district offices of the ACC.

The now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) had 1,273 staff. "We could not send up our organogram so far due to difference of opinion among ourselves," ACC Chairman justice Sultan Hossain Khan said. "Today (Wednesday) we approved an organogram on the basis of consensus."

"This is our most successful meeting in the last five months where we did not have any disagreements," Sultan noted.

The ACC also approved draft rules on recruitment and service, and guidelines to screen the ex-Bac staff.

The guidelines include reviewing the service records and personal files of the staff.

ADB urges govt to make ACC effective soon

UNB, Dhaka

A visiting top ADB (Asian Development Bank) official yesterday requested the government to make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) effective as soon as possible, as the donor agency took it as a positive step.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said the ACC body will be finalised within this month to make it effective, overcoming some teething problems.

"The newly established body went through some teething problems at the initial stage. The problems will be resolved within this month," he told reporters after a meeting with the ADB Director General for South Asia region, Kunio Senga, at his secretariat office.

This is Kunio's first visit to Bangladesh after taking charge of this region as the director general of the bank.

The ADB official was very happy to know about the establishment of the ACC but requested to make the body effective as soon as possible, Saifur said.

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Hospitals filled with diarrhoea patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The spread of diarrhoea in the city and other parts of the country has sharply increased in the last week, triggering a sudden influx of patients into city hospitals.

During the last week, more than 500 patients have been admitted everyday to the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), popularly known as the cholera hospital, in Mohakhali.

The ICDDR,B, admitted 522 patients on Sunday, 500 patients on Monday and 514 on Tuesday.

"I came here (ICDDR,B) yesterday (Tuesday) with my six-year-old child. Initially we gave him primary treatment at home through oral saline, but as his situation deteriorated we brought him to the hospi-

tal," said Amena Akhter, a resident of city's Basabo.

She predicted that her child might have contacted diarrhoea through drinking water supplied by the Wasa at his school or by taking roadside foods.

An official of the Health Directorate said countrywide figures for diarrhoeal attacks in 15 districts stood at about 1,000 as of Tuesday. Dinajpur, Natore, Jhenaidah and Feni are the most affected by diarrhoea, said the health directorate sources, who forecast a further increase in the coming days.

The Health Directorate also estimated that about 96,000 people were affected by diarrhoea in 22 districts since last January, adding that only between 20 and 22 districts regularly inform them about

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KIBRIA KILLING US congressman told of sincere govt probe

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Ambassador to Washington Shafiq Mobin Chowdhury briefed Congressman Barney Frank on Tuesday on the progress made in investigating the killing of SAMS Kibria and reaffirmed the government's sincerity in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Congressman Barney Frank was one of the three US lawmakers who recently wrote a letter to the Bangladesh government expressing their concerns over the killing of Kibria, an Awami League lawmaker and former finance minister.

The envoy informed Frank that the US embassy in Dhaka had expressed "full satisfaction at the government's cooperation with the

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Satkhira Ahmadiyyas under renewed threat

Zealots ask SP to re-hang removed signboard within a week

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Ahmadiyyas of Jyotindranagar in Satkhira, still smarting from the shock of Sunday's attack, came under renewed threat yesterday when religious zealots asked the Satkhira superintendent of police (SP) to re-hang within a week the signboard removed from the wall of the sect's complex.

"Otherwise, we ourselves will hang the signboard, if necessary, by sacrificing our lives," threatened

International Khatme Nabuwat Movement, Bangladesh (IKNMB), believed to be run by leaders of key ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami, in a statement circulated in

Jyotindranagar last night.

IKNMB Satkhira Amir Maulana Ehsanur Rahman, Nayeb-e-Amir Maulana Abdul Khaleq, Secretary Maulana Mahmudul Hasan and Publicity Secretary Sheikh Mizanur Rahman made the threats in the statement.

The threats followed a meeting where people from all hues vowed to keep peace in the area.

The IKNMB leaders also threatened local journalists with dire consequences for running a series of reports on their organisation and termed those false and baseless.

They asked the journalists "not to support the Ahmadiyyas," saying:

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