

# Death toll tops 100 in Indian heat wave

AFP, New Delhi

A heat wave in northern and central India has claimed 28 more lives, it was reported yesterday, taking the toll since the start of summer to 102, the Press Trust of India said.

The northern state of Uttar Pradesh -- one of India's most impoverished -- was the worst affected, with 13 new deaths reported Monday, taking the state-wide total to 62 since mid-April, the news agency said.

Other deaths due to heatstroke were reported from northern and central states.

Over the weekend, 37 people fell victim to the scorching sun.

The real toll, however, could be far higher, with many people dying from heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, heart attacks and diarrhoea in poor regions where official statistics are not well kept, officials said.

Meteorologists said, however, that relief was in sight from the blistering summer temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), with the mercury set to drop in the coming days as the monsoon pushes north.

New Delhi recorded its hottest

day of the year on Saturday at 44.9C, nearly five degrees above normal, the local weather centre said.

"Winds are coming from Rajasthan and Pakistan which are very high in temperatures -- winds blowing from hotter areas will bring in heat," S.C. Bhan, the head of the Delhi weather office, told AFP.

Bhan also said the lack of pre-monsoon rain in the region for the past 10 days was a key cause of the sizzling heat, but added that temperatures would drop back to normal by midweek.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) bulldozes illegal structure at Lalmatia in the city yesterday.

# EC moves to stop foreign funding

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Former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, during quizzing by the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI), divulged to the interrogators that BNP chairperson and immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia collected Tk 300 crore for election funding from the governments of Pakistan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia before the stalled ninth parliamentary elections.

Once the EC's proposal is made a law, none of the political parties will be allowed to collect funds from foreign sources and registration of a political party will be cancelled if it violates the law.

"If any registered political party receives any donation or funds from any foreign country or organisation, it will be detected during auditing," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Sakawat Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Besides, we can ask intelligence agencies to investigate whether any political party received any donation or fund from foreign sources," he added.

Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said if such anomalies were detected in auditing, the political party would be provided with the scope to explain its position on this. "If the party fails to come up with reasonable answers or refute the allegation, its registration might be cancelled," he said.

In defence of drafting the proposal, the EC said in the absence of any such regulations, political parties can collect funds from any sources. "The facility is reportedly being misused. So, collection of funds from any foreign country, organisation or persons should be stopped," it explained.

The political parties, however, will be allowed to collect funds

through donations from domestic sources. "Donation or gift made to a registered political party by an individual or a private company or a group of companies or a non-government organisation shall be exempted from paying tax for such donations or gifts if the donor is a tax payer," the EC said proposing a legal procedure for donating to political parties.

The EC has also decided to properly enforce the existing election laws regarding political parties' election expenses.

"Every political party nominating any candidate for elections shall maintain proper account of all its incomes and expenditures for the period from the date of publication of the election schedule till the completion of elections in all the constituencies in which it has nominated candidates and such account shall show clearly the amount received by it as donation above Tk 1,000 from any candidate or any person seeking nomination or from any other person or source giving their names and addresses and the amount received from each of them and the mode of receipt," the election laws say.

## EC SECRETARAT INDEPENDENCE

The EC last Thursday sent a proposal to the chief adviser for separation of the secretariat from the control of the prime minister's office (PMO).

Earlier, the EC on several occasions said that an amendment to the constitution is required to separate the EC Secretariat from the PMO.

Sahul Hossain said, "We have now proposed to separate the commission's secretariat from the PMO by amending the rules of business."

In the government's rules of

business, the EC Secretariat is now under the control of the PMO.

"Once, the commission secretariat is separated from the PMO, we will be able to recruit and control the officials of the commission's secretariat," Sahul said. He said the EC has sent the proposal and now the government will decide the next course of action in this regard.

# Nepal reaps peace dividend as tourists flood back

AFP, Kathmandu

Impoverished Nepal's crucial tourism sector is reaping a major peace dividend with officials reporting a surge in arrivals of nearly 45 percent in the wake of an agreement by Maoist rebels to end a decade of insurgency.

Although tourism officials said the figure meant the country was now back on the international tourist map, industry representatives said the sector was still suffering from lingering damage to the country's travel infrastructure.

"The last five months have shown encouraging signs of growth in the tourism sector," said Aditya Baral, a spokesman for the Himalayan nation's tourism board.

He said there was 43.4 percent year-on-year growth in foreign visitors arriving by air between January and May, with the trend expected to improve, giving solid year-end figures.

# Man 'beaten up' in camp

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him to an army camp in Shahbagh around 7:00am from his home yesterday. In the camp Shibli, a captain of engineering corps, and the other plainclothes person, who claimed to be a major, beat him up for half an hour.

He alleged that they forced him to sign some documents following the beating and dropped him off in front of Concept Tower on Green Road, where he has a condominium on the ninth floor.

Family members of Liton and residents of Concept Tower rushed him to Samorita Hospital on Panthapath.

Doctors attending Liton said his body bore several injury marks and he was in severe pain. They said they would carry out tests for internal injuries.

Liton in Samorita Hospital told The Daily Star that captain Shibli's mother owns a flat in Concept Tower on the 13th floor, which she rents out to tenants.

Secretary of the Concept Tower flat owners' association said a number of the condominium owners, including

# Six killed in fresh Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops in Kashmir have shot dead three Islamic militants along the de facto border with Pakistan and a further three people have been killed by rebels, officials said yesterday.

The clash along the heavily-militarised and mountainous Line of Control, which occurred on Sunday, came after Indian authorities said they had registered an increase in militant infiltration attempts as the weather improves and the snows melt.

"Other militants fled back," army spokesman Anil Kumar Mathur told AFP.

Police meanwhile said militants killed three Muslim men, including a policeman and an employee of the Indian army's engineering division, in the south of the divided state.

A peace process between India and Pakistan was launched in 2004, and although violence has dipped significantly there has been scant progress on the wider issue of the future of Kashmir.

The level of militant activity over the coming months will also be closely watched as a barometer for the state of the slow-moving peace process, with Kashmiri separatist leaders warning of a return to all-out violence unless political progress is made.

Kashmir is in the grip of a nearly 18-year-old insurgency that has left more than 42,000 people dead.

Liton who is an executive member of the association, had a month-long row with a few of the owners over the raising of a wall near the lift on the 13th floor.

Liton said Shibli threatened him over cellphone on June 8 saying, "You have gone too far with the 13th floor... I'll show you what the army is." Liton told Shibli to take care of the matter himself and hung up the phone.

Liton's wife Meher Afroz told The Daily Star that she wanted to file a case accusing captain Shibli and six unidentified army personnel with Dhanmondi Police Station but the police refused to accept the case.

She said the on-duty officer told her that they could not accept the case as army related cases did not fall under their jurisdiction and suggested that she lodge her complaint with the army camp near Science Laboratory. Afroz went to the army camp and submitted a written complaint against Shibli and the six others.

When The Daily Star contacted the Inter Services Public Relation (ISPR) about the incident it could not comment on the issue saying they were unaware of the incident.

# Mindless hill-cutting caused mudslide

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Geography professor of Chittagong University, told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

Dr Shahidul conducted a survey that came up with the findings that over one hundred hills have disappeared due to hill cutting during the last 30 years.

The survey report identified Khulshi, Panchlaish, Nasirabad, Pahartoli, Sholoshahar, Bayezid Bostami, Foy's Lake, Lalkhan Bazar, Oxygen intersection and Polytechnic areas as badly affected due to the widespread hill cutting.

Silimpur under Sitakunda, Jungle Pahartoli under Hathazari upazila and some other parts in the district also faced rampant hill cutting until recently, the report said.

ASM Maksud Kamal, national expert, Earthquake and Tsunami Preparedness, UNDP, said no risk of landslide is involved if the hills are cut with a slope of 20-30 degrees. But the hills in Chittagong were cut with slopes of 70-80 degrees, making those hills highly unstable.

# China concerned at developments

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agency yesterday, he said: "We sincerely hope that the peace, stability and development of the country could be safeguarded in the interest of its people."

Qingdian, who took up his ambassadorial assignment two months ago, said they appreciate the government's strong determination to develop economy and improve people's lifestyle.

"Bangladesh has a large potential market with huge population and low-price skilled labour," he said, adding that the Chinese government will always encourage Chinese companies to do trade and make investment here.

Asked if China would consider more trade facilities for Bangladesh to reduce an about \$ 2 billion trade deficit, the envoy said his government takes the issue of trade imbalance with Bangladesh seriously and has made substantial effort to solve the problem.

Qingdian mentioned that his country has granted tariff-free access to 84 items and preferential tariff treatment to 156 other items of Bangladesh within the framework of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement.

"More tariff reduction plans are on the way and we will encourage more

Chinese enterprises to come to invest in Bangladesh."

The ambassador said the Chinese vice-minister for commerce would be visiting Dhaka next month to discuss trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Replying to a question, he said the Chinese companies have already made investment in power, textile, telecommunications as well as many private sectors in Bangladesh.

"The rising manufacturing industries in Bangladesh are attracting Chinese investors to this country. And the Chinese government is keen to see such investment to be mutually beneficial to both Bangladesh and Chinese people."

On the planned highway link between Teknaf and Kunming through Myanmar, he said China in principle supports the proposal for building the tri-nation highway. He welcomed the recently signed Bangladesh-Myanmar MoU on the project.

Asked about China's cooperation in facing the global warming, a critical issue for Bangladesh, the envoy said China and Bangladesh can forge cooperation in this area as both the developing countries are facing the same problems of floods and

droughts.

About Dhaka-Beijing military cooperation, Qingdian said the relations between the armed forces of the two countries have been "always perfect". "We have exchanged defence delegations from time to time, and cooperation in every project is going well."

# Declare Buddhism as Thai national religion Demand monks

AFP, Bangkok

Thousands of Buddhist monks blocked a street in central Bangkok yesterday, demanding that Buddhism be declared Thailand's national religion in a new constitution, police said.

About 3,000 saffron-robed monks and 1,200 of their followers rallied outside the Thai parliament, with 250 police officers on guard at the protest, which lasted for most of the day.

The protesting monks tried to march into the parliament building but police managed to convinced them to stay outside, said police Major General Manit Wongsomboon.

"Their demand is to insert a phrase in the new constitution declaring that Buddhism is the national religion," Manit told AFP.

About 500 monks pledged to hold a vigil through the night, police added.

The protest was held as military-appointed charter drafters started to debate clauses in the new constitution, which currently makes no mention of a national religion.

The military plans to bring the constitution before the public in a referendum expected in early September.

Some 95 percent of Thais are Buddhist, but critics of the proposal warn that naming a national religion could inflame tensions in the Muslim-majority south of Thailand, where a separatist insurgency has raged for three years.

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5x3

5x3

# Mahi resigns

FROM PAGE 1

through a press conference," he said adding, the sooner democracy is established in the party, the better for all.

Mahi B Chowdhury turned in his resignation letter to the party president pointing out a number of setbacks in the party including absence of democracy. He also alleged that the party has failed to reach its goals even after eight months of its formation.

"LDP was formed with an aim to practice healthy politics, but it did not achieve that for various reasons," he said in the letter.

To the contrary of the people's expectations, the positions he held in the party were not acquired through a democratic process and that had been making him feel uncomfortable, Mahi explained.

"An environment has been created in the country in favour of a democratic culture. Whereas, my posts of presidium member and organising secretary of the [LDP] national executive committee were nominated posts, not elected ones. Therefore, I have been feeling embarrassed speaking on democratic practices in the party," Mahi said in the letter.

Since all positions in LDP are still nominated, Mahi hoped that senior members of the presidium and the national executive committee of LDP as well as all other political parties of the country would set example for all by taking steps towards democracy.

"I stepped down from both the posts willingly, but I am determined to

perform my duties as a general member of the party and I am ready to work after being elected to any post in a democratic method by grassroots level leaders and workers," he added.

Meanwhile, LDP issued a show cause notice to Firoje M Hasan, joint secretary general of the party, for his alleged involvement in activities against the party violating the party regulations, sources said.

When contacted, Firoje M Hasan told The Daily Star that he did not receive any notice yet.

Mahi B Chowdhury joined Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in August 1992 and was elected to parliament with BNP ticket in 2001 from Munshiganj 1.

On June 21, 2002, his father Badruddoza Chowdhury, the then president of Bangladesh, was forced to resign from the post as BNP threatened to impeach and remove him from the office on charge of disrespecting BNP founder Ziaur Rahman.

Mahi resigned from BNP on March 10, 2004 and joined Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) -- a political party that his father had founded after resigning from the office.

On June 6, 2004, despite considerable opposition from the BNP, Mahi Chowdhury contested and won by-election of Munshiganj 1 as a BDB candidate. BDB was later renamed Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).