

Heatwave sweeps parts of country

UNB, Dhaka

People in different parts of the country are experiencing a sweltering heatwave with the mercury soaring to 37.4 degrees Celsius in Dhaka yesterday.

The country's highest temperature 38.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Chuadanga.

Day labourers, rickshaw pullers, farmers, and others who generally work outdoors are finding it challenging to continue working under the intense heat of the sun.

Animals and birds are also restless and struggling in the scorching heat.

According to a Met office bulletin, mild to moderate heatwave is sweeping over Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal divisions and Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogura, Moulvibazar, Chattogram, Rangamati, Chandpur, Noakhali, Feni, Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts.

Day and night temperatures may rise slightly over the country, it said.

Meanwhile, the Khulna region is currently experiencing temperatures between 37 and 38 degrees Celsius, which is causing great discomfort to workers and animals alike.

As the day progresses, the temperature keeps rising, making it unbearable for people to move around in the scorching heat.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Three killed in truck-pickup collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Three people were killed in a collision between a pickup and a truck in Jamalpur's Melandah upazila last morning.

The deceased were identified as Shah Alam, 35, Chanchal, 32, and Kajol, said Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Melandah Police Station.

Police and locals told The Daily Star that the driver of the Dewanganj-bound pickup van lost control over the vehicle and collided head-on with a Jamalpur-bound truck in Malancha on the Jamalpur-Dewanganj highway around 7:30am.

Two people died on the spot while another was declared dead on arrival at the Melandah Upazila Health Complex, said the OC.

Among the deceased, two were pickup van passengers while another was a passenger of the truck.

The bodies have been kept at the health complex for autopsy, the OC said.

Both vehicles are in police custody, the OC added.



A local resident removes debris from his house damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russian missiles hit southeast Ukraine

France denies presence of its soldiers in Ukraine

AGENCIES

A 50-year-old man and his 11-year-old daughter were killed after Russian missiles struck a house in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, officials said yesterday.

It was the latest Russian strike on civilian infrastructure in southeast Ukraine as Moscow's invasion stretches into its second year.

"The enemy carried out a missile attack on Zaporizhzhia and killed another Ukrainian family," the head of the State Emergency Service, Sergiy Kruk, said on social media.

The girl died in an ambulance, said the head of Zaporizhzhia City Council, Anatoliy Kurtiev. Rescue workers pulled the girl's 46-year-old mother alive from under the rubble.

Her elder daughter was not at home when the Russians struck at night, the State Emergency Service said.

Kurtiev said two Russian missiles struck a residential building, adding that windows and roofs were damaged in dozens of neighbouring houses, reports AFP.

The region of Zaporizhzhia is one of four Ukrainian provinces Russian President Vladimir Putin claims to have annexed last year.

Meanwhile, the French defence ministry has denied the presence of French soldiers in Ukraine, as allegedly revealed in documents attributed to the Pentagon and leaked to Russian networks mid-week.

A spokesperson for the Minister of the Armed Forces, Sébastien Lecornu said: "There are no French forces engaged in operation in Ukraine. The documents cited do not come from the French armies. We do not comment on documents whose source is uncertain."

Top secret Pentagon documents, reportedly containing charts and details about anticipated weapons deliveries, battalion strengths and other sensitive information, were spread on Twitter and Telegram last week.

One slide suggested that a small contingent of less than a hundred special operations personnel from Nato members France, America, Britain and Latvia were already active in Ukraine.

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EMBASSY REOPENING Delegation set to visit KSA: Iran

AFP, Tehran

Iran's foreign ministry said yesterday a delegation will visit Saudi Arabia by Friday to pave the way for reopening its diplomatic missions there following a similar move by Riyadh.

The announcement comes a day after a Saudi delegation arrived in Tehran on a similar diplomatic trip, and follows a historic meeting between the two Gulf countries' foreign ministers in China.

"We are expecting a foreign ministry delegation to visit Saudi Arabia" by Friday, Deputy Foreign Minister Alireza Enayati said in an interview with state television.

"Two separate delegations will go to Riyadh and Jeddah", ahead of reopening Iran's embassy and consulate respectively.

Saudi Arabia severed relations with Iran in January 2016, after its embassy in Tehran and consulate in the northwestern city of Mashhad were attacked by protesters demonstrating over Riyadh's execution of Saudi opposition Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Roadworks, bottlenecks, breakdowns can ruin it

FROM PAGE 1

stopped for days if needed to facilitate traffic movement during the rush.

The government is turning the 190km Gazipur-Elenga-Hatikumrul-Rangpur highway into a four-lane highway. The Bangabandhu Bridge approach road in the east has two lanes, which could become a bottleneck.

Project Director Waliur Rahman said vehicles heading north will use the main road while Dhaka-bound vehicles will use a bypass from Bangabandhu Bridge.

"We got good results with this initiative during the last Eid-ul-Fitr rush. But a large number of unfit vehicles breaking down blocked the road before Eid-ul-Azha," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Proper traffic management is the key, he said, adding that 14km out of the 19km Bangabandhu Bridge approach road in the west is already four lanes.

Cumilla Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Shamim Alam said the

server for Daudkandi Toll Plaza goes offline occasionally. "If such an event occurs during the rush, it will create a huge problem. I request preparations so that the toll can be collected manually if needed," he said.

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun echoed him.

In most toll booths of Padma Bridge, Meghna Bridge, Bangabandhu Bridge and Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway, booth operators take the money from vehicles and give receipts printed by computers connected to a server.

Bridge Secretary Monjur Hossain said the authorities were working to install an Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system at the Padma Bridge but it would not be done before Eid.

On March 20, the Bridge Division held a meeting where recommendations were made for more toll booths on the expressway, keeping extra change at the booths, and stopping unfit vehicles before

they hit the roads.

Ilias Kanchan, chairman of Nirapad Sarak Chai, a platform working on road safety, said, "It is possible to curb road crashes if the number of unfit vehicles can be reduced."

Jatiya Press Club President Farida Yesmin also said road crashes would not reduce until the authorities pay more attention to the fitness of vehicles.

A record 5.42 lakh registered vehicles, which should have renewed their fitness certificates, did not do so as of October 15 last year.

Khandaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of the Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said it was not possible for the association to track unfit vehicles.

He requested the BRTA to give the local administration and the police a list of such vehicles for taking action.

He said many garment workers hire buses to go home during the holidays and urged factories to give them leave in phases so that pressure on the roads

is less.

However, the Dhaka Road Transport Owners Association, of which Enayet is the general secretary, yesterday asked its members "not to rent out unfit and rundown buses outside Dhaka".

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary General of Jatri Kalyan Samity, said only one day of holiday before Eid day, expected to be on April 22, is not enough for all to leave the capital.

He demanded the government add another day of holiday ahead of Eid.

Quader said, "We can't bring discipline on the road and transport sectors." He termed it the biggest challenge.

He directed the authorities concerned to sit with transport associations regarding unfit vehicles.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, who moderated the meeting, said they want to set this year's Eid journey as a model.

AL to go for fresh picks

FROM PAGE 1

AL leader Zahangir, who became Gazipur mayor in the 2018 election, was expelled from the AL on November 19, 2021, after he was seen in a viral video clip making derogatory remarks about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and expressing doubts about the number of martyrs in the Liberation War.

Seven days after his expulsion from the party, the government suspended him from his mayoral post. The ruling party, however, granted him amnesty on January 21 this year.

Seven aspirants collected nomination forms for Gazipur City Corporation election.

The Election Commission on April 3 announced the schedules of elections to five city corporations.

Polls will be held in Gazipur on May 25, Khulna and Barisal on June 12, and Rajshahi and Sylhet on June 21.

A total of 17 aspirants collected nomination forms on the first day.

Five mayoral aspirants collected nomination forms for Sylhet and four for Barisal.

AL sources say, disgruntled AL leaders running as independents may become a serious issue for the party in the polls.

Since the BNP boycotted most of the national and local elections held after 2008, ruling party nominees faced major challenges from such independents popularly known as "AL rebels".

This time, the AL is preparing for the election assuming that the BNP will not participate, and according to insiders, the top AL leadership will be tough on "rebels".

The AL wants to flaunt its popularity and organisational strength by winning the city polls before the national election.

Besides, the AL-led government wants to show that fair and transparent elections can be held when it is in power.

Burning cigarette or mosquito coil possible cause

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting security guards of the complex, the investigators said there was electricity in only the living spaces for the guards, the mosque, and the office of the complex. Wi-Fi access points were on, they added.

Investigators said there was a room for security personnel to stay on the roof of the Adarsha Market. The embroidery factory and a warehouse were beneath the room.

During sehri, cigarette butts from the roof might have fallen on the second floor and goods in the embroidery factory or the warehouse caught fire. Apart from this, the fire could also ignite from a burning mosquito repellent coil in the place where the security personnel stay, the investigators suspect.

Marina Nazneen, executive officer at Dhaka South City Corporation Zone-1, who is leading the committee,

told The Daily Star, "We have almost completed all the work. But we are yet to get the list of the affected people. We will submit the report tomorrow [Monday]."

Asked about the cause of the fire, she said, "We will make our observations in the final report."

However, no fire expert has been included in the committee that was formed with councillors and officials of the DSCC on April 4. It has been asked to investigate the cause of the fire, assess the extent of the damage and assess the list of the victims and submit a report in three working days.

Fire Service and Civil Defence also formed a seven-member probe body on the day and the committee has been asked to submit a report in eight working days.

Meanwhile, the affected traders of Bangabazar held a meeting with

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday afternoon over the reopening of the market.

After the meeting, the mayor told reporters that the market would be temporarily open on Wednesday when the debris have been removed.

"We are expecting to get the list of the affected traders by tomorrow [Monday]. We will complete the cleaning up work within the time. Bricks will be laid so that traders can start their business," he added.

Helal Uddin, president of Bangladesh Shop Owners Association, said each affected trader will get a space of 17 and a half square feet to run business in a makeshift shop.

In another development, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry has announced Tk 1 crore in grants to rehabilitate the Bangabazar traders.

Besides, the Hijra community yesterday donated Tk 20 lakh for them.

Make law

FROM PAGE 12

and oppose freedom.

"I have heard that the Law Commission has proposed such a law. I will call for this law to be passed in this parliament to keep the nation protected."

Pointing to the BNP, the minister said they tried to question the last two elections to make parliament ineffective. They are plotting to make Bangladesh a dysfunctional and failed state.

"Since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had people involved in jail killings and Bangabandhu murder prosecuted, she can have this law enacted to punish the anti-state and anti-independence elements of the country," he added.

BNP leader Dulu indicted in tax evasion case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against BNP leader and former deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu in a case filed for dodging Tk 10 lakh in income taxes.

Dulu, now on bail, pleaded not guilty after Md Akhtaruzzaman of Dhaka Special Judge Court-2 read out the charges to him.

Earlier, the judge dismissed the petition submitted for discharging the accused from the charges of the case, said Dulu's lawyer Taherul Islam Tauhid.

The judge fixed May 14 for starting the trial of the case.

On August 3, 2008, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) Assistant Tax Commissioner Hafiz Al Asad filed a case against the BNP leader.

NBR said Dulu evaded more than Tk 10 lakh in income taxes from his income of Tk 23,437,501 he earned since 1983.

Dulu gave false information about his real income and expenditure to the income tax department, the complainant added.

Experts for repealing DSA to salvage press freedom

UNB, Dhaka

Experts at a workshop yesterday demanded the annulment of the Digital Security Act to ensure press freedom and human rights.

News Network organised the programme with the support of Internews and EngageMedia at the NGO Forum's Training Hall in the city's Lalmatia area.

At the programme, Rezaur Rahman Lenin, a researcher, human rights activist and legal expert, said a total of 1,129 cases were filed under the DSA from October 9, 2018, to August 2022.

Of them, he said 301 cases were filed against politicians while 280 were against journalists and 157 against teachers and students.

Though the abuse of the DSA is growing alarmingly, he said the government is not serious about amending this law. Besides, amending the law alone will not suffice to deal with the issues it raises.

Pabna constable suspended for assault

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A police constable was suspended yesterday for assaulting a man with an iron rod over a trivial matter in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila.

The victim Mokbul Hossain Pramanik, 35, of the upazila's Haripur union, was admitted to the upazila health complex with a head injury.

Sirajul Islam, a constable of Chatmohar Police Station, rents a house from Sobed Ali of village Chowdhuripara.

Mokbul, Sobed's brother, oversaw construction work that was being done around the house.

On Saturday, Mokbul asked Sirajul to move his bike from the construction area, which enraged Sirajul and at one point he attacked Mokbul.

Additional Superintendent of Police Masud Alom said a departmental inquiry was underway in connection to this incident.

Over 50 pro-BNP lawyers

FROM PAGE 1

lawyers' panel, have been mentioned.

Other named accused of the case are Kayser Kamal; Kamrul Hasan Sajal; Shah Ahmed Badal; Kamrul Isalam; Yunus Ali Robi; Mostafizur Rahman Ahad; Mirza Al Mahmood; Mahdeen Chowdhury; Mehedi Hasan; Noor-A-Alam Siddique Sohagh; Jamiul Hoque Faisal; Nazrul Islam Chhoton; Mohsin Kabir Roki; Faisal Siddique; Shafiqul Alam Shofiq; Ehsanur Rahman; Md Shahidul Islam; Monjurul Alam Sujan; Md Mahbubur Rahman; Mahfuz Bin Yusuf; Redwan Ahmed Runjib and Isha.

It has been said in the case statement, the accused along with some outsider terrorists entered the two hall rooms of SCBA where Iftar Mahfil was organised with a procession chanting slogan in the

name of fugitive convict Tarique Rahman and Jamaat (Jamaat-e-Islami) and they scratched the banners containing the name of the chief justice, vandalised the chairs and tables and created a chaotic situation there.

The accused hurt and injured some lawyers including Rafiqul Islam, Pannu Khan and Shahnewaz when they tried to prevent the accused, read the statement.

Accused Noor-A-Alam Siddique Sohagh attempted to kill Rafiqul Islam by blowing with a stick on his head and Rafiqul Islam got serious injury, according to the case statement.

The accused persons left the place after directing the general lawyers not to take Iftar, Robiul said in the case statement.