

Country endures over 2,000MW of load shedding

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) yesterday shed 2,000MW of load across the country as gas shortage forced the authorities to shut down a number of gas-fired power plants.

According to official sources, BPDB had to resort to about 2,051MW loadshedding at 12:00pm when power generation was 10,749MW against a demand of 12,800MW.

But many officials unwilling to speak on the record believe that the loadshedding was even more than 2,000MW.

“This happened as we are not getting adequate gas supply that forced many plants to go for shutdown,” said a senior official of the BPDB.

Earlier, the Energy and Mineral Resources Division had informed that gas supply from two floating terminals of liquefied natural gas

According to official sources, BPDB had to resort to about 2,051MW loadshedding at 12:00pm when power generation was 10,749MW against a demand of 12,800MW.

(LNG) will remain suspended from 11:00 pm yesterday due to the impact of the super cyclone Mocha.

As a result, gas supply to the Chittagong and Cumilla regions will be disrupted today.

However, supply will resume soon after considering the situation.

As a consequence, operation of gas-fired power stations will remain off or partially closed in Chittagong, Meghnaghat, Haripur and Siddhirganj areas.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid regretted the temporary inconvenience.

Dhaka Power Supply Company (Desco) managing director Engr. Md. Kausar Ameer Ali said that the areas in Dhaka city under his jurisdiction experienced about 347MW at 11 am in the day time on Saturday against a demand for 1157MW.

The supply was 819MW, he added.

Managing director of Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) Bikash Dewan informed that the areas under his company had to resort to 350-380MW in the day time.

The extent of loadshedding may be even higher after evening on Saturday, he told UNB..4



This aerial view shows people sifting through the rubble of a building hit by an Israeli air strike in Deir al-Balah in the centre of the Gaza Strip, yesterday. Israeli air strikes battered Gaza and militants fired rockets again today, as deadly fighting resumed after a night of relative calm despite efforts to secure a truce.

PHOTO: AFP

Turkey votes today as Erdogan fights for his political life

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday led prayers at Istanbul's iconic Hagia Sophia mosque before entering the election battle of his political life against a powerful secular rival.

The 69-year-old will be emulating a ritual that Ottoman Sultans performed before they led their men off to war as he braces for today's parliamentary and presidential ballot.

Erdogan has never faced a more energised or united opposition than the one spearheaded by retired civil servant Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his disparate alliance of six parties.

The Turkish leader excelled at splitting his rivals and forging unlikely unions while winning one national election after another for 21 years.

But his Islamic-rooted party is reeling from anger over Turkey's economic meltdown and a crackdown on civil liberties during Erdogan's second decade of rule.

The six opposition parties have put aside their political and cultural differences and joined forces for the lone task of pushing Erdogan out.

They are officially supported by Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party -- a group that



accounts for at least 10 percent of the vote.

“Enough is enough,” Kurdish housewife Hafize Timurtas told AFP moments before campaigning officially concluded. “We can't take this anymore.”

The math is not adding up in Erdogan's favour and most polls show him trailing his secular rival by a few points.

Kilicdaroglu is now desperately trying to break the 50-percent threshold and avoid a May 28 runoff that could give Erdogan a chance to regroup and reframe the debate.

Kilicdaroglu yesterday laid carnations at the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk -- a revered military commander who forged a secular state out of the Ottoman Empire's ruins in 1923.

It was a defining moment that underscored the contrasting visions the two men have for their increasingly polarised nation of 85 million people.

The voting will include southeastern regions that lie in ruins in the wake of a February quake that claimed more than 50,000 lives.

24 dead in Zambia bus accident

AFP, Lusaka

Twenty-four people were killed yesterday when a bus carrying churchgoers heading for a religious service rammed into a truck in southern Zambia, police said.

The crash left 12 others seriously injured, including the driver, they said.

Over 1.3 million

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said Hasanul Amin, deputy director of Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP).

Some 565 cyclone centres, which have the capacity to accommodate over half a million people, have been prepared in Cox's Bazar.

After yesterday afternoon, tourist police were asking people to steer clear of the beach in Cox's Bazar.

In Chattogram, almost one lakh people, mostly women and children, were evacuated to cyclone shelters.

Some 16,500 volunteers are working to help the people, Deputy Commissioner Abul Bashar Md Fakruzzaman said.

In Patuakhali, hundreds of people from the small islands and char areas were taken to 118 cyclone centres.

In Noakhali, officials said in the evening that they had the preparations to evacuate people in Hatiya upazila.

“But the weather is still good and people do not want to come to cyclone centres,” said UNO Mohammad Kaiser Khasro.

“When the weather starts deteriorating, people will begin to move,” he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the people of Nijhum Dweep are in fear as there is no embankment on the island of around 40,000 residents.

Besides, there are no cyclone centres at Chargasia and Dhalchar islands, locals said.

[Staff correspondents in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram and our correspondents from Patuakhali and Noakhali contributed to the report.]

Rwanda opposition figure announces presidential bid

AFP, Kigali

The head of a Rwandan opposition party, Frank Habineza, said yesterday he would run for president in next year's election after winning the nomination of the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda.

Habineza is widely expected to face President Paul Kagame, who has ruled Rwanda with an iron fist for decades and who won a third term in 2017, taking home nearly 99 percent of the vote.

A former rebel chief, Kagame has been regarded as the country's de facto leader since the end of the 1994 genocide.

Habineza was elected unopposed by around 200 members at a party congress held in Kigali on Saturday.

“We will continue our struggle for democracy, freedom of speech, free media, and human rights,” he told a

press conference after the vote.

Kagame has not declared an intention to run a fourth time but has presided over controversial constitutional amendments that allowed him to serve a third term and could see him rule until 2034.

The government in March decided to synchronise the dates for its parliamentary and presidential elections, which are due to be held in August next year.

Habineza, who is also a human rights activist and lawyer, ran against Kagame in the 2017 presidential election, coming in third place with less than one percent of the vote.

His party -- one of just two opposition parties recognised by the government -- won two seats in parliament for the first time in 2018.

“When we started this party in 2009, everyone knows it was very

difficult. We were violently attacked by people with guns, our people were put in prison, and I had to go into exile in Sweden for two years,” Habineza told reporters.

“But despite these difficulties, we have seen some progress and changes,” he added.

In 2017, the United States said it was “disturbed by irregularities” in the presidential election.

Several opposition parties -- including the United Democratic Forces (FDU) -- are not officially recognised and cannot participate in elections in Rwanda.

FDU leader Victoire Ingabire was arrested in 2010 while campaigning against Kagame.

She was jailed for eight years on terrorism charges before being released following a presidential pardon.

It may be as bad as Sidr, or worse

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getting strong as low pressure was not created in the Bay this year, and it may badly impact the coastal districts of Chattogram and Barishal.

“Cyclone Mocha's route is different from the usual routes of cyclones. So Cox's Bazar and St Martin's would endure massive damages due to the strong wind speed and storm surge,” said Monowar Hossain, a meteorologist of BMD.

Cyclone Sidr had made landfall on the Khulna-Barishal coast on November 15, 2007, while cyclone Aila had made landfall on May 25, 2009, on the West-Bengal and Khulna coast with a maximum windspeed of 120kmp/h.

Mostofa Kamal Palash, a weather and climate researcher at the University of Saskatchewan in

Canada, said Mocha is going to be the first cyclonic storm with an expected sustained windspeed close to 200kmp/h that would make landfall in Saint Martin's Island.

“Cyclone Mocha has the potential to completely inundate the whole of Saint Martin's Island with a storm surge around 15-20 feet high in the sea. It is going to be the first such cyclone on the island. We don't really know what might happen there.”

Experts also said that compared to Sidr and Aila, Mocha is to make a landfall in a lesser populated area. However, the entire population, most of which is made of Rohingya living in the Ukhiya and Teknaf refugee camps, is at severe risk.

ASM Maksud Kamal, professor of disaster science and climate resilience at Dhaka University,

said, “Cyclones Sidr and Aila made landfall on the Khulna coast, where the Sundarbans gave natural protection. But in the area where Mocha will make its landfall, there is no such protection.

“Landslides would be another huge problem, which may occur during the cyclonic event and even after.”

He added that when Sidr had made landfall, there were not enough shelters or volunteers in the southwestern part of the country as the region was considered relatively free from large-scale disasters.

“In the Chattogram region, there are a good number of cyclone shelters and the preparedness is adequate, but the problem will be landslides. Also, as there is a lot of economic activity there, losses will be prominent after Mocha.”

PM to brief media on tri-nation tour tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address a press conference tomorrow to brief the media about the outcome of her recent tri-nation visit to Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom.

“The press conference will be held at her official Gono Bhaban residence at 4:00pm on Monday,” Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

On April 25, Hasina left Dhaka for Tokyo on a four-day official visit to Japan on the first leg of her tri-nation visit. She went to Japan at the invitation of her Japanese counterpart Kishida Fumio.

On the second leg of her visit to Washington DC, the prime minister attended a programme marking 50 years of Bangladesh-World Bank partnership and some side events that include a roundtable with US business leaders and several meetings with WB's incoming president Ajay Banga and managing director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva alongside a civic reception.

On the third leg of her visit to London, the premier attended the coronation of Charles III as the king of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms.

Hasina returned home from London on May 9.

5 children drown in Pabna, Patuakhali

STAR REPORT

Five children died after drowning in Pabna and Patuakhali yesterday.

In Pabna, three children drowned in a pond in Ishwardi upazila.

Jahid Hossain, 10, son of Bachhu Mandal, Hridoy Hossain, 10, son of Pangihu Promanik, and Anika Khatun, 11, daughter of Akijal Hossain, were residents of Sara Gopalpur village.

Their bodies were recovered and rushed to Ishwardi Upazila Health Complex where physicians declared them dead, said Aurbinda Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi police station.

In Patuakhali, two more children drowned in a canal in Mirzaganj upazila.

Sudipto Chandra Mistry, 7, son of Subir Chandra Mistry, and Brishui Rani, 9, daughter of Rakhal Chandra Mistry, are cousins, said local UP member Sohrah Hossain. “Neither of them knew how to swim.”

Just the day before, three children of a family drowned in a pond in Kalapara upazila.

[Our district correspondents contributed to this report]

2 workers die after falling off building

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two workers died after falling off a building in Dhaka's Shyamkur area yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Rabbi, 22, son of Md Liton and Rabbi, 18, son of Abbas Ali. Both hailed from Ghatail upazila in Tangail.

The incident happened around 10:00am at the under-construction building of a textile factory in the Postogola area.

Md Sohag, a co-worker of the deceased, said the two along with other workers were removing the rooftop shuttering, standing on the second floor.

Suddenly, they slipped and fell to the ground. They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they died from their injuries, he said.

The bodies were kept in the DMCH morgue for autopsies, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the DMCH Police Outpost.

Kenya starvation cult death toll exceeds 200: govt official

AFP, Nairobi

The death toll in an investigation linked to a Kenyan cult that practised starvation has climbed to 201, as investigators yesterday unearthed 22 more bodies from a coastal forest, a government official said.

Police believe most of the bodies found in a forest near the Indian Ocean town of Malindi belong to followers of Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, a taxi driver-turned-preacher who is accused of inciting them to starve to death “to meet Jesus.”

Coast Regional Commissioner Rhoda Onyancha, who announced the latest figures, said 26 people have been arrested over the deaths, including

Mackenzie and an “enforcer gang” tasked with ensuring that no one broke their fast or left the forest hideout alive.

She said investigators would halt exhumations for two days to reorganise their efforts, with the process to resume on Tuesday.

Mackenzie has not yet been required to enter a plea but a court on Wednesday ordered him to be detained for three more weeks pending further investigations over what has been dubbed the “Shakahola Forest Massacre.”

The 50-year-old founder of the Good News International Church turned himself in on April 14 after police acting on a tip-off first entered Shakahola forest.

Imran back home

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army chief” was behind his arrest.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the head of a shaky coalition, today warned that those involved in “facilitating, abetting and perpetrating” the violence should be arrested within 72 hours.

“Those who demonstrated anti-state behaviour will be arrested and tried in anti-terrorist courts,” he said during a visit to Lahore.

At least 10 people from PTI's senior leadership have been arrested since the protests began, one of Khan's lawyers said.

Interior minister Rana Sanaullah has repeatedly vowed that police will rearrest Khan, who remains wildly popular ahead of elections due in the Autumn.

The country now seems primed for a “progressively ugly showdown in the days and weeks to come”, read an editorial in Dawn, the country's leading English language newspaper.

“None of the leaders, political or institutional, who are invested in this tug-of-war appear ready to take a step back,” it said.

Khan returned to his Lahore

residence today where he was greeted by jubilant crowds of supporters who threw rose petals over his car.

His arrest on Tuesday came just hours after he was rebuked by the army for claiming it was involved in an assassination attempt against him last year.

Khan won power in 2018 on an anti-corruption campaign, voted in by an electorate weary of decades of dynastic politics.

Independent analysts say he was brought to power with the support of the military -- who hold undue influence in Pakistan -- before falling out with the generals.

Mobile data services and access to social media platforms including Facebook and YouTube, which were cut shortly after Khan's arrest on Tuesday, had been partly restored around the country.

Pakistani politicians have frequently been arrested and jailed since the country's founding in 1947 but few have so directly challenged a military that holds significant influence over domestic politics and foreign policy and has staged three coups.