

More rain likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Light to heavy rain in most parts of the country brought down the temperature yesterday, giving people relief from the scorching heat that swept over the country during the last couple of weeks.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), more rain or thundershowers in different parts of the country including Dhaka will occur in the 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

“The country experienced light to heavy rain yesterday and Dhaka will get more rainfall in the next one or two days,” said Tariful Nevaz Kabir, meteorologist of BMD.

The country’s highest rainfall was recorded in Tangail, 84 millimetres, within 12 hours from 6:00am yesterday while 47 millimetre rainfall was recorded in Dhaka during this time, according to the Met office.

“This rain brought relief to all who had been suffering in the scorching heat since the last week of May,” said Noorjahan Begum, a resident of Gandaria.

She said it was difficult for her to live in their rented house, which is the top floor of the building, during the hot weather.

“I even fell sick due to the excessive heat and was forced to go to the house of my daughter whose house is a little cool,” said Noorjahan.

Mohammad Salehin, a resident of the city’s Kolabagan said he could not sleep for the last few days due to unbearable heat and load shedding but he could sleep peacefully for a long yesterday morning due to the rain.

Many residents of Dhaka were seen getting wet in the rain on purpose while many children played football in the open or on the street under the rain.

“The rain was badly needed as we were exhausted due to the scorching heat as well as load-shedding,” Mohammad Shamim, a resident of Mirpur 12.

According to the forecast of Met Office, rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at many places over Chattogram and Barishal divisions; at a few places over Rangpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions; and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions.



Activists of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal take part in a rally protesting the price hike of essentials and demanding a caretaker government for the next national election yesterday. The photo was taken in Shantinagar area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SOUTHERN UKRAINE FRONT

Russia reports heavy fighting

Claims to have destroyed 21 armoured vehicles; Kyiv silent on counterattack

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia reported heavy fighting along the front in southern and eastern Ukraine yesterday, while Kyiv maintained a strict silence about its long-anticipated counterattack.

With virtually no independent reporting from the front lines, it was impossible to assess the degree to which Ukraine’s operation was under way or whether it was having success in penetrating Russian defences to drive out occupying forces.

Ukraine’s counter-offensive is ultimately expected to involve thousands of Ukrainian troops trained and equipped by the West. Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said Ukraine had begun a major offensive against Russia’s army but that Ukrainian forces had failed to achieve their objectives despite intense fighting over at least three days.

Pro-war Russian bloggers reported intense battles on the Zaporizhzhia front

near the city of Orikhiv, around the mid-point of the “land bridge” linking Russia to the Crimea peninsula, seen as one of Ukraine’s main potential targets.

The Russian army claimed to have destroyed more than 21 armoured vehicles in the past 24 hours. Such claims are unverifiable.

Ukraine generally forbids independent accredited journalists from reporting on its side of front lines during offensive operations.

The initial days of the counter-offensive have been overshadowed this week by a humanitarian disaster after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam holding back the waters of the Dnipro River that bisects Ukraine.

Thousands of people have been forced to evacuate homes flooded in the war zone, vast nature preserves have been wiped out and the destruction to irrigation systems is likely to cripple

agriculture across much of southern Ukraine for decades.

Kyiv said yesterday it had intercepted a phone call proving that Russian forces in control of the dam had blown it up. Moscow says Ukraine sabotaged it.

In its few comments, Ukraine has reported gains of territory in the east around the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces captured last month after nearly a year of the deadliest ground combat in Europe since World War Two.

But Kyiv has said virtually nothing about the southern front, widely assumed to be the focus of its main assault as it tries to push towards the coast and cut Russia’s access to Crimea.

In his nightly video address, delivered on a train after a visit to the flood zone in the south, President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Ukrainian troops and repeated earlier claims of success in Bakhmut, but gave no further account.

3 Rohingya women held while fleeing to India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday detained three Rohingya women who were trying to flee to India through Dhalai border in Moulvibazar’s Kamalganj upazila.

They are Minara Begum, 20, wife of Syedul Amin of Ukha camp 14; Formina Begum, 20, daughter of Iqbal Ahmad of camp 5; and Hamima Begum, 20, daughter of Noor Alam of camp 14.

According to police sources, three women and four men escaped from Kutupalong Transit Camp in Cox’s Bazar early Thursday. The BGB members detained three women.

Sanjoy Chakrabarty, officer-in-charge of Kamalganj Police Station, said four Rohingya men entered India after crossing the border. Members of Indian Border Security Force detained them, he added.

Man beaten to death by co-workers over theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A construction worker was beaten to death and another injured allegedly by their fellow workers in Sylhet city yesterday.

The deceased, Nayan, 20, of Sylhet’s Bishwanath upazila, was working at a under construction building of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. Injured Aiyub Ali is now undergoing treatment there.

Talking to this correspondent, Fazlul Haque, another construction worker, said the supervisor of the construction work and other workers detained Nayan and Aiyub over the allegation of stealing Tk 1.2 lakh and a mobile phone around 6:00am and started beating them.

After Nayan’s condition deteriorated, they took him to the hospital where doctors declared him dead, Fazlul added.

Mohammad Ali Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said they detained four construction workers in this connection. The detainees are Aminul Islam, Aynam, Saban Ali and Rubel Miah.

OCCUPIED WEST BANK Palestinian killed by Israeli forces

AFP, Ramallah

Israeli forces yesterday killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry and the army said, with the latter adding that a soldier was lightly wounded.

Mehdi Bayadsa, 29, was killed by “bullets from the occupation (Israel) near the Rantis military checkpoint, west of Ramallah”, the ministry said in a statement.

Sadiq’s men may decide his successor

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League central committee, said she came to Barishal from Dhaka along with 17 other leaders and activists to campaign for Khair.

To resolve the conflict between Sadiq and Khair, some central AL leaders visited Barishal and even some of them are staying there. The leaders include AL presidium members Abdur Rahman and Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Joint Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim and Organising Secretary Afzal Hossain.

But they failed to address the rift and launch a united campaign.

Al Nahian Khan Joy, former president of Chhatra League, said he

has been in Barishal for the last two days to campaign for Khair.

When unknown faces are campaigning for Khair, many AL leaders became nonchalant.

Afjal Hossain, election agent of Khair, told this newspaper that the central leaders are taking part in the campaign following the electoral code of conduct.

He, however, declined to comment when asked about the absence of district committee leaders and activists in the campaign.

Meanwhile, councillor aspirants in most words are seeking votes for boat, electoral symbol of AL, first and then for themselves, said locals.

Abdul Haye Mahabub, general secretary of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal of Barishal city unit, said Joynal Abedin and ATM Shahidullah Kabir are contesting for the councillor post in ward 10. “When we talked to them during a visit to the ward recently, both of them were seen seeking votes for the ruling party mayor candidate first and then for the councillor post.”

POLLS CODE

Khair yesterday offered Juma prayers at Markaj Mosque in the city’s Choumatha area.

After the prayers, his supporters were seen distributing leaflets. They entered the mosque compound

and sought votes for boat, which is a violation of section 20 of the electoral code of conduct.

Khair, however, did not take part in the campaign.

Md Humayun Kabir, returning officer of the BCC election, told The Daily Star that “the majority of our magistrates offered Juma prayers in different mosques in the city. They did not allow any candidates campaign in mosques.”

Asked about circulating leaflets, he said he did not get any complaints regarding this. “If we receive any complaint, we will definitely take action.”

Campaigning now intense

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“We are putting in all-out effort in every ward, especially the BNP-leaning ones. We are reaching out to everyone and trying them to bring to the polling centres,” a joint general secretary of Khulna JP told this paper.

POLLS CODE OF CONDUCT

Violating the electoral code of conduct, Khaleque and his supporters campaigned during Friday prayers at Baitun Noor Jame Masjid in Khulna’s New Market area.

According to the Election Code of Conduct, candidates are not allowed to campaign in places of worship.

Khaleque delivered a five-minute speech, sought blessings from everyone and urged them to go to the polling stations on election day.

After the prayers, around 20 supporters of Khaleque distributed campaign leaflets among the devotees inside the mosque.

A colourful election festoon of Khaleque was seen in the Rupsha Bus Terminal area.

Contacted, Khaleque said he did not violate any election code by seeking blessings and that he had no idea who put up the festoon there.

[Our Khulna correspondent also contributed to this report]

The passing of the ‘mystery man’ in politics

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made him the mystery man in our politics. What we don’t know about him far outweighs what we do.

I am talking about Serajul Alam Khan.

I saw him walking on the pavement in Banglamotor. He had long, flowing hair, white as kash flowers, a thick mustache, and a long white beard. He dressed in white-pajamas and panjabi, or a fatua. He looked exactly like a portrait of a sage or dervish from a book. He would walk briskly towards Shahbag. Sometimes he held a walking stick. Later on, I came to know that he was headed to the Intercontinental hotel. It was his daily routine.

That’s as much as I got to know him. I never met him face to face, nor did I have a talk with him. I tried reaching out to him a few times. But I was told that he was not interested to meet or talk to anyone other than his political disciples or people he knew well and considered loyal to him.

From an influential student leader, most favoured by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he became the leader who had founded the first opposition party against Bangabandhu after independence. Keeping his political activities shrouded in mystery, he left us forever.

He breathed his last yesterday at the intensive care unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. He had been undergoing treatment at the hospital for old age complications, according to DMCH Director Brig Gen Nazmul Haque.

Born in 1941 in Noakhali, he was 82 years old. He spent the last years of his life in quiet negligence. The media did not show much interest in him.

But he was one of the key organisers

of the country’s Liberation War, as well as its political polarisation afterwards.

Mohiuddin Ahmed and Shamsuddin Peyara wrote two books on Khan. Both writers were connected to the JSD, and both were close to Khan. Mohiuddin wrote “Protinayok” and Shamsuddin wrote “Ami Serajul Alam Khan”.

Initially, Khan was a prudent, far-sighted and creative student leader. He considered Bangabandhu as his one and only leader.

According to Mohiuddin’s book, Bangabandhu formed Bangladesh Liberation Force which consisted of his most trusted student leaders—Khan, Abdur Razzak, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and Kazi Aref Ahmed, among others. Khan’s contribution to taking the Bangladesh Chhatra League leadership to newer heights in the late 1960s was solid.

The two books by Mohiuddin and Shamsuddin help us understand what then triggered the rift between Bangabandhu and Khan.

According to the books, Khan’s rivalry with Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni was no secret. During the Liberation War, he stayed in India, yet the rivalry kept getting worse. It came out in the open after the country was liberated. Fuelled by conflicting ideological stances on key political issues, Khan and Moni led two separate factions of BCL. In 1972, both factions announced rallies in separate locations, and both wanted Bangabandhu to inaugurate their respective programmes. Finally, Bangabandhu came to inaugurate the programme organised by Moni’s faction. The rift between Bangabandhu and Khan had started since then.

In 1972, Bangabandhu formed

Jubo League with Sheikh Moni and Mostofa Mohsin Montu at the helm. Many may find it hard to believe but Khan formed the JSD within the next 4-5 days. He announced the party committee by naming Major Jalil (ret’d.) and ASM Abdur Rab as joint conveners. Khan did not hold any post in the JSD. His name could not be traced anywhere, and yet he was the brains behind the major decisions carried out by the party.

How was it possible to form a political party within such a short time?

Khan never responded to this question and many others regarding the mystery hovering over his personality. He hardly gave detailed answers to these questions. He didn’t write anything either. After taking his dictation, a few short booklets were written but those did not answer any of the major questions about his life.

In his book, Mohiuddin makes many attempts to answer these questions and unravel the mysteries. He engaged Khan in long conversations and asked many questions. He asked the same questions over and over. Sometimes he got incomplete answers, but on most occasions, Khan stayed silent. Though this book sheds light on many events of his life, many mysteries remain as they were.

In Shamsuddin Peyara’s book, Khan talked about the formation of the JSD. Regarding incidents like the activities of JSD’s Gonobahini and the attack on the Indian High Commission, Khan says that these were done without the knowledge of the JSD leadership.

These books also reveal how he had formed the Biplobi Shoinik Songstha

within the army, which was led by Colonel Taher. He also published the Gonokontho, the mouthpiece for the JSD.

But how did he fund all these different JSD activities?

Before independence, when he was involved in the BCL, he talked about monetary problems, and also mentioned how Bangabandhu and his wife had given him monetary support. His daily meals at the Intercontinental also raised eyebrows.

About the brutal killings of Bangabandhu and his family members, he says in Shamsuddin’s book, “I heard about this brutal killing at around 11:00am. I was in Kolkata. Naturally, I could not accept it ... his demise came in such a brutal way, and that too, along with his family members. I struggled a lot to make peace with this reality.”

Many JSD members rejoiced upon the brutal killing of Bangabandhu. They printed and distributed leaflets about it, according to “Jasoder Uthhan Patan: Uttal Somoyer Rajniti”, another book written by Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Although Khan was not present in the country at that time, it is hard to believe that these activities were carried out without his knowledge.

With the passing of Serajul Alam Khan, many unknown chapters of history will remain unknown. We will hear a lot of stories and myths now. Many stories will surface, and his near and dear ones will relate many others, but that’s what they will be—stories. It is unlikely that they will become a part of history.

He will live on as the “mystery man” in our politics, as Kapalik, or “Dada Bhai”.