

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE Heat records topple across sweltering Asia

AFP, Bangkok

Temperature records are being toppled across Asia, from India's summer to Australia's winter, authorities said yesterday, in fresh evidence of the impact of climate change.

The sweltering temperatures match longstanding warnings from climate scientists and come as countries from Greece to Canada battle record heat and deadly wildfires.

In India, the world's most populous country, officials said this August was the hottest and driest since national records began more than a century ago.

The month falls in the middle of India's annual monsoon, which usually brings up to 80 percent of the country's yearly rainfall.

But despite heavy downpours that caused deadly floods in the country's north earlier this month, overall rainfall has been far below average.

August saw an average of just 161.7 millimetres (6.4 inches), 30.1 mm lower than the previous August record in 2005, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

That has left the country baking in unrelenting heat. "The large rainfall deficiency and weak monsoon condition is the main reason," the IMD said.

Authorities in Japan also said yesterday that the country had experienced its hottest summer since records began in 1898.

Temperatures from June to August were "considerably higher" than average across the north, east and west of the country, the weather agency said.

In many locations "not only maximum temperatures but also minimum temperatures" reached record highs, it added.

And in Australia this winter was the warmest on record, with an average temperature of 16.75 degrees Celsius (62.15 Fahrenheit) for the season running from June to August.

That is a hair above a record set in 1996, and the highest average winter temperature since the country's records began in 1910, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

Climate change has fuelled searing temperatures across the globe already this year, with July the hottest month ever recorded on Earth.

Scientists have long warned that climate change produces heatwaves that are hotter, longer and more frequent.

And the warming El Nino weather pattern could turbocharge the heat further, though its effects are likely to become more apparent later in the year as it strengthens.

Heatwaves are among the deadliest natural hazards, with hundreds of thousands of people dying from preventable heat-related causes each year.

In developed countries, adaptations including air conditioning can help mitigate the impact.

But even in wealthy Japan, authorities said at least 53 people died of heatstroke in July, with almost 50,000 needing emergency medical attention.

The effects of heat are unevenly distributed, with small children and the elderly less able to regulate their body temperatures and thus more vulnerable. Those who have to work outside are also particularly at risk.

Even a healthy young person will die after enduring six hours of 35 degree Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) warmth coupled with 100 percent humidity.

But extreme heat does not need to be anywhere near that level to kill people, experts warn.

‘With this honour, comes more responsibility’

Korvi Rakshand, the founder of JAAGO foundation, has won the 2023 Ramon Magsaysay Award in the emergent leadership category. Rakshand talked to The Daily Star's Sadi Muhammad Alok over the phone after the announcement on Wednesday, and gave his reaction about the honour and spoke about JAAGO foundation in detail.

The Daily Star (DS): Today we came to know that you are one of the four winners of this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award. We congratulate you. How are you feeling after hearing this news?

Korvi Rakshand (KR): Thanks. While continuing my work, I never gave thought to winning such a prestigious award. We kept on working. Ramon Magsaysay authority told us that they have been monitoring JAAGO foundation's and my work for almost five years. We were very surprised to know this. We had no clue. During this long period, they conducted research and collected information on us through various means.

Needless to say, winning this award brings us a lot of delight. In the past, people like Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, and from our country, Fazle Hasan Abed sir, Prof Muhammad Yunus won it. As our name has now been included in that coveted list, our responsibilities have also increased. At the same time, winning such an award opens many new avenues. Previously we might have wanted to work inside the country. Now we may extend our successful model to other countries. In that case, it will be a source of pride for Bangladesh, too.

DS: JAAGO does voluntary work. However, many people don't have a clear idea about the foundation's work to be honest. Can you tell us a bit about your activities?

KR: JAAGO started its journey in 2007 with the voluntary work of teaching English to some underprivileged children. We had some spare time on our hands and, as students, wanted to help the children. This is how it started. It is always easier to help the children because elders wouldn't listen to us. Thus, we started our work with 17 children. Soon, the students started asking "When will we get promoted?", and we realised that in their imagination, we were running a school. Then we set up a school in Rayerbazar slum. After that, we thought we should start another school in Karail slum. After a few years, we realised that many entities are doing similar work in Dhaka—we should venture outside as well.

Eventually, when we went to other cities, we faced a major constraint. We found that no matter how noble our cause is, we could not replicate the positive outcome that we've received from the Dhaka children.

The main reason was a dearth of competent teachers. It was then that we brought in the online school concept where teachers could teach students from Dhaka through videos. During the Covid pandemic, people saw that it was very much feasible. However, when we started it way back in 2011, people laughed us off!

Many young individuals contacted us asking to work as volunteers for these efforts. While working with them, I found out that even though I, as a person or JAAGO as a foundation, wanted to work with only children and their education,



these young and enthusiastic individuals also wanted to work on youth development, women empowerment, and several other issues. A variety of ideas started pouring in. Then, we thought that we could not manage so many ideas and kickstarted a small platform named "Volunteer for Bangladesh".

The idea behind this platform was that it would bring active individuals together, who would act as a group and get things done. When we shared this on May 2, 2011, we saw that youths from Chattogram, Rajshahi, and Sylhet were saying, "Brother, we have nothing here. We want to work, too." From there till now, a total of 50,000 young individuals spanning all 64 districts are working on different objectives under the platform. A common question to us is, how are we managing these 50,000 people. Actually, we don't. Each district's youths conduct their own election to select the leadership. The winners decide which objective should be worked out in which district. This is how our journey is continuing for years.

DS: JAAGO foundation is no longer a volunteer organisation, right?

KR: Yes, you are right. We received an NGO license in 2020. Since then, we have been working with many

international organisations too. Before that, all activities of the foundation revolved around the people of this country, their money and their dreams inside the country.

DS: So, after getting an NGO license, you are getting external aid?

KR: After getting the NGO license, large-scale donors like UNICEF, USAID, and SSPO are working with us. As we did not have this licence before, we could not work with such a big fund. Now we can do it.

Now we are educating 13,500 children in Bandarban with the help of UNICEF. We brought back students who dropped out of school during the Covid pandemic. Currently, we are running a training programme funded by USAID for 55,000 young individuals who either dropped out, couldn't finish their education or are currently jobless. Our objective is to teach them relevant skills that can help them get employed.

We are also working with female students. Our journey consists of 16 years, and thus, those who started from playgroup are now heading towards the universities. We noticed that the number of female students dropped significantly at the university level, due to lack of support. JAAGO Women Scholarship was initiated last year. Through this scheme, we helped some meritorious female students who got the opportunity to study in public universities but couldn't continue due to financial constraints. Last year we awarded the scholarship to 100 such women. This year, 160 women received it. Recipients will get the amount each year during their four-year graduation course. Every year, we would like to award this scholarship to a new batch of girls.

DS: Now people from various walks of life are getting the opportunity to admit their children into JAAGO Foundation's schools. However, initially, we would see that some young individuals were collecting money or selling things on the Dhaka roads wearing yellow T-shirts donning the JAAGO logo. It seemed that they belonged to the privileged part of society and were mostly English medium students.

KR: It's true. Initially, we started with our friends and family. I studied at Scholastica. My friends also came from there. The scene you described was part of the initiative we took to celebrate World Children's Day.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

12 fishermen hurt in gas cylinder blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Some 12 fishermen suffered critical burn injuries when a gas cylinder exploded in a boat in Cox's Bazar town last morning.

The incident occurred around 8:00am, just a couple of hours after the fishermen anchored the boat to the Bakkhali river's jetty no 6 to begin selling the fish they caught from the Bay.

Police, however, could not immediately determine what caused the gas cylinder to explode, said Md Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Police Sadar Station.

Of the victims, 10 fishermen were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with 70 percent burn injuries, said Ashiquur Rahman, resident medical officer (RMO) of Cox's Bazar General Hospital.

They are Aiyub, 31, Dil Mohammad, 30, Rafique, 25, Monir, 26, Shofiquil, 26, Arman, 20, Rahim, 37, Rahimullah, 30, Shaheen, 35, and Osman, 19.

The remaining two – Ali Akhbor, 50, and Dulal Majhi, 47, were undergoing treatment at Cox's Bazar General Hospital with 30 percent burns.

Missing college student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A college student was found dead yesterday morning, 20 hours after he went missing while swimming in the Rowmari canal in Jamalpur's Melandah upazila.

Shofiquil Islam, 24, of Sherpur's Sreebordi upazila, was a third-year honours student at Dr Sekender Ali College in Sherpur.

Firefighters recovered his body from the canal around 11:30am.

Shofiquil drowned after going swimming in the Rowmari canal on Thursday around 4:00pm.

Divers from the district fire service unit started a rescue operation around 5:30pm but were unable to locate him that night, said Melandah Police Station Officer-in-Charge Delwar Hossain.

Two killed in clash over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Two people were killed and at least five others were injured in a clash over a land dispute in Cumilla's Barura upazila last morning.

The deceased were identified as Khorshed Alam, 32, and Abdus Sattar, 55, of Jalgaon village of the upazila.

Witnesses said there was a longstanding dispute between Khorshed and Sattar over a piece of land in the village. The clash took place as Abdus Sattar and his men went to plough that land in the morning.

Hearing the news, Khorshed and his men hurried to the scene to halt his rival group, resulting in a clash, they said.

Khorshed and Sattar were killed in the clash, while five other injured were receiving treatment at Cumilla Medical College Hospital and District Sadar Hospital, said Firoz Hossain, officer-in-charge of Barura Police Station.

Additional police forces were deployed in the village to prevent further untoward incidents, he said.

30 homes gone All set for grand opening

FROM PAGE 12

of a 1km-long flood control embankment in the village are moving their homes and livestock to higher ground out of fear that the dam will collapse, said UP Chairman Rasheduzzaman Rasel.

The Jamuna River was flowing 16cm above the danger level at Mothurapara point of Sariakandi upazila yesterday at 3:00pm, according to officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB).

Contacted, Nazmul Haque, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Bogura, said they were working to prevent the erosion.

"Around 13,000 families have been marooned by the recent flood. The government is distributing relief materials among the victims," said Golam Kibria, the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO).

Meanwhile, the flood situation continues to deteriorate in other northern districts, namely Sirajganj, Kurigram, and Jamalpur.

In Sirajganj, vast low-lying areas have gone underwater after the Jamuna overflowed its banks, marooning around 100,000 people in five upazilas, said locals and people's representatives there.

Jamuna was flowing 13cm above the danger level at the Hard Point and 7cm above the danger level at the Kazipur Point yesterday at 6:00pm, according to WDB.

"The water level is increasing rapidly in the Jamuna due to onrush water from upstream India, further deteriorating the flood in the district. The situation is expected to remain unchanged in the next couple of days," said Ranajit Kumar, sub divisional engineer of the district WDB.

In Kurigram, the Brahmaputra has been swelling since Thursday due to onrush water from upstream India.

However, the water level was still below the danger mark, local WDB officials said yesterday.

"Houses and croplands in our union have been submerged," said Sohrab Hossain, chairman of Ashtamir Char Union Parishad in Chilmari upazila.

FROM PAGE 1
wheelers and motorcycles. Other vehicles will run on the structure at a maximum speed of 60km per hour at the beginning, according to sources.

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway is one of the two expressways now being built to reduce traffic congestion in the city.

The 20km Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway is being built on the Dhaka EPZ-Kawla route. At Kawla, it will be connected with the Dhaka Elevated Expressway which will link the Dhaka-Chattogram Expressway at Kutubkhali.

Experts said people will have to wait until the opening of both the expressways to get the full benefit of the structures.

Once the two expressways are operational, people from the

country's northern, western and south-western regions will be able to avoid the capital's perennial traffic jams while travelling via Dhaka.

Trucks and lorries, which are now barred from entering the city during the day, will also use the expressways. The deadline of the Ashulia Elevated Expressway is June 2026.

PARTIAL OPENING AT LONG LAST

In January 2011, the BBA signed a deal with Italian-Thai Development Public Company to build the Dhaka Elevated Expressway at a cost of Tk 8,703 crore.

The agreement was revised and inked again in December 2013 with a revised cost of Tk 8,940 crore after bringing several changes to the design. According to the deal, the government will provide Tk 2,413

upazila.

Sarwar Alam, joint secretary of Borhanuddin upazila BNP, brought the allegation at a press conference.

Monir Hossain Mia, OC of Borhanuddin Police Station, told The Daily Star that activists of BNP and AL brought out processions at the same time. Police had to disperse them as tension ran high when the processions came close to each other at the intersection near the police station.

A chase and counter-chase took place between the activists of BNP and AL in Bogura's Nandigram upazila, leaving seven people injured.

Alauddin Sarkar, president of Nandigram upazila BNP, told this newspaper that AL men, led by its leader Anwar Hossain Rana, attacked their programme at their temporary party office near Nandigram Filling Station.

He said their seven activists were wounded in the attack.

crore (27 percent) as "viability gap funding" while the private partner will bear the remaining cost.

Besides, the government is to spend Tk 4917.57 crore on land acquisition, resettlement and relocation of utility service lines, meaning the total cost of the project is Tk 13,857.57 crore.

But the scheme faltered time and again over the years mainly due to the failure of Italian-Thai to manage funds and problems related to land acquisition, said officials involved in the project.

However, the fund-related crisis was resolved after Italian-Thai handed over 49 percent of its share to two Chinese companies – China Shandong International Economic and Technical Corporation Group (34 percent) and Sino Hydro Corporation Ltd (15 percent) – in 2020.

Denying the allegation, Anwar claimed that BNP men threw brick chips at them when their peace rally was passing by the BNP office. Their two party activists were injured.

On the other hand, traffic came to a halt in Park Road area of Gaibandha town following a clash between BNP men and police.

Mahmudun Nabi Tutul, general secretary of Gaibandha BNP, said their 20 activists were injured in the attack and police detained four party leaders.

Police attacked their rally without any provocation, he alleged.

Masud Rana, OC of Gaibandha Sadar Police Station, told this paper that BNP men tried to vandalise some shops. Police brought the situation under control by firing teargas shells and detaining two.

[Our correspondents from Mymensingh, Bogura, Barishal, Jhenaidah and Patuakhali contributed to this report]

BNP doesn't want election

FROM PAGE 1

the loan for the Padma Bridge would not be given unless the MD was allowed to stay in his post. Hillary Clinton herself gave the order to stop the Padma Bridge funding.

"Then I said, 'We will build the Padma Bridge with our own money.' We have done exactly that, and shown it to the world. Bangladesh can, the people of Bangladesh can."

Addressing the activists, Hasina said, "Keep your educational institutions clean.... Encourage people with uncultivated land to grow crop If anyone pays attention to production, we will not have to beg from others."

She then asked them to encourage people to register for the pension scheme.

The event started around 3:00pm. Carrying festoons, banners and placards, hundreds of thousands of BCL members from across the country started arriving at the venue in the

morning.

Within hours, the venue and its adjoining areas turned into a human sea.

In her speech, the PM said, "I provided my children with one thing: education. They took out loans to continue their studies. Wealth and money are of no use. Everyone realised that during the coronavirus pandemic. I want our sons and daughters to grow up skilled and qualified."

The names of Chhatra League activists can be found on the list of martyrs of the Liberation War. "When I was arrested in 2007, it was the Chhatra League that took to the streets."

BCL President Saddam Hossain presided over the massive rally while General Secretary Sheikh Wali Ashif Inan moderated it.

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also addressed the rally.

This govt has to step down

FROM PAGE 1

"We again wage a movement to bring back democracy," he said.

Accusing the police of obstructing the BNP's movement, he said, "The movement would continue although our party activists are being arrested and false cases are being filed."

Presiding over the rally, Dhaka South city unit BNP convener Abdus Salam called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign and hold the next national election under a caretaker government. "Otherwise, the government will be forced to quit through a mass movement."

After the rally, the BNP took out a large procession from its Nayapalton central office. The procession ended

near Rajdhani Super Market at 6:30pm after marching through different streets.

A good number of law enforcers were deployed in Nayapalton and its adjacent areas to avert any untoward situation.

Sri Lanka pays back

FROM PAGE 1

the amount within three months.

Bangladesh lent the money to Sri Lanka in three instalments in 2021 – the first tranche of \$50 million was sent on August 19, the second instalment of \$100 million 11 days later and another \$50 million in September – the first loan given by Bangladesh to any country.