



PHOTO: STAR

Helping stray animals beat the heat

RBR

Dhaka is experiencing the worst possible heat wave and Dhakaites are all chalking out their best-known life hacks and household hacks to beat the heat.

Fermented rice thirst quencher with lemon and kaffir lime leaves is a cooling drink that people used to have when there were no refrigerators, and now grannies are insisting for that cooler to be had. Having tamarind juice, lemonades, oral saline, and glucose drinks has become a must in this heat wave.

But, what about the city's other dwellers who cannot express their discomfort like us? I am talking about stray animals and our pets. This city is theirs too, just like we care for ourselves, we must remember to care for our stray animals during this unprecedented weather.

Dhakaites are generally kind-hearted and social media is full of clips showing people leaving terracotta bowls or plastic buckets of water on the balcony or rooftops for birds to take a dip and drink a sip. The poor crows are panting, sparrows are hiding in building cracks and ventilators, the dogs near the butcher shop or grocery shop in the

lanes are lying half-conscious on the footpath, street cats are hardly seen and are hiding in some corners.

Rakibul Haque Amil, founder and chairperson of People for Animal Welfare (PAW) Foundation, explains what we should do for our street animals and pets during this heat.

Stray animals are suffering the most in this heat wave. Your house pets are taken care of, yet pet lovers who own local breeds and foreign breed dogs, cats and birds must allow them to rest in air conditioning rooms or use an air cooler between noon and 4:00pm or 5:00pm when the heat is almost unbearable. These poor animals are vulnerable around those hours.

"If you do not have an AC, then give them a fan, placed at their level so that the air can pass and circulate around them. It is important to maintain temperature. Give them a wet towel wash every day, and frequent baths. Pets tend to hide under a table or bed, let them be and try to keep that place



cool by mopping it with water," he said.

Amil adds, "As for stray animals, find them a shaded corner, pour water containers and place them in that corner or the footpath for dogs. Cats can help themselves but still try to look out for

them as well." Birds living in urban cities do not have easy access to water bodies like ponds or swamps. So, it is best to put out water for their relief. As city

dwellers, it is our responsibility to ease life for our city animals too.

Professor Dr KBM Saiful Islam, dean, Faculty of Animal Science & Veterinary Medicine and Chairman, Department of Medicine and Public Health Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka says poultry and farm animals also suffer from heat stress or stroke.

"The sheds for such animals are not scientifically constructed, it traps the heat inside the room. It is important to keep their shed cool by placing thick, wet jute cloths on the tin roof or spray water at intervals. During extremely hot hours of the day do not keep the animals out in the open.

"We must know that there is saline for animals too. If you cannot find one then human oral saline will suffice; household pets or street animals can be given saline water as well. Your pets need to be trimmed, given plenty of fresh water with vitamin C and electrolyte mix. You must remember to give them foods that are easy to digest so that not much energy is needed for digestion.

"Animal welfare and animal rights need to be remembered and practiced by us all during this suffocating summer."

Padma Bridge collects Tk 1,500cr in tolls since opening

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The Padma Bridge has collected Tk 1,500 crore in tolls since its inauguration on June 25, 2022.

Till April 27 midnight, a total of Tk 1502,62,15,900 have been collected from 1,12,91,095 vehicles, said Padma Bridge Site Office Additional Director Md Amirul Haider Chowdhury.

Amirul said, "The amount of toll collection on Padma Bridge is as expected."

Approximately 56,01,232 vehicles used the Mawa entry point, while 56,89,863 vehicles crossed at the Jajira point.

A record was set on April 9, when the bridge saw its highest single-day toll collection of Tk 4.90 crore from 45,204 vehicles.

The Padma Bridge was formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June 25, 2023 and was opened to traffic the following morning, marking a significant milestone in the country's infrastructure development and economic enhancement.

On the first day, 51,316 vehicles crossed the bridge and Tk 2,09,31,550 was collected.

The megastructure was constructed with a budget of Tk 30,193.39 crore.

Teen gang leader killed in attack by rivals

UNB, Chattogram

A leader of a teenage gang was murdered in an attack allegedly by rival gang members in Patiya upazila of Chattogram Saturday afternoon, said police.

The victim identified as Raju Hossain Russell, 27, was the son of Jafar Ahmed from Sushkradandi village under ward 2 of Patiya municipality.

The incident took place near Palli Mongol Temple around 5:00pm.

Raju's sister, Ajma Akhtar Liza, accused a rival gang leader, Jewel Chowdhury alias Julu, and his accomplices, Sakib and Arman, of her brother's murder.

"Julu, Sakib, Arman, along with others, have killed my brother over establishing dominance in the area. I demand justice for his murder," she said.

Patiya Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Jasim Uddin said Julu is wanted for multiple crimes including theft, robbery, extortion, and drug-related offences.

"Raju himself had a troubled past with law enforcement; after attempting an escape during arrest, he was shot and subsequently nicknamed 'Guli Raju' by locals."

Sources say Julu and his gang have instilled fear in the community through theft, extortion, and violence, causing locals to hesitate in speaking out against them.

Speaking on the matter, Additional Superintendent of Police (Patiya Circle) Ariful Islam said law enforcement visited the scene and collected evidence.

Draft law more breaches more control

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because it has our data. The law says the state would have unbridled access to that data."

He also said that national security is not a well-defined term, and that it can encompass a wide range of abuses of the law.

"This exception will become the law," he said, pointing out that freedom of expression is criminalised in Bangladesh.

Data localisation could make data breaches more damaging, he said, adding, "Storing data in a single location creates a single point of failure for hackers."

Alam said that international companies may be hesitant to operate in Bangladesh due to data storage restrictions, and this could stifle foreign investment.

He added that data localisation also means the government can barge in and access citizen's data at any time. "Data localisation must not be made mandatory."

Alam also said, "Global cloud service leaders always monitor threats collaboratively. But if we store data locally in any data server, we are missing out on this international monitoring and oversight."

"Section 51 mandates storing all classified data within Bangladesh's territory. Data centres are energy-intensive, such that big tech companies are taking them underwater. We are not being able to give adequate energy to homes and people. How will we ensure that we can sustain these data centres?"

The speakers also demanded the Data Protection Authority be independent, instead of being government-controlled.

"The government cannot hold itself accountable," Alam said, adding, "We are yet to see the government hold anyone accountable for the multitudes of data leaks happening."

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director at TIB, said the law has improved a lot following consultations with stakeholders.

"It can be seen they are adopting a majority of the recommendations being placed by the stakeholders. But then we are observing that they are ignoring the recommendations we are most concerned about."

On November 27, the cabinet approved in principle the draft Data Protection Act, which may soon be placed in parliament.

A reopening that defies heatwave and logic too

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Primary schools, however, will remain open across the country.

Earlier in the day, Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury opposed closing educational institutions nationwide because of high temperatures in some areas.

He had said schools could decide on their own if the temperature has become unbearable and has gone over 42 degrees Celsius in the areas concerned.

"Why do we talk about closing schools whenever something happens? It is not right to expect everything to will remain open, but educational institutions will be shut," the minister told a programme in Dhaka.

In Bangladesh, a temperature of 40 degrees Celsius is not anything new.

Schools and colleges were scheduled to reopen on April 21 after the end of the Eid and Pahela Baishakh holidays but the government extended the closure until April 27 due to the heatwave.

Yesterday, 34 districts out of the 64 recorded temperatures above 36 degrees Celsius. In Jashore, it was 42.2 degrees Celsius, yesterday's highest in the country.

Mostak, a teacher of the Khatapchar Azizia Mabudia Alim Madrasa in Boalkhali upazila of Chattogram, collapsed on his way to the madrasa in Kalurghat area yesterday morning.

"The teacher became unconscious when he was crossing a river on a ferry," said Kazi Emran Kaderi, a relative of the teacher.

Mostak was taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 10:00am.

In Jashore, Ahsan, a teacher at Ahmedabad Secondary School, lost consciousness at school, said Headteacher AJM Masud Parvez.

He was declared dead when taken to Jashore General Hospital.

In Noakhali, 18 students of Joy Narayanpur Islamia Fazil Degree Madrasa in Begumganj and Janakalyan Shikkaha Trust High

School in Hatiya became sick in classes.

Fatema Israt, a senior teacher at Trust High School, said, "Just after class started, some students of class-VI, -VIII, -IX, and -X became sick. Some of them started throwing up while others complained of severe headaches."

Local doctors attended to them and they were sent home, she added.

Jamal Uddin, a teacher at the madrasa, said one of the students lost consciousness in a classroom.

In Faridpur's Saltha upazila, 10 students and three teachers, including the acting headmaster, of Ramkantopur Government Primary School became sick. Two students had to be admitted to the hospital.

Sukla Rani Shil, acting headmaster of the school, said, "We received treatment and two students were admitted to the Saltha Upazila Health Complex."

"The teachers and students fell sick due to excessive heat," said Saltha Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Kazi Abdul Momin.

In Munshiganj, a class-VI student passed out during class at Banari Bahumukhi High School of Hasail Banari union in Tongibari upazila.

A madrasa student in Shologhor of Srinagar also became unconscious in class. He was later admitted to the Srinagar Health Complex.

The Daily Star talked to headteachers of 10 schools in the capital and they said student attendance was low.

Mozammel Huq Miah, headteacher of Rajdhani High School, said, "We had around 50 percent attending today [Sunday] whereas the normal attendance is over 80 percent."

"... Many parents did not send their children to school fearing the scorching heat."

Echoing him, Principal of Dhaka Collegiate School Ariful Islam said some parents expressed concern over sending their children to school.

Salma Akhtar, headteacher at Hariyadi Government Primary

School in Kapasia of Gazipur, said due to the heat, only a few students attended school.

PARENTS CONCERNED

Many parents were sceptical of sending their children to school. Some opined that the authorities were prioritising the schedule for academic activities over the children's health.

"When there is no respite from the heatwave and a heat alert continues, what is the point of reopening the schools? The weather remained unchanged as the government extended the heat alert again," said Abrar, a parent from Mohammadpur.

"If they [the government] had to reopen then why did they shut down the schools before...? The decisions are whimsical," he said.

Shafiur Reza, a parent, said, "The government should extend the closure considering the well-being of the children. This might cause some loss but that can be made up."

Jannatul Ferdous, a mother of two sixth graders in Jhenidah, said, "The temperature outside is unbearable for adults. How can the children bear it?" She demanded that the authorities close schools immediately.

Prof Siddiqur Rahman, a former director at the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University, told The Daily Star, "Due to the heatwave, all schools were closed, which was a welcomed decision. But reopening them, before any improvement in the temperature situation is not an appropriate move."

"If students become ill or die then what's the point of arranging education? First, their safety must be ensured."

The decision to continue classes in educational institutions amid such a heatwave should be reconsidered, he added.

[Our staff correspondent in Chattogram and our correspondents in Noakhali, Benapole, Gazipur, Faridpur and Munshiganj contributed to this report.]

Extortionists on the prowl in Badda

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Mehedi and Robin, the two mob bosses, also control gangs in Bhatara. The other listed criminals who control local gangs from abroad are Zeesan Ahmed, Dalim Mahub and Chanchal, police said.

Some members of the gangs are also ward- and thana-level leaders of the ruling Awami League, police said.

In Joarsahara area of Bhatara on March 18, a group of armed criminals shot Rubel Hossain, a businessman, in the leg for refusing to give money.

After the incident, the Gulshan division of Detective Branch of police arrested seven suspects and recovered six firearms, five magazines and 75 bullets from their possession.

One of the arrestees, Rasheduzzaman Khan Raju, admitted that he shot Rubel.

On March 11 and 12, a Rab team in Uttar Badda arrested six members of a gang that used to make and sell firearms. The officers recovered four guns, and many components of firearms waiting to be assembled.

On February 17, Badda police arrested three alleged associates of Zeesan Ahmed and recovered a pistol and five bullets.

One of them, Amzad Hossain, known among locals as Chakku Sohel, had photos of a modern, small pistol. Police recovered the pistol and four bullets at the flat of one of Zeesan's men, Mohammad Rahim, said Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam Bhuiyan of Badda Police Station, who led the drive.

But police could not catch Rahim. Another close associate of Zeesan, Abul Bashar Badsha, is a former general secretary of Badda Thana Swachchhasebak League. He is also on the run, police sources said.

Police said ward-21 Jubo League General Secretary Abdul Mannan handles Zeesan's money. Police are looking for him.

Locals and police sources said there are at least six current or former local leaders of AL and its front organisations in Mehedi's gang.

On April 10, a guard of an ATM booth was stabbed to death in Shahjadpur area of Gulshan.

Detectives arrested a suspect named Ariful Islam 12 days later.

He had tried to break open the cash machine but failed.

Contacted, Jahangir Alam, general secretary of Badda AL, said he always cooperates with law enforcers in catching criminals.

"When a fully-fledged committee of the party will be formed in Badda, men involved in crimes will not be included," he told The Daily Star.

Rifat Rahman Shamim, deputy commissioner (Gulshan) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said police are continuously conducting raids and arresting suspects.

"We request people to let us know if they receive threats. The complainants' identities are kept secret," the DC said.

Ramp up electricity production from May 1

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secretariat to discuss ways to boost power production.

Sources said the state minister told the power plant owners to utilise the furnace oil-based power plants.

"In the future, you will not be allowed to get capacity payments unless you generate power. If power generation doesn't increase by May 1, we will impose fines as per agreement," a top ministry official told The Daily Star, quoting Nasrul.

The BIPPA representatives agreed to increase power generation from next month, said the official, adding that if everything goes as planned there will be next to no power cuts this year.

Some districts of the country have been seeing eight to 10 hours of power outages every day, said officials of Bangladesh Power Development Board.

On April 22, the PDB produced a record 16,233MW. However, there were still power cuts.

The PDB has been producing up to 7,400MW from gas-based power plants, about 4,100MW from coal-fired plants and about 3,100MW from furnace-oil based plants.

The country's liquid fuel-based power plants have a combined capacity of around 6,000MW. But PDB rarely produces more than 3,500MW due to a shortage of fuel.