



DHAKA'S HEATWAVE

Between Lilies and Migraines

RBR

Like the song "Summer Nights" from the '80s blockbuster "Grease", I keep humming my own parody these days: Summer lovin', had me a headache. Summer headaches happened so fast. I popped a pill, hoping for relief. But the pain stayed, beyond belief. Summer days, drifting away... to uh-oh, those summer migraines!

A pat on my back for rhyming -- or maybe thanks to these AI times for tweaking it. But let's not linger there. Instead, let me take you back to the current oppressive heatwave -- the headaches, the waves of humidity, and the embarrassing sweat -- that make daily life in Dhaka feel unbearable.

Before diving into the intensity of the day's temperature, I pause to reflect on the intoxicating scents of summer flowers. Kamini, or Orange Jasmine, with its heavily scented, white, star-shaped blooms and glossy foliage, fills the air with a heady fragrance. Then there are lilies -- showy, exotic, dramatic -- gracing gardens from early to late summer. Their bright colours and delicate shapes are nature's gift, offering a sense of calm despite the scorching heat.

Summer in Bangladesh, from late April to mid-June, brings a vibrant display of heat-resistant flowers: Krishnochura with its fiery red canopy, Sonalu with golden cascades, and Jarul with purple blossoms. These blooms thrive in oppressive humidity, painting Dhaka's streets in colour.

Many summer flowers are nocturnal, their white petals glowing in moonlight, their hypnotic fragrance attracting birds and bees. These



ethereal blooms are why I confess my love for tropical summers in Dhaka, urging you [to also see the charm of sunny days and breezy nights.

Even though the weather forecast says rain is expected over the next week, the heatwave is a devastating dampener to this euphoria.

I love summer, but not the heatwave. Much of this unforgiving heat is our own doing: rapid urbanisation has created a localised heat trap. Dhaka's dense concrete, asphalt roads, and glass buildings absorb heat during the day and release it slowly at night, preventing the city from cooling down. Add to that our near-constant use of air conditioners, which vent waste heat into the streets, raising outdoor temperatures even further.

The loss of green spaces -- once the city's natural cooling agents -- only worsens the problem. Combined with

seasonal weather patterns, the result is this torrid spell. A short Kalboishakhi storm may sweep through, but the suffocating humidity that follows often feels worse. Sometimes I wonder if heatwaves are a preview of what hell might feel like.

Beyond frangipani and romantic visions of summer, the reality is harsh: heatwaves and extreme humidity are suffocating, making city life nearly unbearable. Right now, Dhaka is caught in a mild-to-moderate spell, but the impact feels far heavier.

During these stifling days, caring for ourselves, animals, and birds is crucial. People must drink plenty of fluids -- coconut water, lemon water, oral saline -- and wear light cotton clothes while avoiding direct sun during peak hours. Meals should be light, with fruits and vegetables instead of oily or spicy food, and



PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

sunscreen or hats are essential against UV rays. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable, so they should remain indoors in shaded, cool areas.

Pets and street animals need shade and fresh water too. Never leave them in parked vehicles or force them to walk on hot pavements that burn their paws. Birds also suffer, so bowls of clean water and food in shaded balconies or rooftops can help them survive, while cages should never be left in direct sunlight.

Heatstroke is a serious risk for all living beings, with symptoms like dizziness, vomiting, headache, and fainting. Immediate cooling and medical attention are vital. In short, staying hydrated, seeking shade, eating light, and protecting against the sun are essential steps to safeguard humans, animals, and birds during this severe heatwave.



JS scraps duty-free car benefit for MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, scrapping the duty-free car benefit for MPs to reduce state expenditure, increase transparency and accountability, and ensure equality at par with citizens.

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman moved the bill in parliament, and it was passed by voice vote. The cabinet had approved the draft on Thursday.

The bill abolishes Section 3C of the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 1973, which outlines the pay and perks of Bangladesh's MPs.

Section 3C had stated that an MP is entitled to import one car, microbus or SUV free of customs

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Fuel rationing for emergency vehicles lifted: Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman told parliament yesterday that fuel rationing imposed on emergency response agencies and service providers has been withdrawn.

"Fuel restrictions on police, law-enforcing agencies, ambulances, the fire service and others engaged in emergency services have been lifted. We made this decision two days ago. I hope there will be no further problems," the prime minister said in response to a point of order raised by Monirul Haque Chowdhury, MP for Cumilla-6, in parliament.

Earlier, during the point of order, MP Monirul Haque Chowdhury referred to the killing of customs officer Bullet Bairagi in Cumilla.

He said, "On his way home, he [Bullet Bairagi] was murdered and left abandoned. I called the police, but they said they were facing a fuel crisis, so their duty hours had been reduced and they could not stay that late."

Demanding the immediate withdrawal of police fuel rationing, he warned, "Otherwise, a law and order crisis may emerge, obstructing people's ability to move freely and safely."

Over 90% of July uprising cases

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Court documents show that at least 24 cases have so far been filed with various police stations in Dhaka city against 77 journalists on different charges, including murder, attempted murder, and unlawful assembly linked to the uprising.

Of the journalists, Shyamal Dutta, former editor of Bhorer Kago; Mozammel Haque Babu, former managing director and editor-in-chief of Ekattor TV; Farzana Rupa, ex-principal correspondent at the TV channel; and Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at the same TV station, are now behind bars in connection with murder cases.

Seeking anonymity, a journalist, named in a murder case with Jatrabari Police Station, said the accusation of his involvement in killings during a protest on August 5, 2024, came as a shock to him.

"I knew nothing about the incident. I learnt about it from social media... This false case has taken a heavy toll on me over the last one and a half years," the journalist, who works for a national daily, told The Daily Star.

Expressing frustration over the lack of progress in the probe, he said the prolonged legal battle not only affected his professional life but also left him in a state of uncertainty.

Another journalist, Kazi Nazrul Islam from Shariatpur, has been living in fear since he was implicated in an attempted murder case filed with the New Market Police Station in September 2024.

His fears grew after he observed that bail was rarely granted in cases linked to the uprising.

"I underwent stomach surgery at a Dhaka hospital on July 2, 2024. Following the doctor's advice, I had been on bed rest at my Shariatpur home since then. Yet, I was made an accused in a case filed over an

uprising-related incident on August 1, 2024, in the capital," said Nazrul, a correspondent of Bangla daily "Jaijaidin" in Shariatpur.

"This case has severely affected me both mentally and financially. I don't know when I will be cleared of it as the investigation drags on," he added.

Lawyer Tariqul Islam, who has been defending a number of the accused in Dhaka courts, said many individuals with no political affiliation were arbitrarily arrested.

"They were listed as unidentified suspects under vague or fabricated

- 1,855 cases filed with police stations across the country
- 799 of them lodged over murders, rest on other charges
- Investigation completed in 176 cases
- Charge sheet submitted in 156 cases

charges and forced to remain in jail for months without trial... Such practices obstruct the course of justice and constitute a grave violation of fundamental human rights," he noted. **VICTIMS' FAMILIES FRUSTRATED** For Fatema Akter, a college student, the wait for justice has compounded her grief.

She is the eldest daughter of Mohammad Habib, 45, who was killed in Jatrabari while taking part in a protest on July 20, 2024.

More than a year and a half passed since a murder case was filed with Jatrabari Police Station over her father's killing, but there has been no

visible progress in the investigation.

"We are still waiting for justice," said Fatema, venting her frustration.

"My father was the sole breadwinner of our six-member family... We are facing severe financial hardship. Now my brother is the only earning member, but his income is not enough to support the family," she said.

Like her, Nurul Amin Mollah from Patuakhali has been waiting to see justice served.

His 23-year-old son, Jihad Hossain, a master's student at Kabi Nazrul Government College, was shot dead in Shonir Akhira area during a protest on July 19, 2024.

Nearly two months later, Nurul filed a murder case with Jatrabari Police Station against 84 people, but police have yet to submit a probe report, according to court records.

"I don't know what has happened to the case. We only sought justice... All we can do now is wait," Nurul told The Daily Star.

When contacted, AHM Sahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (media and public relations) at the PHQ, said the July uprising related cases are highly sensitive, and that investigations are taking more time than usual due to large numbers of accused in the cases.

"The priority is to verify evidence -- such as video footage, digital data, witness testimonies -- and submit charge sheets that will hold up during trial," he said, adding that police are working to complete investigations as quickly as possible.

In reply to a query, he said, "Allegations of harassment of innocent individuals, including journalists, are being taken seriously. Police are verifying cases involving erroneous or insufficiently supported accusations. Legal measures are being taken to provide relief where appropriate."

Gunman planned to target Trump officials

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"We do believe, based upon just a very preliminary start to understanding what happened, that he was targeting members of the administration."

Blanche added no further motive was known for the attack, confirming the suspect -- who was armed with a shotgun, handgun and knives -- was staying at the Washington Hilton hotel where the black-tie dinner was held on Saturday evening.

"We believe that he traveled by train from Los Angeles to Chicago, and then from Chicago to Washington," Blanche said. "It appears he purchased these firearms in the past couple years."

Attendees dove under tables in chaotic scenes as Secret Service agents swarmed into the glitzy White House Correspondents' Association



dinner, held annually in the US capital.

Crowded into the ballroom were Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance, several cabinet members and top lawmakers, and hundreds of guests in black tie.

Trump said at a hastily arranged late-night news conference at the White House that he first thought

the noise was a tray being dropped, before realizing it was gunfire. He said he hoped the media gala would be rescheduled within a month.

"They seem to think he was a lone wolf, and I feel that too," the president said. One officer was shot at close range in his safety vest and appeared to be not seriously harmed.

Trump added that the venue was "not a particularly secure" facility, as questions swirled about the president's safety.

An AFP photographer saw FBI tactical agents on Sunday evening entering a two-story, brown house in Torrance, California associated with the suspect.

Multiple US news outlets identified him as 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen from the southwestern Los Angeles suburb.

Coal overtakes gas in power generation

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PDB's summer plan projects up to 5,130MW from gas and 5,700MW from coal during peak hours.

Three coal plants under maintenance or facing shortages are expected to raise output by early May. This is likely to make coal's dominance regular.

Badrul Imam, honorary professor at Dhaka University's Department of Geology, said the country's increasing dependence on imported LNG and coal is the cumulative result of years of weak focus on domestic gas exploration, development, and production.

"The country historically relied on its own indigenous gas resources, which had long supported power generation at relatively low cost, but insufficient investment and policy attention gradually pushed the energy sector toward imported fuels," he told The Daily Star.

"Imported LNG is expensive, while coal carries environmental costs despite being relatively cheaper than LNG in some cases," he said.

"The current situation, where coal-based generation has overtaken gas-fired power generation, should be seen as the consequence of failing to

adequately explore and develop local gas reserves over many years.

Imam also said Bangladesh still has significant hydrocarbon potential, but exploration requires sustained policy commitment, investment, and technical effort.

CHEAPER FUEL

In FY 2024-25, gas-fired electricity cost Tk 7.09 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), coal Tk 13.20 kWh, and liquid fuel Tk 27.39 kWh, PDB data shows.

Experts said gas costs are calculated using domestic prices, while LNG imports now meet much of the demand.

So, when LNG import costs are factored in, the price of power from gas should be much higher than what PDB data showed, they said.

Data from the country's lone state-owned gas supplier Petrobangla shows it supplied 2,614 million cubic feet of gas (MMcf) yesterday, including 935 MMcf from imported LNG. The power sector received 942MMcf.

Prof M Tamim, vice chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh, said maximising power production from coal is a strategic necessity for Bangladesh in the short term.

The primary driver for this is cost, as coal remains significantly cheaper

than LNG and liquid fuels, he said.

"Despite often being criticised as a dirty fuel, coal must remain the backbone of the country's baseload supply until renewable energy or alternative fuels can be deployed at scale," he added.

Baseload electricity is the minimum amount of electric power that must be supplied to a grid 24/7 to meet constant demand.

Several large coal-fired plants in the country, including Payra, Rampal, and SS Power, along with supplier Adani in India, are now crucial for Bangladesh's baseload electricity generation.

The change in fuel mix in the country's power sector comes at a time when globally, except in Asia, countries are depending more on renewables than coal for electricity generation.

According to London-based think tank Ember, renewables accounted for around 34 percent of global electricity generation in 2025, surpassing coal's share for the first time in modern history.

Power production from coal fell by 63 Terawatt-hour globally to 33 percent of global electricity generation last year, marking its first decline since 2020, Ember said in its Global Electricity Review 2026.

'I just want to see her face one last time'

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Limon's roommate, Hisham Saleh Abugharbieh, a 26-year-old US citizen and former USF student who was arrested on Friday, has been charged with two counts of first-degree premeditated murder. Despite being a non-student, Hisham lived with Limon in an apartment on Avalon Heights -- a student housing complex north of USF's Tampa campus.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Bristy's father, Jahir Uddin Akon, recalled his last conversation with her on April 16.

"Father, I am attending classes at the university. I am busy with lab work. Around 5:00pm, we will go shopping. I will go with a friend," said Akon, an insurance company employee.

"There was so much joy in her voice. She was supposed to return home in July. She used to buy things for herself and for us whenever she found time," he said over the phone.

Now, he says, that voice is gone. "No one will call me 'father' anymore. I used to call my daughter 'Ma'. I will not be able to call anyone 'Ma' again," he said, his voice breaking.

"I have only one demand now: find my daughter's body and bring it back. I just want to see her face one last time."

According to Akon, Bristy went missing shortly after receiving a phone call from a man identified as Hisham Saleh Abugharbieh. She went downstairs to speak with him and did not return.

"I had many dreams for my

daughter," he said. "She was very good in her studies. She went to the United States to fulfill her dreams. With her, I have lost my dreams as well."

Bristy graduated in chemistry and chemical engineering from Noakhali Science and Technology University and later enrolled in postgraduate studies at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet). She secured a full scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree in chemical engineering at the University of South Florida and left Dhaka on August 12 last year.

Her family, originally from Madaripur, has lived in Mirpur-II in Dhaka for over two decades.

"We want justice. We cannot accept this death. We demand punishment for those responsible and the return of her body," said Bristy's cousin, Tuli Akon.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam yesterday said Bangladesh wants the US to ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

"We demand a prompt and thorough investigation into the matter so that those involved are identified and brought to justice," she said, describing the double murder as deeply unfortunate.

Shama Obaed said she personally spoke on Saturday with Bristy's brother and Limon's father.

"We are in contact with all the relevant agencies, including the

Bangladesh Mission in Washington, the US Department of State, and the FBI. We have spoken to both families and will provide all possible cooperation from our side," she told reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

USF authorities have stated that both students had health insurance through their student status that includes repatriation coverage.

In a joint statement, the families of Limon and Bristy urged USF and relevant authorities to ensure Islamic funeral rites for the two victims; pursue swift justice with the highest punishment for the accused; and investigate alleged security lapses at Avalon Heights -- including roommate screening, inadequate CCTV coverage, weak security measures, and the handling of prior complaints.

They also demanded the return of all personal belongings, settlement of pending financial dues, support for the bereaved families, and the establishment of a permanent memorial at the university in honour of the two victims.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Consulate in Miami is actively working with local funeral authorities and all concerned parties to repatriate Limon's body to Bangladesh as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, the embassy is maintaining regular contact with relevant US authorities to obtain more information regarding Nahida Bristy.