

All set for Biswa Ijtema from Saturday

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Preparations are almost complete for the 38th Biswa Ijtema, the biggest congregation of Muslims next to Hajj, at Tongi from Saturday.

Devotees from around the world will start arriving in a couple of days for the three-day Ijtema that takes place on an area of 160 acres of land on the eastern bank of the river Turag.

Every year, about two million people from home and abroad join the grand meet, organised by the Tablig Jamaat. Devotees from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Middle Eastern countries pray for the divine blessings, unity and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah.

Volunteers have already set up pandals and makeshift camps. Hundreds of devotees

from the Kakrail Grand Mosque, other mosques, students from madrassahs and different religious institutions carried bamboo poles, gunny and other necessary things to the spot from as early as October.

The north-western side of the area has been selected for foreign devotees. Separate camps have been set up for different countries with separate arrangements for food, ablution etc. Strong security measures have also been taken.

The Ijtema Committee at a meeting presided by Agriculture Minister MK Anwar last week took 22 decisions to make the annual meet a success without any trouble.

The decisions include smooth supply of water and electricity, arrangement for gas for foreign guests, increasing telephones facilities, round-the-clock medi-

cal and fire services, special trains from Dhaka etc.

Meanwhile, the jawans from Bangladesh Army and Navy are working to flatten out land and fill up low-lying areas to make them suitable for use by the devotees. They are also setting up four pontoon bridges over the Turag.

On the other hand, although there are two permanent overhead water tanks, two deep tube-wells and around 50 reserve tanks have been set up. Over 100 pucca and thousands of make-shift toilets are being erected.

Police, army and local administration will have their control rooms to ensure law and order and meet emergency.

Generators for uninterrupted electric supply have been set up while the control rooms will provide telephone facilities.

Tongi Government Hospital will have 30 extra beds for treatment of the devotees. It has opened temporary burn, asthma and diarrhoea units. Six ambulances will be there to bring emergency patients to Dhaka. Besides, fifty doctors will be on duty at four other temporary medical camps.

The first Ijtema was held at Kakrail Grand Mosque in 1946. The second at Chittagong Hajj Camp in 1948. In 1958, it took place at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj. The 20th grand meet was held at a village at Tongi.

Sources said, Tongi became the permanent venue for Biswa Ijtema when the then Pakistan government allowed the organisers in 1967 to use the land by the river Turag. Later Bangladesh government allotted 160 acres for the purpose.

Look before you leap

Policymakers and parties concerned discuss problems arising out of off-limits decisions.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT (BISHAWJIT)

Bangladesh Transport Foundation (BTF) organised a meeting recently with members of different professions at the Teachers Training College to exchange views on the impending ban on non-motorised vehicles (NMV) on the stretch of road between Kalabagan and Azimpur.

Commuters, rickshaw-pullers and businessmen pointed out their problems and sufferings and urged the policymakers to consider their opinion before restricting the movement of non-motorised vehicles on major roads in the capital.

The organisers assured them of passing on their views to the authorities concerned. Policymakers, planners, local administration officials and citizens also took part in the discussion.

The BTF also formed a committee to help implement the projects of freeing NMVs from city roads.

"The planners should keep provisions for goods carrying vehicles to move because we carry most of our materials on NMVs," said one trader of Chandni Chawk Market.

"Besides, our customers who come by rickshaws, should also have access to the market," he added.

Booksellers at Nilkhet market also fear a loss of customers once the ban is implemented from January 1, 2004.

"Most of our customers are from the middle and lower middle class and travel by rickshaws," said a representative of Nilkhet Babupura Book Selling Samity.

Some local commuters are apprehensive of the move.

"We may not find any proper transport to go to the university if NMVs are not available on this road," said Jasmine, a Dhaka University student.

"Women are major commuters along this route since they through the markets on the main road. This ban should not be activated before installing more bus-stoppages and ensuring secured footpaths," said Nasima Mannan, a local ward commissioner.

The capital has almost 5 lakh rickshaws informed an official of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

However, only 80,000 of those have legal papers, according to the wheel tax department of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). DCC has not issued licence to rickshaws after 1986 and the renewal date ended on June 30 last year.

Dhaka Metropolitan Traffic Police (DMP), along with the DCC, started a drive to catch illegal rickshaws in the city from



Shahbagh Crossing will become off-limits to rickshaws for smooth flow of traffic

September this year.

Two roads, which were supposed to be made off-limit to rickshaw in phases between November and December this year, will now be freed of NMVs from January 1 as the authorities found it inconvenient to impose the ban during the Ramadan and Eid.

The thoroughfares are the roads stretching from Science Laboratory through Elephant Road, Shahbagh and National Press Club to College Road next to Bangabazar, and Kalabagan to Azimpur via New Market.

Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), mostly funded by the World Bank, also plans to make six more routes NMV free by 2005.

For quilts or pillows, you have to pay 20 pc more

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Price of cotton wool used for making quilts, mattresses and pillows have increased by around 20 per cent this year at different markets in the city.

Usually price of cotton sees a hike every winter because of the extra demand for quilts and mattresses but this year its mark-

edly higher than previous seasons, said salespersons of different bedding stores in the city.

"Shimul Tula" (cotton wool collected from Shimul tree) is being sold between Tk 180 and Tk 200 per kg. The price last year was Tk 150. Price of *Karpas Tula* increased by Tk 20 per kg. Remnants of cotton wool spun into thread are cheaper however. The sellers call it 'modified cotton wool' and sell it between Tk

60 and Tk 80 per kg. Price of *Karpas Tula* ranges between Tk 30 to Tk 150 depending on quality.

Supply of *Shimul Tula*, which is mainly used for making pillows, has slowed down, claimed the sellers. It is collected mainly from North Bengal. Jessore, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Tangail and Barisal are also well known for producing *Shimul Tula*.

"Collecting *Shimul Tula* can be an arduous job these days as the number of trees is gradually decreasing," said Abdul Jalil Khokon, owner of a bedding store.

The price of *Shimul Tula* is much higher than other varieties of cotton, he added.

Moreover, transportation, extortion on the route and other costs has pushed the price up not only of *Shimul Tula* but also of *Karpas Tula*.

"Prices of all essential commodities have risen in past few years which has also affected the price of cotton," Khokon said. "This is nothing unusual," he added.

However, the price hike has not prevented city dwellers from buying cotton. With the arrival of winter, sellers are doing brisk business. The city has around 3,000 bedding stores with at least 15,000 workers.

Nilkhet City Corporation Market is the biggest bedding market housing 28 stores. A single-size quilt here ranges from Tk 250 to Tk 450 while double quilts cost between Tk 350 to Tk 500, informed the owner of Noor Bedding Store. There are some special qualities priced at Tk 1050. Satin is used for the outer covering of those.

Some of the shop owners import synthetic quilts from China and Korea. Imported single quilts cost around Tk 1600 to Tk 2300 while the double sized ones are sold between Tk 1800 and Tk 2600.



The warm look of goods at bedding stores anxiously awaits customers as the climate gets colder

ADMISSION WAR IS ON



Guardians anxiously wait inside the premises of Viqarunnisa Noon School at Baily Road Saturday as their wards line up for 'admission war'. The admission tests were taken for the newly opened branch of the school at Basundhara.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air Alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975

Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222
Dolphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

LIBRARY & INFO-

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

OUTING

Museum and Zoo
National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadugarh- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm,
Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadugarh- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadugarh- 9666466
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed
Sonargoan Jadugha

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoil	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalabagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahal
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan