

Pilgrims' plight at Hajj Camp

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Over 3,000 intending pilgrims are suffering immensely from mismanagement at the Hajj Camp due to the irresponsibility of the travel agents and the authorities concerned.

Fifty-eight-year old Fahad Ali from Lalmonirhat, an intending pilgrim, has already wasted around Tk 3,000 during his stay at the camp at Ashkona since December 25.

Despite the promises made by his agent to ensure his visa with confirmed plane ticket by December 27, confirmations on these are still pending.

The agent had also assured him of bearing his food and other expenses during his stay at the camp. "But they did not even come to meet me here," Ali told Star City. "I have been able to communicate the agent over the cellphone, but to no avail."

Ali also tried to gather information about probable flight details. "But I failed to do this as the security men stopped me at the entrance to the airport. We are still uncertain about when we will be flying to Saudi Arabia," he added.

Rahimul Bari, a 64-year-old intending pilgrim from Bogra, said he had to sell his property to cover the hajj expenses. "I have already paid the major amount to the Moallem (agent) for the passport, tickets and

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travel expenses from Bogra to Dhaka."

"But after coming to Dhaka I have to spend lot more money to ensure my ticket and the meet other expenses," he said adding that he has already called his family members at Bogra and asked for additional funds.

Motin Miah arrived at the camp from Jamalpur on the night of January 2 along with 40 other fellow pilgrims from the same region. "I don't know what will happen as we read in newspapers that flights are still quite scarce," said an anxious Motin Miah.

Hajj camp officials complained that they are facing great difficulties performing their regular duties due to the huge crowd of pilgrims.

"We still do not have a confirmed number of the non-ballottee pilgrims who are

currently residing here," said Abi Abdullah, hajj officer at the camp.

But some senior officials estimated that the number was well over 3,000 and increasing until the night of January 2. The pilgrims have already occupied all space on the six floors of the camp near the Zia International Airport.

The pilgrims are also suffering due to the high food prices at the camp. The only canteen at the camp is charging the same prices as restaurants outside the camp charge.

"We expected that food would be provided here on subsidised rate for the stranded pilgrims," said a pilgrim on condition of anonymity.

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and dry foods such as chira (flattened rice), muri (puffed rice) and biscuits that they had brought with them.

Most pilgrims complained that the volunteers and officials of different sections at the camp remain absent most of the time.

"We have been waiting here since 4:30 in the afternoon seeking some help. But its 7:00pm and we see no volunteer," said Md Akash Ahmed, the son of a pilgrim.

Long queues of pilgrims waiting for service were found at the medical section, the information centre and other sections of the camp.

Camp authorities pointed out that the security measures that the government had assured them were not being maintained properly at the camp.

"People are walking in and

out of the camp with ease. Most of them are not being checked properly," said a senior official at the camp on condition of anonymity.

"Because of the huge rush of pilgrims, their relatives and travel agents, we have decided to check only those who are carrying luggage and suspicious objects," said an on-duty police officer at the camp.

When asked about the mismanagement, Abdullah said: "The government is taking drastic measures and hopefully the crisis will be solved within the January 6."

The camp officials and policemen at the camp complained that some agents are trying to take goods illegally to Saudi Arabia inside the luggage of pilgrims.

"We have already caught some 70 pilgrims who had onions, garlic, vegetables and food items in their luggage," said Abdullah.

The pilgrims said their agents had asked them to carry those in their luggage and hand over to the relatives and employees of the agents in Saudi Arabia.

"In return, most of these pilgrims were assured a prompt visa and ticket processing. The innocent pilgrims have no idea about the kind of trouble they may fall into after reaching Saudi Arabia," said Abdullah.



Hajis uncertain whether they would be able to perform Hajj protesting in front of Biman office last Sunday.

Rejoinder from National Museum

BNM has the largest collection of historical objects. Among them a good number of Sanskrit and Arabic inscriptions on basalt stone is worth mentioning. In labeling the objects normally a general form have been followed with vital information suffice to understand the facts. Translated versions of inscriptions are available in published catalogues and unreasonable in the labels. The author stated the inscriptions on basalt stone in her story as 'clay tablets'. This type of careless remark gives the wrong impression on public.

A total of two galleries of BNM are devoted to the

specimens of the glorious Liberation War. A key label in the gallery depicted the history of the Liberation War from language movement to the recent international mother language day and was unnoticed by the writer.

Labels of an object in a museum have the prime importance. They are developed in the course of meticulous evaluation day by day. A large number of objects in four curatorial departments in 44 galleries within 20,000 square meters needs more attention, man-power and time. Changes in display, objects and labels in the gallery are in a regular way with all its limitations. The labels of Kabi Nazrul Smriti Corner are properly placed. Nowadays, computerized engraving methods have been started for labels in BNM.

Department of Public Education serves informal educational activities deals with school programme, free guide lecture service to common visitors, students and scholars everyday according to the schedule. In addition to this, guide services are available for the scholars and state guests. The author did not mention it, moreover, she stated "None of the 46 galleries in museum has guides."

Finally, the author stated that the museum is in the same state for the last 16 years harmonizing with a voice of an incredible visitor. Why specifically 16 years? It might be more or less than 16 years or the 16 years significantly reflections of some interested corner, those who were involved with the museum at that time. Since its inception, the organizational structure and composition of professional hierarchy of BNM was incomplete. Regrettably, vacuum has been created since then. But now this is in response to the article "NATIONAL MUSEUM IN A STATE OF DISORDER" that was published on December 26 in Star City. The feature on 'National Museum' is incomplete and many dimensions of the 'National Museum' hardly get any chance of access in the author's mind. The writer just meets the demand of the public at a glance in a great hurry. She depicted her story with inadequate information.

The author reported the colours of the models of 'Pink Lotus (Nelumbo nucifera Saern / Nelumbium speciosum Willd)' and 'Blue Water Lily (Nymphaea stellata Willd). These flowers were template on silk fabrics from the original one and displayed authentically in addition with colour photographs from the natural habitat. Due to the organic origin of the flower models the colour of the flowers merely fades owing to photo reaction but the blue colour remains as blue. In due course, the models are replaced on a regular basis.

The information "A particular chart shows but these is on samples," is not a chart. In fact, it is a pictorial label of the aquatic plants with their scientific names that are shown in the painting of the 'Pond Ecosystem.' In addition, there is also another descriptive label at the other side of the painting that deals with the importance of preserving biodiversity of a pond as well as natural heritage, which was unnoticed by the author.

Different types of 'Natural Dyes' that are used in colouring of fabrics in Bangladesh are shown in the showcase. Some of the important short listed 'Natural Dyes' are displayed with coloured fabrics and photographs. The samples of the 'Natural Dyes' are exhibited in the other showcase of the same gallery with other headings. The repetition of the samples will make the arrangement more incoherent.

In the 'Elephant Gallery,' tusks of the elephant are displayed on the panel board without glass covering. So that people can understand the enormous size of the elephant teeth, feel its uneven base and hollow nature. A descriptive label on the use of the tusk has been given with it. It makes no security hazard. It is worth mentioning here that after long 22 years, BNM secured an authorized service rule of its own and the authority is devoted to keep pace with all other developed museums of the world.

Bangladesh National Museum is a unique institution that has a proud history of its own, upholding the pride culture and heritage of the nation. National Museum needs the constructive support of every citizen as well as every member of the media.

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12x3