



# Hajj camp readying for the devotees

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The preparation to receive pilgrims at the Hajj Camp at Ashkona near Zia International Airport is going on in full swing with the target to inaugurate this year's camp on November 22.

The work of white wash, gardening, renovation and cleaning will be completed by November 20, two days before the pilgrims' arrival, said the officials.

Hajj camp is maintained by the Religious Affairs Ministry to train would-be pilgrims on how to perform the Hajj.

The officials said that this year the number of pilgrims to attend the camp would be more than 60,000 and they have so far got confirmation of 42,000. The actual Hajj takes place on the tenth day of the Arabic month day during the Eid-ul-Adha. The date is determined after the sighting of the moon.

"The number of pilgrims would exceed 60,000 this year who include those travelling

under government supervision. We have all the preparations to serve them with care," said Abi Abdullah, Hajj officer.

He said that they had completed all the preparations including employing volunteers and security personnel from the day before the guests' arrival to ensure services during their stay at the camp.

"Besides, 200 Rovers from different units and 50 volunteers from Anjuman-e-Khademul Hajj will be deployed," said Abdullah.

This year no pilgrim will be allowed to enter the camp with rice and vegetables and other heavy food item to take these to Makkah.

"Every year most pilgrims carry rice, vegetable, lentil, cabbage, lau with them as they are said by the agencies that these are not available at Makkah and Madinah. But this

is not true. These are extra burdens," said the Hajj officer.

Security at Hajj Camp and its adjoining areas will be tightened from November 20.

"The Hajj pilgrims' security is our first priority. We have taken all-out measures to provide additional security at the camp during the arrival and departure of the pilgrims," said Abi Abdullah, Hajj officer.

While visiting the camp on November 13 this correspondent saw that a good number of labours were working hard to clean and renovate the camp. The gardening work is also on progress.

In the morning of the second day of siege called by the 14-party alliance it was seen that around hundred pilgrims rushed to the camp braving the obstacles on the road for medical check up.

"I came out of home at

around 5:30 in the morning. I had to change transport three times to reach here. What could I do? I heard that if I missed the date it would take a long time to get the serial again," said Jonab Ali, 60, coming from Jatrabari.

Other pilgrims mostly aged, 40 percent of them women, had to take risk of life to attend the medical check up.

"My son told me not to come but I am determined to take part in hajj at any cost," said Rabeya Akter, who also came for medical check up.

The pilgrims started arriving at the camp from November 13. The Hajj flights will start carrying the pilgrims to Saudia Arabia from November 26 onwards.

Besides, various law enforcing agencies would be deployed to man the camp site to maintain law and order.

The authorities will install 16 close-circuit television (CCTV) cameras on the premises and archway metal detectors at the entrance.

"For the first time we are going to install scanning machines with the help of the Civil Aviation Authority," said Abi Abdullah, Hajj officer.

The hajj camp has the capacity to accommodate a total of 2,500 pilgrims at a time. The authorities believe no pilgrim will need to stay on the corridor like last year.

"If the schedule remains in place we will not need to accommodate any pilgrim outside the dormitory. Still we are prepared for any emergency situation," said the Hajj officer.

## ANTI SMOKING LAW

# Law acknowledged, execution poor

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The ban on smoking in public earlier last year stirred up a surge of awareness among the majority of the smoking population, but the law itself remains far from being properly executed.

Although the "Smoking and Tobacco Control Act-2005" came into effect on March, 26 last year, general people have been more concerned about their smoking habits in public places, they are baffled about the particulars of the law, as it failed to define clearly the places off-limit to smoking.

Aiming to discourage smoking and sale of cigarettes and tobacco products, the law imposed a ban on smoking in public places and in public transport, and advertisements of tobacco products.

"I am aware that the government has prohibited smoking in public places and public transport, but what the public places are, I am not sure," said Sharif Mahmud, a Dhaka University (DU) student.

Contrary to the orthodox scenes of city streets where people fume away with rash apathy towards the surroundings, the city has seen a welcoming surge of concern among the people regarding smoking in public. City dwellers shared mixed feelings about the new law and public places saw a dramatic decrease in public

smoking.

"The number of cigarettes my regular customers buy daily has reduced considerably," said Rashid a cigarette vendor at Bangla Motor.

Abdul Malek, another cigarette vendor in Sabujbagh told this correspondent that his sales have decreased by 25 percent since the imposition of

little success," said Bhuvan Dush, a bank official. "With the law restricting smoking opportunities I believe that I would finally be able to quit smoking," he added.

Syed Mahbulul Alam, Project Manager of Work for Better Bangladesh (WBB) told Star City that it would take years to fully implement a law such as this in a

The law prohibits smoking at academic institutions, government, semi-government and autonomous offices, libraries, lifts, hospitals, clinics, court buildings, airports, sea and river port buildings, railway stations, bus terminal buildings, ferries, cinema halls, covered exhibition centres, theatres and children's parks.

However, lack of proper publicity and campaigns constrain its periphery, as a majority of the city inhabitants are unaware of full details.

The bill also prohibits advertising tobacco products in cinema halls, on TV channels and in books, magazines, leaflets, handbills, billboards and newspapers. Packets of tobacco-related products must contain anti-tobacco messages. The owners of public places and vehicles are also required to illustrate anti-tobacco advertisements.

But the law does not specifically prohibit sales such products on the pavements or parks to the general public, and that it specifically does not prohibit selling such products to school-goers renders its effectiveness futile.

country like Bangladesh.

"You can't expect general people to abide by a law like this in just a few years," Alam said. "It would take around 10 to 12 years to observe any reasonable change in public smoking habits," he added.

However, Alam welcomed the shrink in tobacco advertisements and publicity along with the enforced warning messages tagged to each cigarette packet as two of the major successes of the new law.

"Such small acts will help create public awareness and have a huge impact on the whole issue in the long run, and guide help the law gain success in implementation," he added.

I am aware that the government has prohibited smoking in public places and public transport, but what the public places are, I am not sure,

the law.

Although the anti-smoking law has lost much weight since its imposition where a majority of smokers tried to abide by the law and refrain from smoking in public areas, its success in creating awareness among people has been remarkable.

"Although I am a smoker, I support the law, as I know that smoking is injurious to health, but it is difficult to get over the habit," said Akram Ullas a banker. "Yet the law would benefit the non-smokers," he added.

The new law has also given an opportunity to many to quit smoking.

"I have been trying to quit smoking for a long time now, with

## Dhaka International

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away from its main objective of promoting exportable goods due to the fall in the number of foreign buyers and participants.

"It is true that many organisations take part in the fair for seasonal business. But the genuine exporters will not be benefited with this little number of buyers from abroad," said managing director of an export-oriented leather company who will take part in the fair.

The 12th DITF will take place at its traditional venue in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city. Preparation for the fair is going on in full swing amid political unrest in the country.

Malaysia has been selected as the partner country for the 12th DITF. Besides the hosts, Iran, Pakistan, India, Singapore, Thailand, USA and Nepal will take part in the fair.

The organisers said that the total number of participants from home and abroad has increased this year mainly because of local participants.

Golam Samdani, fair development officer, said there will be 10 premier pavilions, 14 premier mini pavilions, 35 pre-

mier stalls, 46 pavilions, 240 general stalls and 10 restaurants.

"We have completed our preparation for this year's fair and we are hopeful that the fair will attract more visitors than that of previous year," said Amir Hossain, director, DITF.

The EPB officials declined to comment on possible disruption of the fair due to the ongoing political unrest. They, however, said that they do not have any plan to change the schedule.

This year EPB did not lease out the entry ticket business. The officials said after inviting tender for three times none of the bidders offered reasonable rate. So EPB has decided to sell the entry tickets itself for the fair. The target is earning a minimum of Tk 1.16 crore.

Tickets will be available at the entrance at Tk 10 for adults and Tk 5 for infants.

The fair to be concluded on December 17 will remain open to visitors from 10:00am to 9:00pm on weekdays and from 10:00am to 10:00pm on holidays.

## Approach road

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project said that they had thought about the approach road but the bridge project does not envisage the Satmasjid Road component.

"We know this is the most vital part of the third Buriganga bridge and we are trying to convince the donor to include this part in the project. At present our plan includes constructing a 30-foot wide road from the bridge up to the embankment on Dhaka end," said a top official of the project requesting anonymity.

"We have started talking to the donor about the Satmasjid Road component of the project and hopefully we shall be able to connect the road at the end of the project," said the official.

The construction of the bridge is now at piling phase, where engineers are load-testing the pillars with weights of up to twice the capacity of 150 tons on each pillar.

In addition to connecting a vast area in the Keraniganj and parts of Savar area, the third Buriganga bridge would facilitate creating two more routes as alternatives to Mawa road in the west and Savar road in the east.

With the start of the construction work on the bridge, land prices in Keraniganj area has shot up significantly, local people claimed.

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