

# Thousands head for home ahead of Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of passengers thronged bus, train and launch terminals yesterday, the last working day of the government employees, to leave the capital in a bid to observe Eid-ul-Azha with their near and dear ones.

During visit to different terminals, The Daily Star correspondents found passengers facing scarcity of tickets and high rates.

Different city streets yesterday looked less crowded and plying of vehicles was also thin in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, additional policemen and Rapid Action Battalion forces were deployed in the terminals to avoid untoward situations.

Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday witnessed the highest crowd compared to three bus

terminals at Sayedabad, Mohakhali and Gabtoli and Kamalapur railway station.

According to the ticket sellers, rush may be doubled today as more people are expecting to start leaving the capital.

## SADARGHAT

Sadarghat launch terminal experienced the highest rush as thousands of homebound passengers crowded to return their homes before the biggest festival of Muslims.

The price of a cabin on Dhaka-Amtoli route was Tk 600 last week, which is now selling at Tk 1200, said Mamun, a launch cabin boy.

Long route passengers were seen returning empty handed from the ticket counters as they failed to manage launch tickets even they were ready to pay exorbitant fares.

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## KAMALAPUR

Twenty-six day labourers were seen waiting at the ticket counter of Kamalapur station as they failed to get tickets for their hometown Bahadurabad in Sirajganj.

"After waiting for the entire day we failed to manage tickets even the standing ones," said Abdul Jalil, one of the labourers, adding, "Now we have to find other alternatives."

Many passengers were also seen boarding the trains without tickets after bribing the train ticket examiners (TTES).

The advance tickets were sold from December 21 to 26, though brokers bought most of the tickets depriving the passengers.

A total of 41 trains will carry passengers to Chittagong, Sylhet, Noakhali, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and

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## CHEATING CASE

# Arrest warrant against ex-BNP MP Kaikobad

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against former BNP lawmaker Kazi Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad and two others in a cheating case filed by a proprietor of a construction firm in September 2001.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman passed the order, as the accused did not appear before the court for three consecutive dates.

Defending yesterday's absence of their clients in the court, the defence lawyers said Kaikobad could not appear as he was busy with the election campaign in Comilla-3 constituency. They also did not mention why the two others did not show up.

But the prosecution lawyers rejected the cause saying just a day

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PHOTO: STAR

The mentally and physically challenged hold a victory rally at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday after the UN General Assembly approved an international convention on the rights for the disabled.

# Advisory council holds up move to make PDB a holding company

UNB, Dhaka

The council of advisers yesterday sent back for further vetting a proposal for transforming the state-owned Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) into a holding company.

After discussing the plan in its meeting, the council of advisers ordered more scrutiny of the matter before taking the next step.

President/ Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed presided over the meeting at the office of the chief adviser.

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# Traders' strike paralyses Sonamasjid land port

UNB, C'nawabganj

Activities at Sonamasjid land port remained halted for the second day yesterday due to the indefinite strike enforced by importers and exporters.

Importers and exporters called the strike protesting alleged irregularities by the private operator, Sonamasjid-Panama Portlink Limited, and lack of adequate space in the godown.

They are demanding clearance of stone and rice through the port as per the existing system.

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Prayer Timing		
December 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Shooting in microbus leaves 3 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown criminals sprayed bullets in broad daylight yesterday on a microbus at Dhupkhola in the capital injuring the owner of a manpower agency and its two staff.

The owner of Vienna Overseas, Jahangir Alam, and two of his staff - Abdus Sobhan and Salahuddin, were inside the vehicle and suffered bullet injuries in the attack.

They were on way to their office

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# Asia back to online after quake setback

But access patchy

REUTERS, Singapore

Asia's telecommunications services were partly restored on Thursday after earthquakes off Taiwan cut undersea cables and knocked millions of users offline, but with few alternative routes, access was slow and patchy.

Telephone traffic was back to

normal in some parts of Asia but many operators in North Asia struggled to get up to full speed a day after business and home users from Seoul to Sydney were hit by one of the worst tech disruptions in Asia.

Internet access in many countries had also improved by Thursday although many custom-

ers complained of slow connections.

Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan's top phone company, said it could take up to three weeks to repair six submarine cables owned by a consortium of telecoms firms.

Two powerful quakes off Taiwan on Tuesday, one of magnitude 7.1

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# 3 murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people, including an 8-year-old girl, were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Police said a gang of three criminals called Sheikh Aslam, 38, a VCD cassette trader, out of his residence at IG Gate at Shyampur at around 11:30am.

They took Aslam to a place nearby, shot him point blank and left the scene.

Hearing gunshots, Aslam's family members rushed in and found him lying in a pool of blood. They immediately took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead at around 12:45pm.

Police arrested two youths--Hira and Kalu alias Chora Kalu--suspecting their involvement in the killing.

Police said the criminals are members of "Sundar Babu" group and killed Aslam's father in 2004, prompting the family to file a murder case against them. Since the

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# Birdwatchers find 5 lakh waterfowls of 72 species

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A census, conducted by Nature Conservation Committee (NCC) early this year, found 4,94,401 waterfowls of 72 species at 40 sites across the country.

The census found 1,20,000 shelducks across the country, the highest count of a single species. They also sighted one Asiatic Dowitcher bird. At the Muhuri dam site in the South East coast, they found the highest number of species at a single site -- 37 species.

The NCC revealed their findings at a press conference in the

Rupayan Centre auditorium in the capital yesterday. Suvash Kumer Barman prepared the report.

The survey did not find any birds at the Ahluddim Char in Central South coast. However, they found 2,64,734 birds, the highest count of birds at a single site, at the Dhal Char in Hatia-Noakhali.

The 45-day-long survey started in January 2006. It was conducted at five zones -- Central South coast, South East coast, North East Haor Basin, Central inland wetlands and South & South West inland wetlands.

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# Bombings kill 23 Iraqi civilians in Baghdad

4 more GIs slain, 4 Americans kidnapped

AP, AFP, Baghdad

Three bombs killed 23 Iraqis in Baghdad yesterday, and the US military announced the deaths of three American soldiers.

Two bombs exploded shortly after 10 am opposite a park in the South Gate area, killing nine civilians and wounding 43, a police officer said on condition of anonymity because of security concerns. South Gate is often crowded with commuters and shoppers. A bomb planted under a car killed 12 civilians and wounded 26 others near al-Sha'ab stadium in eastern Baghdad, police said. The bomb exploded among a group of people lining up to buy kerosene.

Another blast targeted a police patrol in western Baghdad but missed, killing two civilians instead, police said. Four others were wounded and taken to Yarmouk Hospital.

The US Embassy said Thursday it believes four American security

contractors and an Austrian remain in captivity after their kidnapping in southern Iraq six weeks ago.

The men went missing Nov. 16 when a large convoy of trucks being escorted by their Crescent Security Group was hijacked on a highway near Safwan, a city on the border with Kuwait.

Suspected militiamen dressed in Iraqi police uniforms ambushed the convoy, taking 14 hostages, including the five security guards, and nine truck drivers who were later released.

The US military said four US soldiers died in roadside bombs on Wednesday. Two soldiers were killed when a bomb exploded near their foot patrol southwest of Baghdad, and one died in a bombing in an eastern section of the Iraqi capital.

A marine was killed during fighting in the western Al-Anbar province, a bastion of the Sunni

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# Last date for depositing firearms now Jan 5

BSS, Dhaka

The last date for depositing licensed firearms has been extended until January 5, a home ministry press release said yesterday.

According to the earlier announcement, yesterday was the last day for depositing licensed firearms.

"If anybody fails to deposit his/her licensed firearms with the nearest police station within the date, he/she will face legal action under the Arms Act," the press release said.