

Eid greetings
The Daily Star wishes its readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers a very happy Eid.

Hajj pilgrimage begins

AFP, Makkah

Some two million Muslims from around the world flowed into the Mina valley outside the holy city of Makkah on Wednesday as the annual Hajj pilgrimage began in earnest.

"Here I am, Allah, answering your call," they chanted, making the trek in one of 20,000 buses, in private cars or on foot, retracing Prophet Mohammad's steps from Makkah to Mina.

The official Saudi news agency SPA said the mass movement toward Mina, an uninhabited valley circled by arid mountains, was taking place without incident.

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Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed for four days from today to February 24 on the occasions of International Mother Language Day and Eid-ul-Azha. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper on February 22, 23, 24 and 25.

INSIDE TODAY

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Mother Language Day obligation
Column: Just Another View
SHImam

Supplements 17-24

Today's 24-page issue of The Daily Star includes a 4-page 4-colour in-house supplement on 'Amar Ekushey' and another 4-page government supplement on 'Language Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day.'

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 21		5-57 pm
Feb 22	6-27 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-05	6-09
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

373 killed as Egyptian train turns into running inferno



PHOTO: AFP

Rescuers recover charred bodies from an Egyptian train that caught fire yesterday killing 373 people.

AFP, Al Ayatt

At least 373 people were killed when a train caught fire south of the Egyptian capital early Wednesday, Assistant Health Minister Ahmed Adel said.

A total of seven carriages of the train burned near the town of Al Ayatt, around 70 kilometers (45 miles) from Cairo, as it took families for the biggest Muslim holiday of the year.

Fire officials said earlier that 54 people were also injured, but added the death toll was so high because people were trapped inside the carriages.

Prime Minister Atef Ebeid told reporters at the scene that cooks used by passengers to heat food on the long trip south set off the blaze, which burned seven carriages of the train near the town of Al Ayatt.

The blaze broke out at 2:00 am
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PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia lays wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar to pay tributes to the martyrs of Language Movement at one minute past Wednesday midnight.

Nation pays homage to language martyrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Crowds of barefooted people wearing black badges and singing *Amar Ekushey* theme song streamed to the Central Shaheed Minar to pay tributes to the memory of martyrs of the Language Movement with the clock ticking by the zero hour.

Amidst a sombre mood, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia placed wreath at the altar at one minute past Wednesday midnight to salute the language martyrs, followed by President's Secretary Mohammad Abdul Huq who placed wreath on behalf of President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, now in Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj.

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury received the prime minister. The members of the cabinet were also present. Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui placed wreaths after the prime minister.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad accompanied by her party leaders laid wreath at 00.24 hours. Next to the AL chief was Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif, who was followed by the DU VC.

Foreign diplomats in Dhaka also placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar. Chiefs of the three services paid floral tributes to the language martyrs.

Socio-cultural organisations, political parties and students' organisa
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Ekushey still inspires petals and protests

AFSAN CHOWDHURY

Today is the fiftieth anniversary of what is known universally to us as *Ekushey*. On this day, 50 years ago in 1952, the students of Dhaka took to the streets to protest the denial of Bangla as the national language and the imposition of Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan. The protests that sparked off on that day ultimately led to a long drawn out struggle that resulted in the birth of Bangladesh.

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Another ADP chop

INAM AHMED

Faced with internal resource constraints and the need to put a lid on fiscal deficit, the government has finally settled with a Tk 2571 crore cut in this fiscal year's annual development programme (ADP).

A meeting of the planning ministry chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on Monday reviewed this year's original ADP outlay of Tk 19,000 crore and then slashed Tk 2,691 crore to Tk 16,380 crore.

But later, Saifur said this should be jacked up to Tk 16,500 crore.

according to a high official of the programming division who was present at the meeting.

According to the latest exercise, local currency component of the ADP has been brought down to Tk 9,380 crore from Tk 10,411 crore. This represents a 13 per cent reduction.

On the other hand, project aid has been slashed by Tk 1,291 crore or 15.7 per cent to Tk 6,928 crore. The original outlay was Tk 8,219 crore. The project aid reduction was mainly due to inability to firm up foreign assistance, the source said.

However, the block allocation of

Tk 1,074 crore remains untouched even after the exercise.

While doing the pruning task, allocations of less important unapproved projects have been totally withdrawn. On the other hand, approved projects of less importance and those yet to be signed faced budgetary cuts.

According to the source, the minister underscored poverty projects, rural infrastructure programmes and those fitting into the government's 100-day programme.

With the cut, the government
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Extortion troubles cattle traders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cattle traders are being subjected to extortion not only at the city cattle markets but also at different points on their way to the capital carrying the sacrificial animals from its suburbs and different parts of the country.

Many of the traders said they have no option other than charging higher prices of cattle to make up for their financial loss due to rampant

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Regulators snub call metering

ABU SAEED KHAN

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has ordered Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) not to implement the metered tariff on local phone calls until legal clarifications come from the Ministry of Law as to whether the BTTB can unilaterally impose such tariff.

Yesterday, the BTRC sought legal opinion from the Ministry of Law concerning BTTB's proposed tariff plan, which BTRC regards as a challenge to its authority over tariff fixation.

Earlier, the BTTB announced that the new tariff would be effective from the midnight of February 25. But sources said the state-owned telecom monopoly violated the telecom law by not obtaining the regulator's approval prior to launching the new tariff plan.

According to the sources, the BTTB misinterpreted an article of the telecom law to claim that it does not require the regulator's approval prior to implementing any tariff plan.

The government on January 30 formed the BTRC to deal with regulatory issues including tariff fixation. Information Secretary Syed Marghub Murshed is the chairman of the commission.

According to BTTB's new tariff plan, local telephone calls at district headquarters will cost Tk. 1.50 for every five minutes during peak hours and for
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Nation gets ready to celebrate Eid on Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Eid-ul-Azha, the second largest religious festival of the Muslims, will be celebrated in the country on Saturday with due solemnity and fervour.

On this occasion, Muslims sacrifice animals commemorating Hazrat Ibrahim's (RA) readiness to sacrifice his son at the will of Allah.

A three-day Eid holiday begins tomorrow, preceded by a public holiday today on the occasion Amar Ekushey and the International Mother Language Day.

Over the last few days, lakhs of city dwellers have left for their village homes to celebrate the Eid with their near and dear ones.

To catch up with the rush of homebound people, Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA)
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