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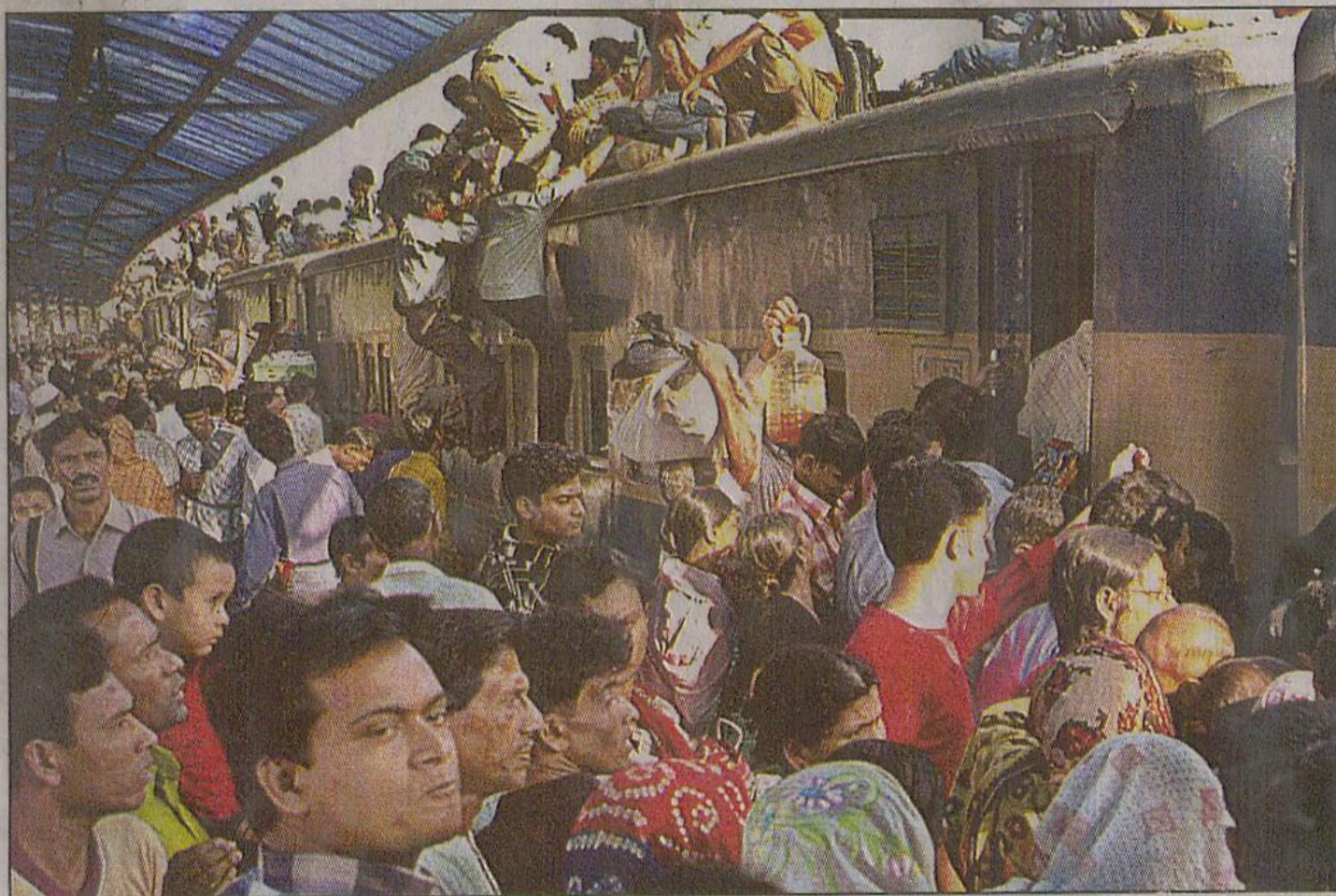
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Homebound people desperate to get on an already overcrowded train jostle each other at the airport station in the capital yesterday, as the Eid is only a day or two away.

Rehearsals for Saarc security launched

Orange, Red alerts to follow

BDNEWS, Dhaka

As part of ensuring foolproof security during the Saarc summit, the law-enforcement agencies have started their security rehearsals in different parts of the capital, sources said.

Besides, there will be 'Red Alert' in the capital from November 10 and 'Orange Alert' from November 7.

Sources said members of the intelligence agencies yesterday launched their security rehearsal at Zia International Airport (ZIA) and on some VIP roads to be used by VVIPs.

They said members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other agencies staged mock exercise at ZIA and on some important routes to be used by the VVIPs.

Meanwhile, the security charge at the ZIA will be given to the Special Security Forces (SSF).

Civil Aviation sources said during the summit, 'Orange Alert' will be in force.

Mad rush for home

20 lakh people to leave city in two days; 2 lakh others may not get seats in safe transport

SURANJIT DEBNATH

With the Eid-ul-Fitr only a day or two away, millions are leaving the capital for their village homes to celebrate the greatest religious festival of the Muslims with their near and dear ones.

A virtually unending stream of homebound people -- men, women and children -- crowded the city's inter-district bus terminals, Kamalapur railway station and Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday as on the previous few days.

The rush will climax today and tomorrow as the Eid will be celebrated on Friday or Saturday, depending on the sighting of the Shawwal moon.

Over three million city dwellers have already left for their homes in the last several days and around two million more are expected to leave today and tomorrow, unofficial estimates said.

The home-goers are braving a lot of troubles and many of them are even risking their lives by travelling in unfit launches and buses.

The troubles facing them are non-availability of bus, train and launch tickets at counters, exorbitantly high price and scapling of tickets, nagging traffic jam, shortage of fit vehicles, snatching and lack of security.

Several passengers told this correspondent that they would forget the troubles on their way once they reached home.

It is feared that over two lakh people may not be able to go home before the Eid due to shortage of transport and non-availability of tickets.

Around five million people used to leave the city on the eve of the Eid in the previous few years. But this year the number is likely to be higher as the three-day Eid vacation from tomorrow will virtually be a longer one with November 7 being a public holiday.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the unusual rush of passengers, many unfit launches and buses were also plying from Sadarghat launch terminal and bus terminals.

Sadarghat Launch Terminal

About 250-300 launches including a large number unfit ones now leave Sadarghat launch terminal every day, carrying passengers beyond their capacity. This is happening despite the government warning of stern action against unfit launches and overloading.

Launches already declared unfit and abandoned have been pressed into 'special service', ignoring the mobile courts and law enforcers.

An inquiry committee recently examined 123 launches and identified 25 of them as unfit and 22 almost unfit.

But the unfit launches, excepting only three, resumed plying in the name of special service, sources said.

No cabin tickets were found at ticket counters but brokers in the capital have been selling them at a premium.

Hasina to be invited to Saarc summit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will invite Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina to attend the 13th Saarc summit beginning here on November 12.

"We will invite her [Hasina] with due honour since the leader of the opposition in parliamentary democracy is seen as the prime minister-in-waiting," Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan told diplomatic correspondents at his office yesterday.

Seeking cooperation from all in making the summit a complete success, he said: "Credit for a success will go to all."

Saarc Charter on terrorism ratified

PTI, Islamabad

Against the backdrop of allegation of involvement of Pakistan-based militant groups in the New Delhi blasts, Islamabad yesterday ratified a Saarc convention on suppression of terrorism, saying it demonstrated the country's "resolve" to root out the menace of extremism.

"By ratifying this convention, the government of Pakistan has once again demonstrated its resolve to fight terrorism and root out this menace from Pakistan and the region," Pakistan foreign office said in a statement.

The "Additional Protocol to the Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism" was signed by the member states during 12th Saarc Summit in Islamabad in January last year.

"Pakistan has always stood firm to the principles and objectives of the convention," the statement said.

Road crashes kill 6 of 2 families

STAR REPORT

Nine people, including six of two families, were killed and 45 others injured in separate road accidents in Tangail, Comilla and Habiganj yesterday.

In Tangail, four people were killed when a Pabna-bound jeep from Dhaka collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound bus in Bil Charinda area near Jamuna Bridge at about 9:30am.

The dead are Abdul Latif, 30, Shilpi, 23, and Kona, 22 -- son, daughter-in-law and daughter of Abdul Kader, executive director of Samata, a non-governmental organisation -- and driver of the jeep Faruque Hossain, 35.

Kader, the only survivor of the fatal accident, was admitted to Tangail General Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

"He [Kader] is fighting for life at the CMH," said an employee of Samata last night.

Police said Kader and his family members were going to their village in Santhia upazila in Pabna yesterday.

4 pirates beaten to death at Sandwip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Angry fishermen beat four pirates to death at Sandwip channel in the Bay of Bengal when the pirates attacked a fishing trawler on Sunday morning.

Sitakunda police yesterday recovered the bodies of Jamsheer, 22, Shamsul Alam, 32, and Didarul Alam, 29, from Bakkhali Canal of Sitakunda coast and sent them to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) morgue for autopsy. The body of the other pirate Salah Uddin, 33, is still to be recovered. Police sources said they

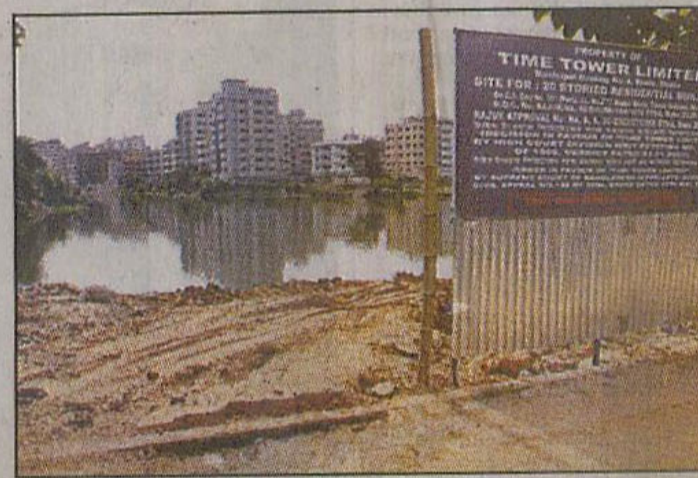
Gulshan Lake again under developer's onslaught

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A developer is filling up a large portion of the Gulshan Lake along the main road next to Brac Center, claiming that it is a private property for which Rajuk has issued a 'no objection certificate' and also approved a plan for a 20-storey structure.

Following complaints from residents, Gulshan police yesterday detained a man tasked with maintaining security on the site.

Officer-in-Charge of Gulshan Police Station Kazi Noor-e-Alam said they have detained the security personnel to extract from him information regarding the so-called owner of the site, who is filling up the lake. Alam, however, said police have yet to get any clue.



A developer is filling up a large portion of the Gulshan Lake in the city. The signboard of the developer is also seen in the picture snapped yesterday.

Meat prices shoot up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Meat traders of the city yesterday started selling beef, mutton and broiler at higher prices ahead of Eid violating the rate fixed by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Most of the meat traders at the city's kitchen markets yesterday demanded Tk 170 to Tk 200 for mutton, Tk 130 to 145 for beef, Tk 100 to Tk 120 for buffalo meat and Tk 85 for a kilo of broiler.

However, the price of mutton was fixed at Tk 150, beef Tk 110 and buffalo meat Tk 90 per kg at a meeting before the Ramadan of meat traders with DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka. The meeting also

REPORT CARD ON MINISTERS

4 years in office

'Powerless' power boss provided dark hours

SHARIEF KHAN

The day the BNP government celebrated its fourth anniversary, the country was undergoing a power load-shedding of around 1,000 megawatts. This shows how Iqbal Hassan Mahmood -- the man in charge of the power division of the energy ministry -- had been performing in the last four years.

This crisis could have been avoided if the government handled the power sector professionally and allowed genuine bidders to submit power in the 450 MW Sirajganj project to build projects. But in the last four years, the power sector only saw dominance of politically biased decisions.

Mahmood's performance has been so poor that he has taken practically no decisions on power projects in recent months. He himself stated on several occasions



Iqbal Hassan Mahmood

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