

Offices still in Eid mood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government, semi-government and private offices including banks and financial institutions opened yesterday with a very low turnout of staffs after the three-day Eid holiday and weekend.

Attendance at the Secretariat, the administrative hub of the country, was also very thin as more than half of the officers and employees did not turn up. Many ministers were also absent.

"About 30 to 40 percent of the staff joined offices today (Sunday)," said an employee at the home ministry, adding that many of them were latecomers.

More staffs are expected to return to their desks today, he said, but it would take a few days before office activities return to normal.

According to Fakhrul Islam, chief engineer of Department of Shipping, almost all employees of the department returned to office yesterday but "working speed was very slow".

"Some 30 percent of a regular day's work was done today (Sunday) due to the absence of key employees in other government offices," Fakhrul said.

Work progressed slowly as almost all officials and employees were seen exchanging Eid greetings and pleasantries with colleagues.

Similar scenes were seen in most private offices with attendance very thin as many employees were enjoying extended holi-

days.

"Around 65 percent of the staff joined today, but there was little office activity," said Sarkar Dipu, an employee of Rangs Group of Companies.

Most came late but left early, spending their stay at the office with pleasantries, he said.

Meanwhile, most city stores remained closed while streets were free from traffic yesterday save a few incidents of congestions in some major intersections.

However, the situation in the city's train, launch and bus terminals were different.

Almost all terminals were crowded with incoming passengers with each passenger carrier arriving with hundreds of people returning to the city from their village homes.

Every bus seat was taken, the launches were crowded and all trains arrived with seemingly hundreds of passengers on the roofs.

Over 60,000 people arrived in the city through Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday. At least another 70,000 arrived at the Mohakhali bus terminals and some 28,000 at the Kamalapur Railway Station, sources said.

The official three-day-holiday of Eid-ul-Fitr ended on Friday, followed by a public holiday on Saturday.

Meanwhile, normal office schedule (from 9:00am to 5:00pm) resumed yesterday after it was curtailed for the month of Ramadan.



Employees at government, semi-government and private offices were busy exchanging Eid greetings and pleasantries with colleagues yesterday after the three-day Eid holiday and weekend. The photo was taken from Shikha Bhawan in the city.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Sustainability of present momentum of Indo-Bangla relations stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and former ambassadors at a roundtable discussion yesterday emphasised an inclusive and participatory process with political parties and key stakeholders for the sustainability of the current momentum of Bangladesh-India relations.

The discussion titled "India-Bangladesh Relations: Confidence Building Initiatives" was organised by Rashtrobhigga Samity at Jatiya Press Club in the city with its President Prof Gyasuddin Molla in the chair. Principal Shahadat Hussain Rana moderated the discussion.

The policy regarding India should be a national policy, not one of any government or political party, said former ambassador Humayun Kabir in his keynote paper.

Relations with India should be

approached through a kind of national consensus. Otherwise, Bangladesh will have to negotiate with a "weak hand", which could be fraught with serious risks, said Kabir.

He also opined for maintaining transparency in the negotiation process with India and strengthening bureaucratic machinery to support the implementation of the new dimensions of the relationship.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said all political parties should at least sit together to exchange their views over Bangladesh-India relations.

He said the Indian government already discussed about the deals to be signed with its opposition. "But there is no dialogue between the opposition and the government in our country. There is no

discussion in this regard in the parliament," said Iqbal.

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir said he is anxious over the fact that neither the opposition party nor many of the cabinet members, lawmakers of the ruling party and members of the parliamentary standing committee know about the deals.

Information about the possible deals published in media is being leaked through sources in the government, not coming formally from any government spokesman. The government should clarify what it is planning to do, said Kabir.

Addressing the programme, Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique urged both governments to remove hurdles towards preserving the intimate ties among people of the two countries, like those in visa

processing.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman blamed the previous governments for their failure to interest India in working with Bangladesh.

"After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, some people tried to convert Bangladesh into a mini Pakistan. Why would India maintain good relations with a mini Pakistan?" said Prof Mizanur.

Former ambassador Ashfaqur Rahman urged the government to hold discussions over Bangladesh-India relations in parliament.

BFUJ Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and Dhaka University Department of International Relations Chairman Prof Delwar Hossain also spoke at the discussion.



Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique speaks at a discussion titled "India-Bangladesh Relations: Confidence Building Initiatives", organised by Rashtrobhigga Samity at Jatiya Press Club in the city. On his right is Principal Shahadat Hussain Rana and on his left is Rashtrobhigga Samity President Prof Gyasuddin Molla.

PHOTO: STAR

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