



Holidaymakers risk their lives by travelling on the roof of an overcrowded train at Airport Railway Station yesterday. **Top right**, homebound people stuck in a 15km tailback near the east end of Bangabandhu bridge in Tangail. **Bottom right**, vehicles caught in traffic jam on a 13km stretch of Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Munshiganj's Gazaria.



PHOTO: STAR

## Heavy rush, slow traffic

FROM PAGE 1

There was no report of major tailbacks there.

Meanwhile, the hustling bustling metropolis of Dhaka looked a little different yesterday as a large number of people have already left for home. The city is expected to show signs of tranquillity in the coming days.

A five-day Eid holiday began yesterday and the bus terminals at Gabtoli, Sayedabad and Mohakhali, Kamalapur Railway Station and Sadarghat launch terminal were buzzing with people.

Talking to The Daily Star, several holidaymakers expressed their unhappiness as many long-route buses failed to reach the terminals on time.

"My little son has become restless at home. He is calling me repeatedly over the phone and asking me to board the bus that would leave first," Faruk Hossain, a service holder who was going to Faridpur, told The Daily Star at the Gabtoli terminal.

"My bus was supposed leave at 12:15pm but it is already an hour late," he said.

Mujibur Rahman, a counter manager of Golden Line, a private bus operator, said their buses were not being able to reach the terminal on time due to heavy pressure of traffic on the highways.

Those who bought bus tickets yesterday alleged they were being charged high.

### HIGHWAYS

Thousands of home-goers heading for the northern districts faced untold sufferings as they remained stuck in tailbacks for hours at both ends of the Bangabandhu bridge yesterday.

The tailbacks stretched from the west end of the bridge to Sirajganj-Hatikumrul Intersection and from the east side of the bridge to Rabna bypass, reports our Tangail correspondent.

According to the traffic control room of the Bangabandhu bridge, the heavy pressure of vehicles and worn-out condition of the highway were to blame for the tailback which began in Tangail's Elenga area around 10:30am.

However, drivers and passengers blamed the toll plaza for the gridlock. They said the booths were taking time

to collect the tolls, creating the gridlock.

On the other side of the bridge, there was another long tailback up to the Sirajganj-Hatikumrul intersection.

People of 16 northern districts go home through this intersection.

Arif Miah, a passenger of a Bogra-bound bus, alleged that no law enforcer was working there to ease the traffic situation.

Mohammad Daud, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bangabandhu Bridge West Police Station, however, said they were struggling to control the situation as the traffic pressure was too high.

Golam Zilani, OC of Hatikumrul Police Station, echoed Daud's views.

Julhas Miah, driver of a Sirajganj-bound bus, said goods-laden trucks were not supposed to ply the highways from three days before the Eid. But, they are still on the highways. On many occasions, many truck drivers violate traffic rules, leading to traffic gridlock.

The picture on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway was similar.

Like on Thursday, a 13km-long traf-

fic congestion was created from Meghna bridge to Baushia in Munshiganj's Gazaria yesterday morning.

The highway has been upgraded to a four lane one but it abruptly narrows down to two lanes right before the bridge, creating a bottleneck, said OC Hedayetul Islam Bhuiyan of Gazaria Police Station.

"The problem will not be solved until a new bridge is built," he said.

### FERRY

There has been a huge pressure of vehicles and passengers at the Paturia ferry terminal since yesterday noon.

Zillur Rahman, assistant general manager (commerce) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), said 18 ferries were operating on the Daulatdia-Paturia route.

Three launches were fined for not having adequate life-saving equipment on them, said BIWTC sources.

### TRAIN

Like on Thursday, most of the trains left the Kamalapur Railway Station on time.

However, many people were seen travelling on the rooftop.

Rangpur-bound Rangpur Express was delayed by an hour, Chapainawabganj-bound Rajshahi Express by one hour and 40 minutes and Mymensingh-bound Isakhan Express was delayed by 40 minutes.

Some 27 trains left the station till 3:00pm and only one of them was late because of technical glitch, Railways Minister Mazibul Hoque told reporters after visiting the station.

"We've talked to passengers of different routes. They are satisfied with the timely services," he said.

But, Sheikh Farhan, a private university student who was heading for Rajshahi, said, "I got the ticket but had to wait as my train was around two hours late."

### LAUNCH

Holidaymakers streamed the Sadarghat terminal since the early hours of yesterday. About 67 launches left for their destination till 6:00pm, said Gulzar Ali, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

Some launches were seen carrying passengers on the rooftop although

there were mobile courts to monitor the matter.

Many of those travelling on the roofs said they had no other option as the launches were already overcrowded.

## The road

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enough for an independent life," she says.

"Because of my disability," Munni continues, "I lost all hope that I could survive. Now, when I hear that our products are applauded by different quarters, I feel honoured."

"We are all grateful for the opportunity to work here," says Bilkis Akter, 22, with Ankur for twelve years. "We see many men and women with disabilities begging on the street but we earn a living through work."

In the lead up to festivals including Eid, the workers of Ankur are particularly busy to meet the challenge of finishing all the orders on time.

## A tragic end

Bus hits and kills boy sticking his head out of bus window

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student was killed after he stuck his head out of the window of a moving bus and was hit by another bus in the capital's Mirpur yesterday.

Police say the two buses of Projapoti Pribahan were trying to overtake each other for quite a while before the freak accident.

The victim Hashem Islam, 19, was in the computer science and engineering department at Dhaka Polytechnic Institute. Hashem also took pictures of weddings, said his brother Kashem.

Hashem and his nephew Nahid Islam were going to Uttara for shopping. They boarded the bus around 9:30am at Maddha Paikpara in Mirpur, he added.

Sub-Inspector Proboto Kumar Roy of Mirpur Police Station, said, "When the bus reached near Mirpur 2 footbridge, the youth stuck his head out of the window and got fatally hit."

Police seized the bus Hashem boarded, but the drivers managed to flee.

The youth was first taken to a nearby hospital, and then to the Suhrawardy Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, doctors sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead around 11:30am.

"He always dreamt of becoming a good photographer," his brother lamented.

Hashem had GPA-5 in his Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination.

Commuters allege that drivers of buses and human haulers in the city often act like they are in a competition.

On February 7, an SSC examinee was killed after he leaned out of the window of a bus to see his mother and hit a pole on the side of the road.

## Meat, fish prices go up ahead of Eid

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MATHEWS CHIRAN

Prices of meat and big fish have gone up in city kitchen markets with the Eid-ul-Fitr round the corner.

The prices increased by Tk 40 to Tk 200 a kg yesterday due to rising demand and falling supplies.

At Sukrabad kitchen market, beef was selling at Tk 520 to Tk 550 a kg, up from Tk 480 to Tk 500 a week ago.

Mamun from Sukrabad said, "I bought beef at Tk 500 a kg last week, but now it sells at Tk 550."

Prices of chicken have also soared. Traders at the kitchen market were charging customers Tk 165 for a kg of broiler chicken. Local chicken and "sonali" chicken, also known as "Pakistani" chicken, were sold at between Tk 200 and Tk 400 a kg.

Traders said prices of chicken went up by Tk 20-50 a kg than a week ago. They said chicken might get dearer in the last few days before the Eid due to high demand.

The situation was similar at Hatirpool kitchen market where broiler chicken was selling at between

Tk 165 and Tk 175 a kg.

Prices of local and "sonali" chicken were almost the same to those at Sukrabad kitchen market.

Prices of Hilsa, Rui and Katla soared by Tk 50 to Tk 300 a kg than a day ago. However, the prices of small fish were stable.

Fish traders blamed the price hike on poor supply. Hilsa (800 gm) was sold at Tk 600 to Tk 800 a kg, up by around Tk 100 a day.

Prices of Rui were Tk 300 to Tk 450 a kg, up by Tk 50.

A hilsa trader at Karwar Bazar said prices of the national fish remained unchanged in the last two weeks, but the prices shot up by Tk 100 to Tk 300 per kg yesterday.

The increase in prices has hit the low-income people.

Badsha Mia, a small trader, could not make a good profit from his business in recent months. The soaring prices of meat and fish have left him baffled.

"Seeing the high prices of beef, I went to buy chicken, but I couldn't. Finally, I bought a small amount of meat," he told The Daily Star.

## Library on wheels

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books," says one library member, Akash Das, 18, from Debipur village, who is currently studying for his Higher School Certificate. "I was astonished to see this mobile library. I feel so fortunate to have the chance to read books for free. This facility is overwhelming."

Library members are entitled to borrow each book for a week at a time. From Hindu law to science, Microsoft Access to Khulna's history, there are over a thousand titles to choose from. Some books are donations. Shrabon also tries to enrich the collection from his own pocket.

"I'm an avid reader," says housewife Nushrat Jahan from Noihati village. "But after marriage I didn't get the opportunity. Now I have enrolled as a library member. I have never seen a local council member like Shrabon. Noihati Union has never had anybody provide books and services like he does."

In her hand is a book, "Childcare and Health," by Dr Salma Fariha. "I was supposed to return it today," she says, "but I've asked to keep it for an extra week to finish reading it."

Books are not Shrabon's only initiative. He has established two

training centres where hundreds of women have learnt weaving, handicrafts, tailoring and more; forty-seven housewives already earn extra income with their new skills. "It's my responsibility to empower women economically and socially," says Shrabon. "They are the main mentors in each family. It's usually up to them to make a family succeed."

Meanwhile an information technology club Shrabon established offers free IT courses, while to improve law and order Shrabon organised solar lights with closed circuit cameras to be installed in key areas. He has overseen the creation of public wi-fi hotspots to encourage online learning.

"I want to be close to the community," he says. "When I was elected as a public representative on 22 March 2016 I swore to myself that I would work to cure this union of social degradation caused by drugs, eve-teasing and unsavoury politics," Shrabon says. Of the twelve candidates in the election, he was the youngest.

Shrabon is available for consultation at the union council chambers every morning. He has publicly invited all 70,000 plus union constituents to bring problems to his

door.

"I'm so proud of Shrabon," says the chairman of Noihati Union council, Kamal Bulbul. "He has improved the attitudes of many young people in this area. Now they are engaged and ready to do constructive work for the community. Local farmers are getting information on agriculture and aquaculture because of him. He arranges video calls with public authorities so farmers can take advice; he organises for public officials to visit constituents' homes."

"I think he has started a movement for people to do good deeds by their own efforts," observes young reader Akash Das. "By interacting with all stakeholders and helping anybody without hesitation, Shrabon has changed us."

"We want more people like him," says Rupsha upazila nirbahi officer Eliachur Rahman, "people truly dedicated to providing villagers with the services they need and doing so from the heart."

As for the future, Shrabon has set his sights high. "I want to take my mission to help people from the local to the upazila level, then district-wide and ultimately, across the nation."

## 26 killed in Pakistan

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a "horrific" act.

Pakistan has seen a dramatic improvement in security in the last two years, but groups such as the umbrella Pakistani Taliban and other extremist outfits still retain the ability to carry out attacks.

Local lawmaker Sajid Hussain Turi, the owner of the market, said bazaars in Parachinar had been barricaded off and vehicles banned from the area after multiple attacks have hit the city this year.

Parachinar was the location of the first major militant attack in Pakistan in 2017, a bomb in a market which killed 24 people in January and was

claimed by the Pakistani Taliban. In March a second Taliban attack killed a further 22 people.

There was no immediate claim of the yesterday's attack.

Kurram, one of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous tribal districts, is known for sectarian clashes between Sunnis and Shiites, who make up roughly 20 percent of Pakistan's population of 200 million.

The twin blasts in Parachinar followed a bombing earlier in the day in southwestern Quetta, capital of the insurgency-wracked Balochistan province, that killed at least 13 people.

Investigators said the attack tar-

geted police. It was claimed by both the local affiliate of the Islamic State group and by Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), an offshoot of the Pakistani Taliban, according to the SITE monitoring group.

There was no immediate explanation for the dual claims. Islamic State Khorasan Province, the Middle Eastern group's affiliate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been known to work with the myriad of Pakistani militant groups in previous attacks, including with JuA.

Officials at the city's Civil Hospital said at least 13 people were killed and around 20 injured, mostly by shrapnel. Police officials said nine police-

men were among the dead.

At the hospital in Quetta, worried children stood by the bloodstained coats of wounded relatives, and Pakistani soldiers visited injured colleagues.

Stunned survivors could give few details about the attack. "I was sitting on a chair. There was an explosion. I got injured and fell down," said one victim, Gulzar Ahmad.

Pakistan has waged a long war with militancy, but security has markedly improved in the country since its deadliest-ever terror attack, an assault on a school in northwestern Peshawar in which Taliban gunmen left more than 150 people dead, most of them chil-

dren.

That attack shocked a country already grimly accustomed to atrocities, and prompted the military to intensify an operation in the tribal areas targeting militants.

The army has also been fighting in mineral-rich Balochistan, the country's most restive province, since 2004, with hundreds of soldiers and militants killed.

Its roughly seven million inhabitants have long complained they do not receive a fair share of its gas and mineral wealth, but a greater push by Pakistani authorities has reduced the violence considerably in recent years.