

Nat'l Eidgah congregation at 8:30am

BSS, Dhaka
A total of 410 congregations of holy Eid-ul-Fitr would be held in the capital this year. Of those, 230 congregations will be held in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and 180 in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) areas. As in the previous years, the main Eid congregation will be held at Jatiya Eidgah Maidan, adjacent to the High Court, at 8:30am. Senior Pesh Imam Hafez Maulana Muhammad Mizanur Rahman of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque will lead the prayers at the National Eidgah. Separate arrangements would be made for women at the National Eidgah. The venue of the main congregation will be shifted to Baitul Mukarram national mosque at 9:00am in case of inclement weather. A total of five Eid congregations will be held at Baitul Mukarram national mosque -- at 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am and 10:45am, said a press release of Islamic Foundation.



Kansat mango market, the largest in Rajshahi, is buzzing with traders and buyers with varieties of the produce on display. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

DMP, Rab to watch vacant city houses

UNB, Dhaka
Special measures have been taken to ensure security of 10-15 lakh vacant houses in the capital during the Eid vacation. During the vacation, area-wise security will be provided to check petty crimes like burglary and stealing, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Masudul Rahman. He further said local police stations would ensure security of the vacant households as well organisations and shopping malls with the help of community police and private security guards of apartment buildings. Besides, special check posts will be set up along-side carrying out foot patrolling and vehicle patrolling, he added. Sources at the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) headquarters said the elite force alongside other law enforcement agencies had chalked out foolproof security measures in the city for the Eid holidays.

FOOTPATH SHOPS

Brisk business there, too

UNB, Dhaka
Though regular malls are always in the limelight during every Eid, the makeshift shops on footpaths and open spaces in the capital are also doing a brisk business pulling huge customers, both the middle-class and lower middle-class people. People were seen crowding around the makeshift shops in the city's Panthapath, Farmgate, Gulistan, Bangabazar, Purana Paltan, Motijheel, Fakirapool, New Market, Nilkhet, Jatrabari, Sadarghat, Mirpur, Malibagh, Mouchak and Rampura areas yesterday to complete their last-minute shopping. These makeshift stalls are seen as hotspots for cheap jeans and gabardine pants, shirts, T-shirts, panjabis, trousers, footwear, belts, caps, lungis, wallets, children clothes, girls' attires, cosme-

tics and toys. Many buyers said they are shopping at the footpath stalls as they cannot afford expensive items at the shopping malls. Mahubur Rahman, a Dhaka City College student, said he first visited some stalls at Bashundhara City Shopping Mall to buy a jeans pant, but he could not due to its excessive price. "The shop owners there were demanding Tk 2,000 to 4,000 for a pant. Later, I came here (a footpath shop near the mall) and bought a jeans and a gabardine pant at Tk 800." A middle-aged housewife, Jahanara, who went to a makeshift shop near Mouchak market, said she bought a panjabi for her husband at Tk 350 from the roadside shop. "As our budget is not much for Eid shopping, we didn't go to any shopping mall." Talking to this news agency, a number of vendors voiced their satisfaction as

they said the volume of sale and profit this year is higher than that of previous years. Badsha, a vendor who sells different types of pants on the footpath near Bashundhara City Shopping Mall, said he made a good profit this time with huge sale of his products. "I've sold 70 pants every day on an average from the 10th Ramadan to date (yesterday)." "We're witnessing a huge rush of customers and the sale is also good," said T-shirt vendor Nizam Uddin in Rampura area. "We're selling good quality panjabis at a much cheaper price and getting huge response from buyers," said another vendor Belal in Baitul Mukarram area. The vendors alleged though they are making a good profit, they have to pay toll to local political leaders and law enforcers running their businesses on the footpaths.

Half of patients leave Barisal hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal
Patients have started leaving Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal city thinking that they would not get proper treatment due to shortage of doctors during Eid. Besides, some patients alleged that they were discharged without completing treatment. While visiting the hospital, this correspondent found that almost half of the patients have already left till yesterday. Murad Ahamed, one of the patients of surgery ward, said he was released although his treatment was not completed. Another patient Abdur Rab Howlader, who was admitted to the ward with head injury two days ago, echoed him. Hanufa Begum, a patient of female surgery ward, who also expressed the same concern, said, "I have been staying at the hospital for three weeks and I will not leave because my condition is critical." Dr SM Sirajul Islam, director of the hospital, said generally 1,800 to 2,000 patients stay at the hospital during other times but now the figure is 1,093. Denying the allegation, he said, "I think no problem will arise in giving medical care to patients." Some 103 doctors out of 156 would be on duty during Eid, he said. They are not releasing serious patients but the less serious ones who can be cured with care at home, he further said. "Generally patients do not want to stay at any hospital during Eid. They want to go home -- it's a common feature," he added.

Eid just another day full of uncertainty



Not sure when or what their next meal will be, these women cook for their families under the open sky at Tanguar Haor of Sunamganj.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA
MINTU DESHWARA with HASAN MEER
"We will celebrate Eid next year. I promise I will get you new dresses then. I will also cook shemai (vermicelli) for you. Lots of it..." Rehana Begum kept on repeating the above to her three children. Finally, her 13-year-old son nodded. But she younger ones kept on sobbing. It was hard for her seven- and five-year-old daughters to understand why there would be no new dresses for them in this Eid. Soon afterwards, her eldest son, already hardened by hardship, began to console his sisters. While the tired mother rummaged through the pots and jars left disheveled at a corner of the house to find something to cook for the family. The 39-year-old said her husband, who used to be a tenant farmer, now worked as a day labourer. But work was hard to come by these days, she added. Life was not always like this for Rehana of Bishwamvarpur village under Sunamganj district. They had rented three acres of land for cultivating paddy amid hope of a good yield. But the April's incessant rain coupled with onrush of water from the hills in the bordering areas had triggered flash floods in the greater Sylhet region and adjacent districts, inundating vast areas of farmland. "All my crops were damaged. All my belongings were ruined," lamented Rehana. "Now, there's no work. My children are crying for Eid dresses. But I don't know how I will provide food for them," said the sobbing mother. Not only Rehana, almost all the people of Bishwamvarpur, Radhanagar and many other villages in Sunamganj haor areas are now barely surviving. Even the thought of Eid failed to bring any hope or joy to their lives. Rather, it only added to their woes. There are around 150 families who live in these two villages. Most of them are marginal tenant farmers. Seeking anonymity, a mother of five said, "I collected some old clothes for my children from a well-off family ahead of Eid. How can I buy clothes when I don't even have enough money to feed my children?" While visiting the villages yesterday, this newspaper saw that the collective mood of the villagers was that of hopelessness. Children were in tears, parents without hope. The elderly villagers sat in a corner wearing a blank look. For the villagers, Eid was just another day full of misery and uncertainty. Manruja Begum, 40, of Bishwamvarpur village, said, "We had cultivated paddy on 300 decimals of land in Korchar Haor. All of our crops were damaged." "I wanted to buy clothes for my four children. Also, my husband needed an eye operation badly. We were looking forward to the harvest. Now, all is lost." She wiped her eyes. Her husband, sitting by her side, was too grief-stricken to speak. Bindu Talukdar, member secretary of Haor Bachao Sunamganj Bachao Andolon, said, "Many are buying rice by selling their livestock. Some are surviving on rice under the Vulnerable Group Feeding programme." The flashflood not only affected the tenant farmers in the district, even the middle-income group was also affected by it. Most of their crops were also damaged, he said. Echoing him, Ali Nur, a resident of Radhanagar village, said, "I'm faced with even bigger crisis. I cannot work at someone's house or stand in the OMS line." "I could not buy anything for my two children this Eid. Not just Eid, I'm worried how I will survive the year." Kamruzzaman Kamrul, upazila chairman of Tahipur, said many were also asking for help from the solvent families. Mafia Begum, 45, of Radhanagar said, "My family survives on the rice we get from the open market sale. When we can't get the rice, we starve. Many days we had to break our fast with nothing but water. Eid will just be another day full of struggle." Even the markets in the Haor areas that used to be abuzz with shoppers ahead of Eid wore a bleak look. Abu Sayed, 48, owner of Nipamoni Garments at Bishwamvarpur Bazaar Market, said, "How could anyone shop on an empty stomach?" Abdul Kaiyum, owner of Tushar Enterprises, and Nantu Barman, owner of Niloy Enterprises, echoed him. Harunur Rashid, chairman of Bishwamvarpur Upazila Parishad, said, "People are barely surviving. How can they celebrate Eid in this condition? They need help." Nurul Huda, chairman of Sunamganj District Council, urged all to stand by the flashflood affected people in the haor areas. "Eid brings people together. It is our responsibility to share the joy of the festival with them."



Holidaymakers from low income group happy to find room atop the cargo of a truck at Amin Bazar outside Dhaka yesterday. Knowing the dangers of riding on rooftops of vehicles is of no use to them as most of them cannot afford to buy tickets to their destinations. Early yesterday, 16 such travellers, including two women and a girl, died after the cement-laden truck they were riding on flipped over in Pirganj of Rangpur.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

RMG workers block road demanding arrears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Demanding arrears before Eid-ul-Fitr, workers of a garment factory blocked Mirpur Road in the capital's Kalyanpur area yesterday, causing traffic disruption for an hour. Around 250 workers of Monde Apparels Ltd took to the street around 12:00pm after they found their factory shut, witnesses said. The factory authorities promised the workers to pay their three-month arrear salaries yesterday, agitated workers said. Earlier, the authorities changed the payment date thrice -- June 15, 20 and 23, another worker alleged. The factory officials had been telling them since morning that Managing Director Noor-E-Alam Siddique Jugol was coming with the money but he did not come till noon, said Shapla Begum, a worker. "My husband is waiting for me with bus

tickets to go Nilphamari and we were supposed to start journey with Eid gifts for my two kids..." she said. Around 3:10pm, vehicles started plying after law enforcers took them to a nearby place, police said. Due to the traffic disruption, a long tail-back took place on the road towards Gabtoli, Selim Uzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Darussalam Police Station, told The Daily Star. This correspondent visited the garment factory to meet the officials yesterday afternoon but it was found locked from outside. Even after repeated attempts, MD Noor-E-Alam could not be contacted as he did not pick up the phone. Siddiqui Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said they have already sent their officials to find the MD to settle the matter.

Eid brings hope to Ctg

FROM PAGE 4
Tk 15,000 a month. Now, all of us are eagerly waiting for Eid as the income shoots up many folds during that time," he said. "Last year, I earned around Tk 45,000 during the Eid Season." He said his target is to earn Tk 80,000 this season. Like Imran, around 200 motif artisans, mostly Urdu-speaking, are busy completing their orders ahead of Eid in the port city's Jhaotala area. Md Shafiq, who has been in the profession since 1990, said back in the 90s the work flow was good. "...now at best 35 factories are in operation," he said. "The situation worsened around two years ago when many motif artisans left their traditional profession. And to make ends meet, they were compelled to find jobs in garment factories." Md Ali, another artisan, said, "My target is to earn Tk 70,000 this Eid season as it's hard to get work afterwards."

Road crashes kill two

FROM PAGE 4
Eid-holiday makers. Ferdous Shamim along with his mother Hosne Ara, wife Rupama, five-year-old daughter Saima and two-year-old son Mehedi was going to Chittagong Railway Station to catch a train to Jamalpur. Our Pirojpur correspondent adds, Md Shamsul Alam Talukder, 75, of Subidpur village, died when a motorbike hit him from behind at Uttar Nilti village in Kaokhaliupazila in Pirojpur.

Municipality

FROM PAGE 4
workers, over 32,500 employees of various municipalities did not get their salaries for months and are spending days in misery, said Mujahidul Islam Tusher, joint general secretary told The Daily Star.

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