



HAJJ MISMANAGEMENT Pilgrims thrown into disarray

90 agencies fail to send a single pilgrim; show-cause notice to 377 hajj agencies

- KEY POINTS**
- Total aspirant pilgrims: 1, 27,198
 - As many as 55,413 sent in 17 days
 - The rest 71, 784 must reach Saudi Arabia by Aug 27
 - So far 25 flights cancelled

SOURCES: BIMAN, SAUDI AIRLINES, HAJJ CAMP

RASHIDUL HASAN

As many as 90 hajj agencies could not send a single of the 13,415 pilgrims till yesterday despite getting their visas weeks ago, as the tour operators failed to book flight tickets and arrange their accommodation in Saudi Arabia.

Eight other agencies have been able to arrange flight for one pilgrim each though they obtained visas for 1,157, according to a list prepared on Thursday by the Hajj Office, which operates under the religious affairs ministry.

Ten hajj operators have managed to send between three and ten of the 1,250 pilgrims they are supposed to send.

This grim picture of poor management explains why hajj flights continue to be cancelled at the last moment.

On the same day the Hajj Office prepared the list, Hajj Camp Director Saiful Islam served 377 hajj operators with show cause notice for creating "obstacles in the smooth hajj management."

And yesterday, Motiur Rahman, the religious affairs minister, warned of action against the hajj agencies involved in irregularities and fraudulence.

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People milling outside the terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 2:30pm yesterday after a fire prompted evacuation of passengers and hajj pilgrims. All normal activities were suspended at the airport. The fire that started on the second floor around 1:30pm was put out after about one and a half hours. There were no reports of any casualties.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SHAHJALAL AIRPORT Fire disrupts operations for 3 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Operations at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport stalled for about three hours after a fire broke out in a terminal building yesterday.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) officials said at least 10 flights, including one dedicated for pilgrims, were delayed.

Staffers of different offices, several hundred passengers, including pilgrims, were asked to leave after the fire broke out at 1:25pm at Air India office on the second floor of terminal building 2, Nure Azam Miah, officer-in-charge of Airport Police Station, said.

Passengers and their relatives waited outside with their belongings under the sun for hours. Moreover, passengers of at least two flights were stranded after their arrival at the prime

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India plans to deport 40,000 Rohingyas

Wants talks with Myanmar, Bangladesh, report says

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India is planning to deport around 40,000 Rohingyas Muslims who it says are living in the country illegally.

The Indian government says only around 14,000 of the Rohingyas Muslims living in the country are registered with the United Nations refugee agency and that the rest are considered illegal and liable to be sent back.

Reacting to the announcement, the Indian office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said it was "trying to find the facts" about New Delhi's plans to deport them.

India is not a signatory to UN conventions on refugees and no national law covers it.

Tens of thousands of Rohingyas have fled persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar



PHOTO: REUTERS

to Bangladesh since the early 1990s, with some of them then crossing over a porous border into India.

"These things are being discussed at diplomatic level with both Bangladesh and Myanmar," Interior Ministry spokesman KS Dhatwalia said, according to a Reuters

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16TH AMENDMENT VERDICT LGRD minister for review of observations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday urged the apex court to review the "unexpected observations" in the verdict in the 16th amendment case.

"With great sadness, I have to say that the chief justice made many unconstitutional and immoral comments in the judgment. Please, review the unexpected observations in the verdict," he said at a public rally in Madaripur's Shibchar area.

"It's not possible to conduct judicial proceedings by hurting people's sentiment. If the people of a country face a crisis of faith regarding the judicial system, that country would be in grave danger," he noted.

The minister said the chief justice had

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GUNFIGHT, BLASTS IN SHARIATPUR One killed, 25 hurt in AL factional clash

A CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

A Jubo League leader was killed and at least 25 others were injured, including 15 by bullets, in a gunfight between two rival groups of Awami League in Andharmanik Bazar area of Shariatpur yesterday evening.

Deceased Iqbal Hossain, 25, was the vice president of Rajanagor union Jubo League, the youth front of the ruling AL, in the district's Naria upazila.

Police and locals said a group of supporters of Dadon Mirbohor, president of Rajanagor union AL, attacked some followers of Zakir Gazi, chairman of Rajanagor Union Parishad and also a local AL leader, at Andharmanik Bazar around 2:00pm.

Later, supporters of Zakir vandalised a shop owned by a member of the rival group.

The attack and counter-attack triggered the gunfight in the area around 6:00pm, causing the casualties. Over 100 crude bombs were blasted during the clash.

Locals rushed bullet-hit Iqbal to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead. The injured were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Locals said there was a rivalry between Mirbohor and Zakir over the last

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Hard times for elephants

Habitat loss, scarcity of food fuel elephant-human conflict in the country



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Restrictions on elephants' free movement, scarcity of their food and development work in their habitats by government and non-government organisations fuelled the elephant-human conflict in the country, leading to deaths on both sides.

These reasons behind the conflict were identified in a study -- "Status of Asian Elephants in Bangladesh" -- conducted jointly by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Department of Forests (DoF).

World Wildlife Fund, which observes today (August 12) as World Elephant Day, says the elephant-human conflict is a result of habitat loss and fragmentation.

When elephants and humans interact, there is conflict from crop raiding, injuries and deaths to humans caused by elephants, and elephants are killed by humans for reasons other than ivory collection, says the WWF.

The study, conducted earlier in the year, noted that the endangered mammoth animals were always forced to enter locality and "lock into clashes with humans".

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- In 2003-16, 227 people and 63 elephants got killed
- 364 resident wild and captive elephants in Bangladesh
- Five of 12 elephant corridors almost closed
- World Elephant Day today

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