

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 28.5 L 25.2	MYMENSINGH H 28.3 L 25.2	CHITTAGONG H 26.8 L 25.5	SYLHET H 27.5 L 24.2	RAJSHAHI H 28.4 L 26.0	RANGPUR H 26.5 L 25.5	KHULNA H 27.2 L 26.2	BARISAL H 30.1 L 28.0	COX'S BAZAR H 28.0 L 25.0
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Light to moderate rain/thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at most places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong & Sylhet divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today, says the Met office. **The sun sets in the capital today at 6:34pm and rises tomorrow at 05:33am.** The highest and lowest temperatures recorded in major cities and towns yesterday were:



RAVAGED

Clockwise from top left, waterlogged potholes, road digging and muddy road impede vehicular movement in front of the capital's Shahjalal airport, on Karwan Bazar level crossing, near Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Badda-end of Hatirjheel, East Rampura and Kajlarpur. Although these are the common scenarios of the city streets throughout the year, especially during monsoon, the authorities are not quick to fix the spots. The photos were taken from Friday to yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Focus on rail, water ways to reduce pressure on roads

Poba roundtable told
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green activists yesterday urged the government to develop railway and waterway communications in order to reduce traffic on roads in Dhaka and thus to minimise hassle.

They recommended setting up new rail tracks, establishing an integrated waterway network with other districts around Dhaka, and taking strict measures for proper implementation of the projects in road transport sector.

The recommendations were made at a roundtable on transport projects and people's sufferings organised by Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) at its office in the capital.

For road transport, they suggested that the government stop illegal parking, control the number of private cars, and ensure adequate walking facility, and introduce separate lanes for cycles and buses.

They said the government spends hundreds of crores of taka on different projects like building flyover to improve the city's road transportation system, but such projects could not bring any benefits to the commuters.

The projects could not be implemented properly due to inappropriate planning, mismanagement, and a lack of transparency and monitoring. The issues also delay the projects, increasing costs, they observed.

Poba President Abu Naser Khan said although the country is moving towards development, traffic jam still causes immense sufferings to the commuters.

Dr Lenin Chowdhury, joint general secretary, said the government should focus on rail and waterways to reduce traffic on roads.



Shamim Osman addressing the rally on Chashara Salimullah Road in Narayanganj yesterday afternoon.

Osman mourns, people suffer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

People in Narayanganj had to suffer yesterday as police closed three roads leading to the town from 1:00pm to 4:00pm to facilitate ruling party lawmaker Shamim Osman's rally marking National Mourning Day.

The blocked roads were: Dhaka-Narayanganj Link Road, Dhaka-Narayanganj Old Road and Narayanganj-Shimrail Road.

Earlier on July 22, Shamim Osman announced that he would hold the mourning rally. Following the announcement, police on Friday made a decision that the roads would be closed to traffic yesterday.

Due to the blocking of the roads, many commuters, including students were seen riding on rickshaw-vans and on the back of trucks as they were unable to find any suitable transport. Frustrated, many simply started walking.

Mohammad Belal Hossain came to Narayanganj from Chittagong for a job interview. The interview ended at 1:00pm but he kept on waiting at Chashara bus stand for a vehicle. "I have been waiting for

two hours to find one." He eventually took a rickshaw-van and headed towards Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Fatullah Sign Board area. "I don't think I'll be able to find any vehicle before night. Now I'm worried whether I'll be able to return home today."

Mohammad Shafique, a private job holder, was waiting for transport on Link Road for around 30 minutes. He said he had to head back to the capital.

"This has become a tradition here [Narayanganj]. Everything just stops abruptly if there's any occasion. I may end up losing my job, if I fail to reach on time," said a worried Shafique.

Meanwhile, Sohail Parvez, a student in Narayanganj Government Tolaram College, said, "I came to the college on a bus this morning. But nothing is available now. I heard that the traffic movement has been stopped due to a mourning rally."

Sohail eventually got on a rickshaw-van to go home. He said he will have to pay Tk 50 for the ride, which is way more than what he usually spends.

Commuters were seen waiting at

bus stations for hours to find transport.

Dhaka-bound Hafizul Islam, president of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Narayanganj district, was waiting for a bus at Chashara bus stand.

"One does not need to block traffic movement to mourn Bangabandhu. Where does it say you have to create sufferings in order to express your grief?"

"Those who respect Bangabandhu and mourn his death do it from their heart. Not by making people suffer," he added.

While visiting the blocked roads from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, it was seen that additional police were deployed in the areas.

Stoppage of traffic, coupled with drizzle not only increased the sufferings of people, many goods-laden vehicles had to remain stranded.

According to traffic police sources, ruling party lawmaker Shamim Osman called for a rally in observance of National Mourning Day on July 22. As a result, three entry points to the city

ADVANCE EID TICKET SALE STARTS FRIDAY

Road condition worries bus owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With Eid-ul-Azha only three weeks away, private bus operators will begin selling advance tickets from Friday (August 18).

State-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Bangladesh Railway are yet to set the date. They might do it today, said officials.

Launch operators usually sell advance tickets mostly over phone. Selling of advance tickets have already started, said a launch owner.

Every year, tens of thousands of people leave the capital to celebrate Eid with near and dear ones at their village homes. However, their journey home always turns bitter largely due to traffic jam, overcharging of ticket and delays in bus and train schedule.

But holidaymakers may suffer in traffic jam if the authorities fail to take quick and necessary steps as some of the major highways have already been witnessing tailbacks, due to pothole-ridden roads and ongoing works, said several bus operators.

Faruk Talukder Sohel, chairman of

Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association, told this correspondent yesterday that they would start selling advance tickets from Friday.

Mizanur Rahman, chairman of BRTC, said they have already held a meeting in this regard and the date for selling advance tickets could be known today.

A Bangladesh Railway official said the date for selling train tickets might be fixed today.

ROAD CONDITION A MAJOR CONCERN
A leader of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association said they are facing huge problems in operating their buses due to a poor condition of roads -- mainly those connected Dhaka with the northern and southwestern regions.

"...A trip to a northern district is supposed to take six hours; it is now taking more than 12 hours... We are incurring a huge loss," he said wishing anonymity.

Another bus owner said they were indecisive whether they will start selling advance tickets ahead of the Eid as they have already been facing serious problems to maintain time schedule.

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Remittance transfer will get easier
Says Gowher Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister's Adviser for International Affairs Dr Gowher Rizvi yesterday said the government was considering easing the transfer process of the remittances sent by Bangladeshi expatriates.

"The government will not take any step that may put the expatriates in trouble," he told a discussion titled "NRB & Opportunity: Remittance Challenges" at a city hotel.

The Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (CNRB) organised the discussion.

Gowher Rizvi said

Airport fire originated in Air India office
Says Caab; reason still unknown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fire at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport originated at the Air India office housed on the second floor of the airport, said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) yesterday.

"The automatic central fire alarm rang out at 1:25pm and the airport's fire control monitor identified Air India office as the source of yesterday's [Friday] fire," Caab said in a press release.

However, the reason behind the fire is still unknown. Offices of two airlines -- Air India and Qatar Airways -- were damaged in the fire.

The fire was brought under control at 2:00pm, said the release. The fire did not hamper landings and takeoffs, it claimed.

But, Caab on Friday said at least 10 flights, including one dedicated for pilgrims, were delayed, due to the incident.

The Caab has formed a five-member committee led by its director (administration) to investigate the matter.

Meanwhile, another three-member probe committee headed by fire service Deputy Director Debashish Bardhan yesterday visited the spot.