



Locals along with firefighters at the spot in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj where the roof of an under-construction filling station collapsed yesterday, killing four workers. Story on page 2. PHOTO: STAR

## Long wait to get buses

FROM PAGE 16  
 "Given the terrible situation in the ferry ghat, I don't know when we will reach home," he said.  
 With Eid-ul-Azha still five days away, holidaymakers like Shariful travelling to 19 south-western districts using Paturia and Daulatdia ferry terminals have been suffering immensely for hours yesterday due to huge pressure of vehicles, strong current of the Padma river and a shortage of ferries.  
 For the passenger buses, it is taking 10 to 12 hours to cross the river at both ends while it takes three to four days for the capital-bound cattle-laden trucks entering through Daulatdia ghat in Rajbari's Goalunda upazila.  
 Although the Eid rush is yet to reach its peak, many people started heading for their homes a few days ahead of the festival to avoid the crowds.  
 Usually, around 1.29 crore people of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur, leave the cities to celebrate Eid at their homes, according to the National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR).  
 Of them, 55 percent will go by road, 25 percent by waterways and 20 percent will use trains, NCPSRR estimated.  
 Several major highways have started

witnessing traffic congestion due to increased number of vehicles and potholes created following excessive rains.  
 But the situation is worse at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry ghats where around 800 vehicles get trapped in traffic snarl-ups for hours on both sides of the river.  
 Around 450 vehicles, including 350 trucks, were seen lined up at Daulatdia ferry terminal as of 6:00pm. At the same time, 100 trucks and 60 buses were queued up at Paturia ferry terminal, our Manikganj correspondent reported.  
 Abul Kashem, a passenger of a bus, said he started from Kushitia around 10:00pm on Sunday and reached Daulatdia ferry ghat at 1:00am. But he had to wait there for 11 hours.  
 "It is becoming unbearable," he said.  
 The bus drivers held the cattle-laden trucks responsible for the jam. But the cattle traders said their vehicles got stuck at the terminal for two to three days and it was tough for them to feed the cattle on the truck.  
 Officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation said the ferries are taking more time than usual to cross the river due to strong currents.  
 This has reduced the number of ferry trips. The numbers of vehicles waiting for

the crossing have increased in turn, said Shafiqul Islam, manager (commerce) of BIWTC's Daulatdia office.  
 Earlier, it took 35 to 40 minutes to reach Daulatdia from Paturia but now it is taking 80 to 90 minutes, he added.  
 Out of 18 ferries, 17 are currently in operation on this route.  
 Meanwhile, 350 trucks, mainly laden with cattle, are being lined up at Shimulia ferry terminal at Munshiganj. As the passenger buses were given priority to cross the Padma river, the number of trucks was getting longer, reported our Munshiganj correspondent, quoting BIWTC officials.  
 Sixteen ferries are currently plying on this route.  
**TRAIN JOURNEY ALMOST NORMAL**  
 Most of the trains left Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday on time.  
 A total of 29 trains departed from the station till 2:30pm. Of them, six were late by up to two and a half hours.  
 The trains that were delayed include Nil Shagor Express, Chattala Express, Rajshahi Express and Sundarban Express, as those arrived at the station late, said Kamalapur Railway Station Manager Sitangshu Chakraborty.

## Passengers made to pay extra fare

FROM PAGE 16  
 reach its peak from Thursday, the last day before Eid vacation.  
 Usually, 60-70 launches ply across 41 routes, mostly to the country's southern regions from Dhaka's Sadarghat. The number doubles during Eid festivals to carry 15 to 20 lakh people, according to transport operators and government officials.  
 Akbar Hossain, a clerk of the Amtali-bound launch said, "During last Eid (Eid-ul-Fitr), the launch was loaded with passengers in the morning but this year we are yet to get such response mainly because of the only three-day leave."  
 They were charging Tk 350 for deck, instead of the usual Tk 300 while the government-fixed rate is Tk 365, he claimed.  
 AKM Azad Hossain, supervisor of Barisal-bound MV Tasriv said they hoped the rush will gain momentum from Wednesday and will reach its peak when garments factories close for the holidays.  
 Mamun-ur-Rashid, a member of the board of directors of Bangladesh Inland Waterways (passenger carriers) Association, said "Business is not well as

of now. But seeing the situation in the ferry ghat, we guess there will be more passengers when the Eid rush will reach its peak."  
 Reaz ul Kabir, director of Surovi Group of Company that runs several launches on different routes, also echoed this view.  
 To understand the conditions of Paturia and Daulatdia ferry ghats, it was found that passenger buses were taking 10 to 12 hours to cross the Padma river at both ends while it took cattle-laden trucks three to four days, hence forming long queues.  
 Several passengers alleged that launch operators have increased the fares, especially of VIP, first and second class cabins by Tk 200 to Tk 600 to earn extra money before Eid.  
 "I have bought a ticket of double cabin (AC) of Sundarbans-12 with Tk 2200 to go to Barisal, which was Tk 1800 during normal time," Dipan Roy told this correspondent yesterday.  
 Asked, Reaz ul Kabir said throughout the year, they charged passengers less than the government-fixed rates as they earned from up and down trips.  
 But during the Eid season, they sell

tickets at the fixed rates since they only make one-way trips.  
 Mahbub Uddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, president of the association, said they are ready to carry people to their homes and have held a series of meetings with the government and law enforcement officials to ensure safety.  
 About the common allegation of overloading, he said people are now more cautious and they try to avoid travelling on the roof. "Besides, we would not allow overloading and let an accident occur because crores of taka is involved with it."  
 Zainal Abedin, joint director of Marine Safety and Traffic Management Department of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, said the number of launch trips have already increased to carry more people.  
 There were 67 trips on August 22 and 81 on Sunday, he said, adding that they have taken all out preparation to ensure safe journey for all.  
 There will be 250 regular and marine police at the terminal and three mobile courts will conduct their operation to stop any sorts of irregularities, he added.

## Hajj dream of 300 dashed by frauds

FROM PAGE 16  
 Rahman, 63, of Nandigram in Bogra, Ataur Rahman, 35, and his wife Chaina Khatun Sumona, 28, from Putia of Rajshahi.  
 "They took several lakh taka from pilgrims at the Hajj Camp for collecting tickets. But they are brokers," Ezaz said.  
 A total of 1,27,103 Bangladeshi pilgrims have reached Saudi Arabia since the beginning of pre-hajj flight operation on July 24, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon told reporters at a briefing at the secretariat.  
 About the fate of around 300 pilgrims, he said they would be able to catch either of the last two flights of Saudi Airlines, scheduled to leave Dhaka at 5:00pm and 8:00pm (yesterday), if they could collect air tickets.  
 However, aspirant haji Nuray Alam Siddik last night said he along with 17 others was on way to Pargachha of Rangpur as the group couldn't manage air tickets.  
 "My mother and I gave around Tk 6 lakh to Pargachha resident Hafizur Rahman. Hafizur had assured us of arranging a hassle free trip saying that he had vast knowledge about the hajj procedures as he had been in Saudi Arabia for many years," he told this correspondent over the phone.  
 "My mother passed away on August 15. Sensing she would not live long, she had asked me to perform hajj on her behalf. I could not fulfill my mother's

dream as we were cheated by our hajj agency," said Siddik, his voice choked with emotion.  
 Eighteen people, including his mother, gave Tk 54 lakh to Hafizur, he added.  
 "We went to the Hajj Camp three days ago after Hafizur had informed us that our flight was confirmed. But he didn't manage air tickets for us."  
 The stories of the rest of the victims are almost similar.  
 Take for example the case of Josna Bibi from Bogra's Nandi Gram. She and her husband gave money to Ataur Rahman of Nandi Gram.  
 "He [Ataur] told us to come to the Hajj Camp on August 23. Five days have passed, but he couldn't confirm our air tickets. We gave him Tk 50,000 extra today [yesterday] for buying tickets, but all the efforts went in vain," said Josna.  
 Almas Ali from Puthia, Rajshahi said his group of 12 pilgrims gave an additional Tk 1 lakh to his hajj agency for confirming air tickets.  
 "But we found the agency official's mobile phone switched off since noon [yesterday]."  
 He said Bazlul Haque Harun, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the religious affairs ministry, yesterday afternoon assured them that those who could not perform hajj this year due to fraudulence of some hajj agencies would be given prefer-

ence next year.  
 The group left Dhaka for Puthia in the evening.  
**PM FOR FRESH PLAN**  
 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the authorities concerned to draw up a fresh plan on hajj management to avoid recurrence of pilgrim's sufferings due to fraudulence of a section of hajj agencies, Menon quoted the PM as saying to him after the weekly cabinet meeting at the secretariat.  
 He said fraudulence and negligence of some hajj agencies created uncertainty about sending all the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia as they didn't take measures to send the pilgrims despite having visas.  
 The minister claimed they had to seek assistance from Rapid Action Battalion and police to force some agencies to give money for airtickets.  
 Menon said actions, including cancellation of licence and slapping of financial penalty, would be taken against those hajj agencies responsible for pilgrims' sufferings.  
 "Due to tireless efforts of the officials concerned, the Biman finally managed to send 64,873 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia through operating 211 hajj flights," the minister said, adding the Saudi Airlines carried 62,230 pilgrims.  
 He said the Biman was preparing a list of hajj agencies who were allegedly involved in cheating and showed negligence in sending pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

## Beyond any 'probe'

FROM PAGE 1  
 She said she even delivered meals for her husband through police personnel in the following three days but on the fourth day police told her that Johnny was not in their custody.  
 Johnny has been missing since then. Police have denied picking him up. Johnny's disappearance and the subsequent ordeal that his family went through was no one-off incident.  
 According to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), as many as 519 people have allegedly fallen victim to forced disappearances between 2010 and July 2017 in Bangladesh and an astonishing 329 of them were still missing.  
 Many family members of such disappearance victims pointed fingers at law enforcement agencies. But there had been cases in which the country's perennially divisive politics and militancy were in play. There were cases of people going missing purposively too.  
 Many of them had gone missing and had returned to their families while bodies of some were found. Others were found shown arrested in different cases by the law enforcers. ASK reckons the number of such people is 190 in the last seven and half years.  
 ASK statistics show, 47 people were made to disappear in 2010, 59 in 2011, 56 in 2012, 72 in 2013, 88 in 2014, 55 in 2015, and 97 in 2016 while 45 people were abducted allegedly by law enforcers in the first seven months of this year.  
 Amid such a situation, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances would be observed in the country tomorrow with people like Jesmin fighting for their loved ones.  
 Since the day Johnny went missing, then three months pregnant Jesmin left no stone unturned and went to every possible place all on her own to find him. The baby girl she gave birth to is now seven months old.  
 Police neither accepted a case nor a general diary she wanted to file.  
 Desperate, Jesmin filed a writ petition with the High Court on March 6 prompting the HC to order in July the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Satkhira to investigate the case.  
 The subsequent probe report mentioned recorded conversation between

### ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

YEAR	NUMBER OF VICTIMS	BODIES RECOVERED	TRACED
2017 (Jan-July)	45	2	10
2016	97	11	29
2015	55	8	12
2014	88	23	25
2013	72	5	10
2012	56	4	18
2011	59	16	4
2010	47	6	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>115</b>

SOURCE: AIN O SALISH KENDRA

Jesmin and a police sub-inspector giving clear indications that Johnny was in police custody.  
 The magistrate also talked to others who were in the police station's lockup with Johnny and they said Johnny was indeed in custody.  
 Following these findings, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) has been tasked by a court with the investigation of the case and report by October 3.  
 August 30 is being observed globally, since 2011, as the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances to condemn what the United Nations considers "a strategy to spread terror in society".  
 In Bangladesh, investigations into many of such "enforced disappearance" cases remained unsolved for years, like the disappearances of BNP leader Ilias Ali, Khulna district Chhatra Union expresident Shamim Hossain and six youths, including BNP Dhaka City ward-38 unit general secretary Sajedul Islam Suman, from the capital.  
 Shamim was forced into a microbus in the morning of September 29, 2011, by five to six men at the capital's Purana Palta Lane.  
 As locals came forward to help, the people who took him away brandished firearms and identified them as the people from a law enforcement agency.  
 Since then, Shamim has been traceless despite his wife Jhorna Khanam and other family members' efforts to find him.  
 "Every day I feel the same pain I have been enduring since the day my husband was taken away," Jhorna told The Daily Star on August 26.

## 'Highway doctor'

FROM PAGE 16  
 laser sensors on their roof -- similar to Google's Street View service -- to snap images of every nook and cranny of Tokyo's highways.  
 "We can easily detect the spots where there is ongoing damage as well as the places that have been repaired in the past," said Masaaki Sakuma, an official in charge of infrastructure inspection at a Metropolitan Expressway unit.  
 The collected data are then transmitted back to company headquarters where desk-bound technicians use special software to create 3-D images that help pinpoint problems much quicker than the time-consuming method of sending out road crews for on-site inspections, the developers say.  
 It also helps deal with a shortage of workers, according to advocates -- a pressing issue in Japan where an ageing population of 127 million is shrinking.  
 The company is also aiming to export the system, with testing already under way in Thailand.

## Food ministry

FROM PAGE 16  
 It also adopted separate condolence motions over deaths of legendary Bangla film actor Razzak, former AL lawmaker and freedom fighter Khan Tipu Sultan and former footballer Shamsul Islam who is the father of former Bangladesh national cricket team captain Khaled Masud Pilot.

## CJ to leave

FROM PAGE 16  
 had invited Sinha to attend the conference slated for September 17, Anisur mentioned.  
 Sinha will return home on September 22.

## US acting asst

FROM PAGE 2  
 Adviser Gowher Rizvi, Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and Security Affairs Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique.  
 Wells will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow morning before leaving Dhaka for Colombo where Wells will speak at the Indian Ocean Conference on September 1.  
 The two-day conference, starting on August 31, will bring together high-level officials from around the world to discuss peace, progress and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region.  
 According to a media note issued in Washington, DC, on August 26, Wells, who is also acting special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, will travel to Dhaka and Colombo from August 28-September 2.

## EU team in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 2  
 and Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs will hold formal discussions on the EU draft Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) submitted to the Bangladesh government in June 2016 and the amended draft finalised by Bangladesh in July this year.  
 The EU is determined to reach an agreement on a specific timeframe to begin the deportation of illegal migrants, while Dhaka wants "logical time" to go through its nationality verification process.  
 Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque will lead the Bangladesh side at the negotiation table.  
 Earlier at the eighth Joint Commission held on July 12 in Brussels, the EU expressed regret about "lack of progress" in the return of illegal Bangladeshis and issued an ultimatum to the Bangladesh government to negotiate a mechanism for their immediate repatriation.  
 The target is to reach an agreement on the SOPs by tomorrow under the framework of the EU-Bangladesh migration dialogue.  
 The Bangladesh side has maintained its position that it would bring

"all the people in irregular situation back" through a nationality verification process within a "logical time."  
 Dhaka has also highlighted the need for "widening the scope of safe, orderly and regular migration".  
 EU officials during the Joint Commission meeting asked Dhaka to confirm the identities of arrested illegal migrants within 48 hours of receiving the list of their names. Otherwise, Bangladesh will be forced to take back the arrestees.  
 The EU president has also threatened to off limit the visa for Bangladeshi nationals.  
 Officials at the Ministry of Foreign and Home Affairs say nationality verification process is very crucial as it is apprehended that Rohingyas from Myanmar might be mistakenly identified as Bangladeshis.  
 Foreign Ministry officials say the government wants to verify under four categories -- citizens who have long been in police custody, those who went with valid visas but later became irregular due to the expiry of their visas and other reasons, those who have passports but no valid visa to enter Europe, and those who don't have passport or any legal travel document.

## Indian court jails rapist

FROM PAGE 16  
 carried out inside the prison where Singh was being held.  
 Hundreds of followers went on the rampage when he was convicted on Friday, attacking train stations, buses and television vans.  
 At least 38 people were killed and more than 200 injured, triggering criticism that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party, which also governs the state of Haryana, was either unable or unwilling to act against Singh's followers.  
 The case dates back to 2002 when two women followers accused Singh of rape at the headquarters of his Dera Sacha Sauda organisation in the town of Sirsa. Singh, also known as the guru of bling for the bejewelled costumes he wears in self-produced films, faced a minimum of seven years under new tough rape laws.  
 Singh's lawyer, A K Panth, said his

client was innocent and would appeal. Vipassana Insaan, a spokesman for the Dera Sacha Sauda, urged Singh's followers to respect the court's order.  
 "Our legal battle will not end here. Our client is absolutely innocent," said Panth.  
 Indian TV channels reported that Singh broke down after the sentence was passed and refused to move out of the court room, saying he was innocent.  
 The prison in the town of Rohtak, 66 km (40 miles) from New Delhi, was transformed into a fortress, with journalists banned from approaching within a mile (1.6 km) and roads were lined with barbed-wire barricades.  
 V Umashankar, a special commissioner in Haryana, said a curfew was in force in the town of Sirsa and parts of Rohtak.  
 Nirmaljit Singh Kalsi, an official in Punjab, said paramilitary forces were patrolling public places to maintain order.

## 2 killed in blast inside manhole

FROM PAGE 16  
 witnesses.  
 Lutfar was hit by the lid. He died on the spot. The nearby scrap metal shop also caught fire, killing Sujon instantly and leaving Abul seriously injured.  
 On being informed, firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the flames.  
 The fire official suspected gas had accumulated inside the manhole and

the explosion took place after the gas came in contact with fire.  
 "The fire engulfed the entire shop in no time. I tried to escape but failed," a relative of Abul quoted him as saying to doctors.  
 Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, said they were investigating the incident. "A case was being filed."