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Long wait to get buses

Buses reach destinations even 8-12 hours late; huge pressure of vehicles on highways, ferry terminals see tailbacks



WASIM BIN HABIB

The morning sun brought some relief for Shariful Islam as a little rain, he feared, would put his journey back home in jeopardy.

Yet with some trepidation, he left his Mirpur residence along with his wife, two children and his niece, to catch a bus that was scheduled to set off at 8:00am from Kallyanpur counter.

But as he reached the bus counter braving the gruelling traffic congestion of the morning, he became absolutely flabbergasted. The air-conditioned bus, which was supposed to carry them to his Satkhira home, was still stranded across the Padma river on its way back from a round trip.

"I was totally astounded. Even after starting off well before the main Eid rush, there is no respite from the sufferings," said a frustrated Shariful, a private job holder.

He came back to his residence again, as per the directive of bus operators, and kept calling them after short intervals. The bus finally reached at 10:15pm, almost fourteen hours later.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Nuray Alam cries at the capital's Ashkona Hajj Camp as he was yet to get his air ticket yesterday. The man from Rangpur says he paid a local travel agent Tk 6 lakh to perform hajj with his elderly mother. Meanwhile, she died on August 15 and now the agent was not answering his phone. Inset, Josna Bibi from Bogra in tears at the hajj camp as she also failed to get air ticket. Her husband Lokman sits next to her.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Hajj dream of 300 dashed by frauds

Some of them paid brokers as high as Tk 3.5 lakh each

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They dreamt of performing hajj this year, but that dream was shattered as they got cheated by some hajj agencies and brokers.

Despite completing all the procedures, around 300 pilgrims could not fly to Saudi Arabia as their agencies didn't confirm air tickets, said Hajj Office sources.

According to some victims, each of them had paid their respective hajj agencies up to Tk 3.5 lakh.

The deadline for sending aspirant hajjis to Saudi Arabia expired yesterday.

"We have prepared a list of around 300 people who were waiting at the Hajj Camp to catch flights to Saudi Arabia. But they could not fly as they were cheated by some hajj agencies and their brokers," Md Ezaz Shafi, inspector (investigation) of Biman Bandar Police Station, told The Daily Star last night.

Police in the afternoon arrested three "brokers" from the Hajj Camp in the city's Ashkona on charges of cheating pilgrims, the inspector said.

The arrestees are Faridur SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

LAUNCH TRIPS Passengers made to pay extra fare

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Abdul Kuddus arrived at Sadarghat Launch Terminal in the capital at 11:40am yesterday from Fakirapool just to book a place on the deck of a launch for his nephew and family members. "Every year, we have to face huge competition just to get a place. My nephew is a private service holder, so I came here to book a place for them," Kuddus said.

"I have managed this," he told this correspondent, showing a bed-sheet he had placed on the floor of the launch, Prince of Hasan and Hossain, plying between Amtali upazila of Barguna from Dhaka.

Although, the launch was scheduled to leave the terminal at 5:00pm, when this correspondent boarded it at 12:00pm, some 70 to 80 others people had already taken their seats and were ready to go home ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

Visiting the terminal yesterday, this correspondent found many people leaving Dhaka to celebrate the festival with their family members at home but the rush is yet to gain momentum.

Launch owners said home rush will SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

'Highway doctor' for ageing roads

AFP, Tokyo

As Japan takes on the mammoth task of upgrading its capital's outdated roads and infrastructure, a local "highway doctor" is betting that its 3-D technology can lend a hand.

Tokyo's sprawling maze of ageing expressways, measuring 320 kilometres (or 200 miles) in length, have long been crying out for a facelift, some dating back to the last time the city hosted the Olympic Games in 1964.

And with the Tokyo 2020 Games just three years away, there is no time like the present.

Metropolitan Expressway has developed just the tools. It sends out cars equipped with cameras and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



2 killed in blast inside manhole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were killed and another was critically injured following an explosion inside a manhole in the capital's Jatrabari last night.

The dead are Lutfar Rahman, 45, a cattle trader, and Sujon, 20, a worker at a nearby scrap metal shop that caught fire after the blast.

With around 80 percent of his body burnt, Abul Hossain, 25, another worker at the shop, was being treated at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said sources at the hospital.

There was a loud bang around 8:10pm when Lutfar was smoking sitting on the manhole lid near a cattle market, said Saleh Uddin, deputy assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, quoting

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Food ministry for import of 20 lakh tonnes of grains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The food ministry yesterday informed the cabinet that 20 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat would have to be imported to meet demand and keep the market stable until January next year.

In the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wanted to know about the current food deficit from the ministry, said Cabinet Secretary Shafiul Alam while briefing reporters at the secretariat.

The minister also apprised the cabinet that 15 lakh tonnes of rice would be imported from Cambodia and Thailand, while 5 lakh tonnes of wheat would be brought in from Russia and Ukraine within January 31 next year.

The PM then asked the ministry not to import additional food grains, as the country's farmers would be affected if additional imports were made, said meeting sources.

Asked when the rice and wheat would reach the country, the cabinet secretary said rice import already started.

Qamrul told the cabinet that during his recent visit to Cambodia, Bangladesh had signed a memorandum of understanding with Cambodia to import 10 lakh tonnes of rice from the Southeast Asian nation in the next five years, added the secretary.

The cabinet gave the nods to the drafts of "The Chittagong Development Authority Act-2017" and "The Khulna Development Authority Act-2017", bringing some changes to the structure of the existing boards of the two development authorities.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

CJ to leave for Canada on Sept 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha will leave for Canada on September 10 to see his ailing daughter.

From there, he would travel to Japan on September 16 to attend a conference of chief justices of Asia and the Pacific, Mohammad Anisur Rahman, personal secretary to the CJ, told The Daily Star last night.

The chief justice of Japan SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 29
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-38 8-00
JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-41 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Indian court jails rapist 'godman' for 20 years

Singh's lawyer to appeal against conviction

REUTERS, Rohtak

An Indian judge sentenced a self-styled "godman", whose followers went on a deadly rampage after he was convicted of rape last week, to 20 years' jail yesterday, but a shoot-to-kill order, curfew and heavy police presence kept protesters at bay.



A spokesman for the Central Bureau of Investigation, which investigated the case, said late yesterday that Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh would serve two consecutive 10-year terms for the two rape convictions.

Reuters and other media had earlier quoted government officials and lawyers as saying that the twin sentencing would run concurrently for 10 years.

Tens of thousands of police enforced a lockdown in large parts of the northern states of Haryana and Punjab where Singh, 50, has a mass following.

Police in Haryana issued orders to shoot protesters on sight ahead of the sentencing and ordered the hearing to be

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