

Homegoers suffer as trains run late

FROM PAGE 1
station, as around a dozen trains were delayed by one to six hours.

Fortunately, bus services were relatively better yesterday as there were no major tailbacks either at the exit points of the capital or on the highways.

Additionally, the situation at Shimulia-Kathalabari ferry terminal improved, easing pressure on the Patura-Daulatdia ferry route.

However, some major bus operators reduced the number of trips to the southern districts due to delays at the Daulatdia end. The delays were caused as cattle-laden trucks were given priority.

SUFFERING AT KAMALAPUR

People, who bought advance train tickets standing in queues for hours a few weeks ago, started to arrive at Kamalapur in the morning. Many went their hours before their schedule departure.

Tula Mia, a rickshaw-puller from Tangail, went to the station around noon to catch the Chapainawabganj-bound Rajshahi Express, which was scheduled to leave at 12:30pm.

But the train had not reached the station until 3:00pm.

"We came here as bus service is expensive and takes more time. But the train has not come even after two hours. When will we go home?" Tula Mia told this correspondent.

Nur Mia, a mason, had arrived at the station in the morning by a night coach from Gopalganj, where he worked, to go to Dewanganj. But his train had not reached the station until 2:30pm.

He, however, could not remember the name of the train he was waiting for.

"I don't know anything about the train but my friend knows about it. We have been waiting for a train since morning," he said.

Rajshahi-bound Silk City Express, which was scheduled to leave at 2:40pm, had not reached until 3:00pm.

Sitangshu Chakraborty, manager of Kamalapur Station Railway, said 30 trains had left Dhaka until 2:30pm and six of them were late.

Rajshahi-bound Dhumketu Express left one and half hours late while Khulna-bound Sundarban Express was two hour and 25 minutes late.

Nilphamari-bound Nilsagar Express was delayed by two hours and 45 minutes; Rangpur Express by two hours and 40 minutes and Dinajpur-bound Ekota Express was 65 minutes late, he said.

Lalmoni Eid Special was running four hours behind schedule. Sitangshu told reporters at 2:30pm.

A railway official said only seven trains had left the station on time until 2:30pm.

The railway does not consider a train late unless it is 30 minutes late, he said, adding that most of the trains were between 10 and 30 minutes late.

Sitangshu was not ready to term the situation a "collapse of schedule".

"Delay of only six trains among 68 trains [the total number of trains which will ultimately leave the station] should not be called 'schedule collapse'. We call it a delay," he said.

He said trains were taking relatively more time to pick and drop passengers at stations due to the huge rush. This meant that the trains were arriving late and thus their departures were delayed.

They had not been able to recover

the delays made on Saturday since no trains have days off during the Eid rush, he said. On Saturday, a train had broken down at Tejgaon for over an hour causing delays to other trains.

"We are trying our best with our limited resources," he said.

Many passengers were seen asleep on the floors of the platform while others fought to get into trains that arrived. Many were seen climbing the roofs of carriages.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Javed Patwari yesterday visited the station around 3:00pm and talked to passengers there.

Speaking to this correspondent, he said they had taken all necessary arrangements to ensure security of passengers and the overall situation was good.

When his attention was drawn to illegal travel on train roofs, he asked that the reality of the situation be taken into consideration as the number of passengers was so huge.

BUS SERVICES

Bus services were relatively smooth yesterday as no major traffic congestion was reported on any highways.

Ferry and launch services on Patura-Daulatdia ferry terminal almost reached normalcy yesterday as the pressure of vehicles had lessened.

Around one hundred vehicles, including 25 long-route buses, were seen lined up at Patura Ghat around 5:30pm yesterday, Abdus Sattar, manager (marine) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Patura office told our Manikganj correspondent.

On the other side, 150 vehicles, including 90 buses, were seen at Daulatdia Ghat around 6:00pm, Shafiqul Islam, manager (commerce) of BIWTC at Daulatdia terminal office, said.

On Saturday, people heading for the southern districts suffered a lot as buses got stuck at Patura and Daulatdia, which was the only route for heavy vehicles since Shimulia-Kathalabari ferry service was partly operative.

But yesterday, Shimulia-Kathalabari ferry service improved.

Shah Md Khaled Newaz, assistant general manager of the BIWTC, said they ran 14 to 16 small and medium ferries to transport light vehicles and a large ferry to transport buses.

However, the situation was yet to be normal as they could operate ferries through one way only, he told our Munshiganj correspondent, adding that each ferry had to wait to make way for another, resulting in 20 to 25 minutes of delays.

Romesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan Ltd, said passengers had not suffered much yesterday as no major tailback was reported on highways.

"However, we have to start each bus about one to two hours late as buses are reaching late due to the huge pressure of vehicles, especially cattle-laden trucks," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Korban Ali, the Dhaka-Barisal route manager of Hanif Paribahan, said yesterday's situation was better than that of Saturday.

He, however, said each bus had to wait three to five hours at Daulatdia to make way for cattle-laden trucks and that was why they had to cut down the

number of trips to avoid delays.

LAUNCH SERVICE

More holidaymakers gathered yesterday at Sadarghat Launch Terminal to go home.

A total of 98 launches left on Saturday while 75 launches left until 8:45pm yesterday. Alamgir Kabir, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), told The Daily Star last night.

"We are expecting 35 more launches to leave the terminal until midnight," he added.

Meanwhile, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan yesterday visited the terminal and gave several directives to officials to ensure safety of passengers.

Bangladesh Jati Kalyan Samity yesterday said passengers had to pay extra and faced harassment while using all types of transports ahead of Eid.

Rape accused

FROM PAGE 16
However, the rape victim's relatives alleged that the police officer released Halal after taking bribes, giving excuse of wrong address in the warrant. But the OC refuted the allegation.

They also alleged that when the rape incident happened in June last year, the same police officer was in charge of Sherpur Police Station. He did not even let the victim file the case with the police station as the accused was an influential person. Later, the victim's family lodged the case with a Bogra court.

According to the case statement, on June 4 last year, Halal went to the victim's house in a village under Sherpur upazila, adjacent to Dhunat upazila, and raped the 18-year-old girl when her parents were out.

Hearing the victim's screams, locals caught Halal and handed him over to Sherpur police. At that time, OC Erfan did not register the case; rather tried to cover up the incident, the victim's relatives alleged.

On June 7 last year, the victim's family filed the case against Halal with the Bogra Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2. It issued the arrest warrant for Halal on July 25 this year.

Following the warrant, Dhunat police arrested Halal in Mathura Bazar area around 6:30pm on Friday, but freed him around 10:00pm.

After the rape, the accused had offered the victim's mother Tk 18,000 so that no case was filed against him, said a relative of the victim, seeking anonymity.

Talking to this correspondent, Halal said he was not involved in the rape, but he was made accused in the case. He was also forced to give some money to the victim's mother after village arbitration on condition that he was not accused in the case.

Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, superintendent of Bogra police, told The Daily Star that the man was released as his address was not in the warrant.

Asked about taking bribes by OC Erfan, the SP said, "If something was wrong, we would investigate it."

Take action against faulty establishments

PMO asks Rajuk over violations of building designs

UNB, Dhaka

The Prime Minister's Office yesterday directed Rajdhani Unnayan

Kartripakkha to take legal actions

against multi-storied buildings and

shopping malls that violated their

approved designs and shrunk parking

zones.

The directives came from a meeting on road safety held at the PMO with Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Md Nojibur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting was told that all authori-

ties concerned submitted to the PMO

their work plans for ensuring road

safety and discipline on the highways.

Greater unity to be forged

B Chy, Dr Kamal

decide at a meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Juktofront Chairman AQM

Badruddoza Chowdhury and eminent

jurist and Gano Forum President Dr

Kamal Hossain have decided to forge

greater political unity.

The decision came at a meeting of

Juktofront and Gano Forum at

Badruddoza Chowdhury's Baridhara

home last night, says a press release.

The leaders decided that after Eid, they would hold a press conference to declare their next programme.

They would meet again this after-

noon at Dr Kamal Hossain's Bailey

Road home.

Among others, Zafnullah Chowdhury, founder of the Gonoshasthaya Kendra and

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, conven-

er of Nagorik Oikya were present

at the meeting.

S Korean families gather on eve of rare reunion

AFP, Sokcho

Dozens of elderly and frail South

Koreans gathered excitedly yesterday

on the eve of their first meeting for

nearly seven decades with family

members in North Korea.

The three-day reunion -- the first

for three years -- begins Monday at

the Mount Kumgang resort in North

Korea, following a rapid diplomatic

thaw on the peninsula.

Shahidul Alam has been sent to

prison on August 12 abruptly and

without presence of his lawyer, it read.

Numerous innocent students are

being subjected to torture in police

custody while on remand, whereas

those allegedly responsible for impos-

ing violence upon a peaceful move-

ment of the young students are enjoy-

ing impunity, the statement said.

"We also urge that the government

immediately release all students who

have been arrested after the protest

and take every step to ensure human

rights of all citizens, including freedom

of speech, freedom of media and free-

dom of association for all."

The signatories to the statement are:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984

Nobel Peace laureate; Tawakkol

Karman, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize lau-

ree; Mairead Maguire and Betty

Williams, 1976 Nobel Peace Prize lau-

ree; Oscar Arias, 1987 Nobel Peace

Prize laureate; Sir Richard J

Roberts, 1993 Nobel laureate in

Physiology or Medicine; Jose Ramos

Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize lau-

ree; Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace

Prize laureate; and Gro Harlem

Brundtland, former prime minister of Norway; Sir Richard Branson, business leader and philan-

thropist; Richard Curtis, film director;

Sharon Stone, actress and human

rights activist; Mo Ibrahim, entrepre-

neur and philanthropist; David Jones,

global social activist; Jerome Jarre,

entrepreneur and internet activist;