

Dhaka-Rajshahi under 5 hours

Nonstop train service to be launched on April 25
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Good news for train passengers. Bangladesh Railway is going to launch a nonstop intercity train service on Dhaka-Rajshahi route from April 25.

A mobile app will also be launched on April 28 -- enabling passengers to avail services fast and with ease, officials said.

Once the train service -- Banalata Express -- is launched, passengers will be able to travel to Rajshahi from Dhaka within 4 hours and 45 minutes, around one and a half hours less than the current travel time.

This would be the third nonstop train; currently two trains are plying the Dhaka-Chattogram route.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will launch the train service through video conference from Dhaka at 10am on April 25, Shariful Alam, senior information officer of railways ministry, said.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan and Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton will attend the inauguration programme from Rajshahi.

The train, however, will be open to passengers from April 27, another railway official said.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) originally planned to

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63pc female terror suspects linked to 'Neo JMB': CTTC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 63 percent of the female terror suspects in the country are linked to "Neo JMB", according to findings of the counter terrorism unit.

A Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit official came up with the findings, analysing profiles of 85 female militant suspects arrested in the last couple of years.

Their involvement increased after "Neo JMB" emerged in 2014. The militant outfit is responsible for the July 1, 2016 Holey Artisan attack.

According to CTTC, 23 percent of female terror suspects are from Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, and five percent are from Hizb ut-Tahrir, said Mahfuza Liza, a CTTC additional deputy commissioner, while presenting her keynote paper at a conference yesterday.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) organised the event on "New Trends in Terrorism: Regional Cooperation to Meet the Challenges" at a city hotel.

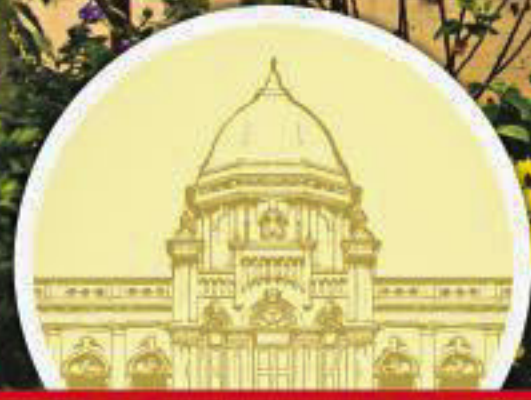
Though the role of females largely remains limited to assisting male terrorists, recruitment and terror financing, some females were found to be equipped with suicide vests during anti-militant drives, said the CTTC official.

According to CTTC findings, over 66 percent of female terror suspects in the country got involved in

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ROOFTOP GARDENING MAKING DHAKA GREEN AGAIN

|| SHADMA MALIK ||



DHAKA
VIBE

New constructions in Singapore must have some form of plantation. A similar rule in Dhaka could change the face of this city.

PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

Against the backdrop of a generation growing up in a dusty city that is fast losing its green, open spaces and is frequently topping the list of having "most polluted air", many Dhaka residents have begun to show interest in rooftop gardening. Experts say, this can improve air quality, provide fresh food and bring down ambient temperature, apart from the obvious aesthetic appeal.

In a survey done by Stamford University -- on 2,700 buildings in Dhanmondi, Lalmatia, Mohakhali DOHS and Uttara, researchers found 36.4 percent rooftops were used for gardening. This study was done two years ago, in both summer and winter.

Asked about the benefits of rooftop gardening in urban areas, Prof Kamruzzaman, chairman of the environmental science department of Stamford University, who led the study, said plants keep the atmosphere cool.

He claimed it can be inferred from the study that areas where rooftop gardening is popular, remains cooler during hot days. Temperature difference varies from 1.8 to 5.4 degrees Celsius due to lack of greenery, Prof Kamruzzaman said.

The study also observed fewer rooftop gardens on commercial buildings than residential ones.

Architect Sabbir Ahmed, who designs

both commercial and residential structures, said gardening is a hobby for tenants in residential buildings, whereas offices only consider gardens "decorative".

"People are often reluctant to set up gardens as they will have to invest time and money to maintain them, but the advantages of this practice clearly offset the extra effort," he said.

Ahmed said rooftop gardening should be taken into consideration at the time of construction. Singapore, a city that aims to be the world's greenest, already has a rule that new developments must include plant life in the forms of vertical gardens or verdant walls.

Fahmida Khanom, director of Natural Resource Management at Department of Environment, said there should be guidelines on urban plantation as it can have an impact on biodiversity.

The guidelines can provide suggestions on which species would be the best for our environment, she added.

Environmentalist Dr Atiq Rahman said widespread use of air conditioner releases heat and harmful gas. Rooftop gardens can relieve city dwellers from excessive heat. Proper maintenance can have a cumulative effect on the temperature.

Golam Maruf, senior consultant (monitoring and evaluation) of Agro-Meteorological Information Systems

Development Project at the Department of Agricultural Extension, said a 5,000 square feet rooftop garden can meet a family's daily requirement of vegetables within a year of cultivation. Food can be grown without insecticides, he added.

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) have taken a number of environment-friendly initiatives. The city corporations gave 10 percent holding tax rebate in the first quarter of the fiscal year in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 for gardening on roofs.

Green Savers, a non-profit organisation which works to familiarise and teach people about rooftop gardening, has set up 3,600 rooftop gardens across Dhaka so far.

A 2007 study done in Singapore found that a green roof tends to experience lower surface temperature than the original exposed roof surface, especially in areas well covered by vegetation. It found that maximum 60 percent of heat gain could be stopped by this system.

Often times, urban planning fails to consider the climate and environment. Rooftop gardening is an easy, environmentally friendly way that can make this city more liveable.

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DHAKA TODAY

MUSIC

Riders on the Storm by Stone Free
Venue: The Junction
Dhaka, Road 8, Block C, Niketon
Time: 7:30pm

ART CAMP

Annual Art for Autism 2019
Venue: Charukola, Faculty of Arts, University of Dhaka
Time: 9am

MUSIC

Breakfast Unplugged Musical Morning
Venue: The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Gulshan
Time: 9am

MUSIC

Concert for Children
Venue: Krishibid Institution of Bangladesh
Time: 5:30pm

ARTEXHIBITION

Digonto
Venue: Drik Gallery
Time: 6:30pm

DEMONSTRATION

Justice for Nusrat
Venue: Gulshan Lake Park
Time: 4pm

THEATRE

Hamlet
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 7pm

Make disaster preparedness time-befitting: PM

Stresses nationwide awareness campaign

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for a nationwide campaign to aware people about dos and don'ts during calamities alongside making the disaster preparedness a time-befitting one.

She said this while addressing the National Disaster Management Council held at the Prime Minister's Office.

The PM emphasised continued review of preparedness measures taken by the council. "We will have to review the disaster preparedness regularly and fix up our dos and don'ts," she stressed.

She also directed the authorities concerned to take measures not only to face disasters but also to prevent man-made calamities such as fire incidents through appropriate plans.

She said a guideline (related to disaster) will have to be disseminated informing people what steps to take in case of a disaster. Hasina also highlighted conducting the awareness campaign at personal and organisational levels.

Talking about the recent FR Tower fire, she prayed for salvation of the departed souls of the fire victims. "People have to be alerted so that man-made accidents don't occur," she said.

The PM urged people to be cautious while using electrical equipment, gas cylinders and flammable substances to minimise the risk of accidents.

Noting that Bangladesh is a densely populated country, she said it is disaster-prone due to its geographical location.

Referring to the 1991 cyclone during the

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IRREGULARITIES IN HAJJ MANAGEMENT

Ministry takes action against 50 agencies

RASHIDUL HASAN

The religious affairs ministry has taken various punitive measures including revoking license, forfeiting security deposit and imposing financial penalty against some 50 hajj agencies for their involvement in irregularities in hajj operation, causing sufferings to pilgrims last year.

The ministry came up with the stringent action, as its investigation found evidence of cheating hajis by those private hajj tour operators, Anisur Rahman, secretary to the religious affairs ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ministry also took other actions, like suspending license and issuing warnings against hajj operators, said the secretary.

He, however, could not provide detailed statistics regarding the actions against the hajj operators immediately.

The irregularities committed by private hajj agencies include arranging poor-quality accommodation for hajis, arranging their lodging far away from the Kaba Sharif, not providing food, transport and other due facilities to hajis as promised, and realising excess money from devotees, said Anisur Rahman.

Around 600 private hajj tour operators were allowed to send 1.27 lakh pilgrims to Saudi Arabia last year.

The religious affairs ministry formed an investigation committee after getting allegations of various irregularities from the pilgrims against different agencies.

After hearing and verifying statements of both sides, the probe body decided to take actions against the 50 hajj agencies.

Sources at the ministry said none of these agencies will be allowed to send pilgrims to Saudi Arabia this year.

According to the hajj agreement with Saudi Arabia, around 1,27,198 pilgrims from Bangladesh will be able to perform hajj this year.

Of them, 7,198 will go on the pilgrimage under government management and 1,20,000 under private arrangement.

The hajj is likely to be in August, subject to the sighting of the moon.

According to a document of the religious affairs ministry, Salwa Overseas Services provided accommodations for its hajis four to five kilometres away from Kaba Sharif, although the hajj tour operator promised to arrange hotel within 1,000 metres from the holy site.

Anwar Hassain, a pilgrim, also filed a complaint with the ministry that Salwa Overseas did not provide them food for several days. At one stage, staff of the agency -- who had accompanied hajis to Saudi Arabia -- went into hiding.

The ministry, after hearing from both sides, revoked license of Salwa Overseas, forfeited its security deposit and fined it Tk 10 lakh.

According to another document, license of Mouri Air International was revoked and security deposit forfeited for very poor arrangements of accommodations for hajis.

Dr Harunur Rashid, in his allegation, said Ababil Travels and Tours did not arrange due accommodation, food and transport facilities for them.

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Attract youth to agricultural sector

Int'l think tank report recommends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Severe environmental degradation, agricultural crises, and an acute shortage of jobs for a growing youth population in rural areas have emerged as the challenges for consistent development of Bangladesh, an international food policy think tank alerted yesterday.

The think tank -- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) -- launched its flagship annual publication, 2019 Global Food Policy Report, at a hotel in the capital.

To avoid the risks, speakers at the event stressed on implementation of decent employment agenda to attract the youths to the agricultural sector.

Shenggen Fan, director general of IFPRI, presented the report.

Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque addressed the programme as chief guest, while Dr Mashiur Rahman, prime minister's economic affairs adviser, and Nazmanara Khatun, additional secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, spoke as special guests.

Panelists at the discussion included former caretaker government adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman; Professor Emeritus Dr MA Sattar Mandal; Dr Khan Ahmed Sayeed Murshid, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies; and Dr Imran Matin, executive director of Brac Institute of Governance and Development.

Dr Shamsul Alam, member (senior secretary) of General Economic Relations Division chaired the programme.

The report says, "Marked by a deepening cycle of hunger and malnutrition, persistent poverty, limited economic opportunities, and environmental degradation, rural areas continue to be in a state of crisis in many parts of the world."

Despite strong economic growth in 2018, undernourishment rose for the third year in a row, with 821 million people in the world now facing chronic food deprivation, the report said.

According to the report, there are around 150 million stunted children globally, despite a decline of nine percent between 2012 and 2017.

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MOTORBIKES WERE NOT BUILT FOR THIS! Five members of what can only be assumed as a family, share the seat -- and the fuel tank -- of a motorcycle on the busy Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Paribagh. The woman wearing a helmet is busy on the phone, while three children have no protective gear. As if that was not enough, a closer inspection reveals that the motorcycle is not even registered, and has the name of a motor shop instead of a number-plate.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



The Daily Star

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