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Nightmare Eid journey

Disorders at train, ferry and bus terminals; up to 40km jam on either end of Bangabandhu bridge



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eid holidaymakers suffered immensely on their way home yesterday due to collapse in train schedule on north-western and southern routes, and long tailbacks on highways and near ferry terminals.

All the intercity trains running on the routes were behind schedule, from one-and-a-half to more than six hours.

Passengers' suffering worsened after a Khulna-bound train derailed on Bangabandhu Bridge around 1:20pm,

suspending rail communication between Dhaka and several other districts, including Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur, for around three hours.

Homegoers, travelling on road towards the destinations, remained stuck for hours in jam while waiting to board ferries and on some major highways, including Dhaka-Tangail highway.

Although the three-day public holiday for Eid would begin Sunday, a large number of people left Dhaka yesterday to celebrate

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Vehicles are caught up in long tailbacks on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Gharinda area of Tangail around noon yesterday. Thousands of Eid holidaymakers bound for northern and south-western districts suffered delays on the highway throughout the day. Police said the tailbacks were built up mainly due to excessive number of vehicles. *Inset*, an overcrowded train leaves Mymensingh Railway Station for Jamalpur.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL, COLLECTED

Hajj today

2m Muslims gather in Makkah

AFP, Makkah

More than two million Muslims began the annual hajj yesterday as the Saudi hosts seek to deter politicisation of the pilgrimage against a backdrop of simmering Gulf tensions.

The hajj, one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and must be undertaken by all Muslims with the means at least once in their lives.

It consists of a series of religious rites which are completed over five days in Islam's holiest city and its surroundings in western Saudi Arabia.

"All of the arms of state have been deployed (and) we are proud to serve as 'God's hosts,'" said security forces spokesman Bassam Attia.

In total, some 2.5 million faithful, the majority from abroad, will undertake the pilgrimage this year, according to Saudi media.

"More than 1.8 million visas were delivered online without the need for middlemen. It's a success," said hajj ministry official Hatim bin Hassan Qadi.

"We feel cleansed by achieving this pillar of Islam and meeting people from across the world. It's marvellous," said Mohamed Jaafar, a 40-year-old Egyptian pilgrim.

"It's an indescribable feeling. You have to live it to understand it," said an Algerian in his fifties completing the

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DENGUE OUTBREAK

Little time for other patients



NEW CASES IN LAST 24 HRS
2,002

TOTAL DENGUE CASES
36,668

OUTSIDE DHAKA
11,085



DEATH
77
(29 OFFICIAL)

UNDERGOING TREATMENT
8,763

SOURCE: DGHS

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

As hospitals in the capital are swamped with people looking for dengue diagnosis, other patients are competing for the attention of the service providers.

At Mugda General Hospital, Hasina Akter said she could not get her 18-year-daughter's blood tested even after waiting in the queue for over nearly three hours on Tuesday.

"I went there with the blood sample around 8:00am when the services begin. But people were queuing up for dengue diagnosis since 5:00am," said Hasina, adding that her family could not afford to go to a private facility.

As the hospital's blood testing services for non-dengue patients close at 11:00am, Hasina had to go back empty handed. Doctors eventually asked her to go to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, an 8-year-old boy and a 55-year-old man, who had been suffering from dengue, died

yesterday in Dhaka. Two others diagnosed with dengue died in Dhaka yesterday.

With them, the unofficial death toll of the dengue outbreak is now at least 77. The government maintains that the number of deaths is 29.

At least 2,002 dengue patients got admitted to hospitals across the country in 24 hours since 8:00am Wednesday. A total of 36,668 people has contracted the mosquito-borne disease this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At Mugda hospital, Director Amin Ahmed Khan said the facility was seeing the highest number of patients since its establishment in 2013.

The medicine ward, equipped to handle 60 patients, now has around 300, mostly suffering from dengue, said a doctor.

Of the 788 people admitted there on Thursday, 527 were suffering from dengue, he added.

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India to fence entire border

Bangladesh has no objection if due procedure followed, says Kamal

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh has no objection if India wants to complete the border fencing following due procedure, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said after returning from a three-day visit to the neighbouring country yesterday.

"India has already fenced about 80 percent of the border. They want to complete the rest of the work. I said that if it is done following the joint border act, we won't have any objection," he told The Daily Star.

The two countries share a 4,096km border.

During his visit, the home minister met his

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BOMBS IN PALTAN, KHAMAR BARI

Act of 'Neo-JMB' followers: police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A small group of followers of the militant outfit "Neo-JMB" planted the improvised explosive devices that were recovered from the capital's Paltan and Khamar Bari last month, suspect counterterrorism officials.

The group members got radicalised by watching online contents of different militant outfits and maintained communication with each other through a "secured mobile application", Saiful Islam, deputy commissioner of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, told The Daily Star.

They acted like a "wolf pack" which doesn't have any spiritual leader or organisational structure. They choose their leader by themselves, he said.

"The group was plotting to carry out attacks on police," claimed Saiful.

The CTTC unit learnt about the group after the arrest of five terror suspects from the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area on Thursday.

The arrestees were identified as Md Shiblee Shahjad alias Sadi, Shah M Asadullah Mortuza Kabir alias Ababil, Masrik Ahmed, Md Ashraf Al Amin alias Tarek and SM Tasnim Rifat.

Of the arrestees, Sadi and Ababil are students of North South University, Monirul Islam, chief of the CTTC unit

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Muslims pray at the Grand Mosque during the annual Hajj pilgrimage in their holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Booming sales on fridge market Customers throng Walton showrooms

The day after tomorrow is Eid-ul-Azha or Qurbani Eid. People need refrigerators and freezers to preserve the meat of sacrificial animals. This year, the fridge market is fully ruled by Walton. Customers are seen thronging Walton showrooms across the country. They are picking none but Walton fridges. The local brand is enjoying booming sales.

This year, the presence of foreign cattle are less in the cattle market as people prefer locally brought-up cattle. Likewise, people are preferring buying fridges of local brand Walton. To them, fridge and Walton are nearly synonymous. The sales of Walton fridge boosted for several reasons. Customers have chance to get Tk. 10 lakh under the campaign 'Who will be Millionaire today'. Besides, there are scope of getting Tk. 1 lakh, free products including a fridge, TV or sure cash voucher. Moreover, Walton fridges are affordable in prices but best in quality. Walton has over two hundred models of refrigerators and freezers. That's why customers rush to Walton showrooms. A vast number of customers already become millionaire buying Walton fridge.



National Cricket Team all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz is handing over a cheque of Tk. 10 lakh to Md. Miraz Howlader from Khulna

Among them, Asma Begum Sadia, a

housewife from Habiganj, got Tk. 10 lakh buying Walton fridge. She said, whomever I asked, all advised me to buy Walton fridge. My neighbors also use Walton fridges. So, I bought it and surprisingly got Tk. 10 lakh which heightened our Eid enjoyment. Thanks to Walton.

Meanwhile, another local brand, Marcel also providing its customers with the scope of getting Tk. 1 lakh everyday which have been already received by a vast number of people. Marcel customers may also get another free product or sure cash voucher. This brand has more than one hundred & fifty models of refrigerators

and freezers. Walton authorities said, they are going to sales 10 lakh unit fridges on this Eid. Walton solely grabbed the major share of the country's fridge market. Besides, 'The Made in Bangladesh' Walton fridges are being exported to different countries. The Bangladeshi brand is getting export order for 4.5 lakh unit fridges and air conditioners this month. According to concerned sources, Walton is the fastest growing brand in fridge market all over the world. None other brands have got customers trusts so fast. So, it can be said, it's time for Walton, it's time for Bangladesh.