



The Daily Star

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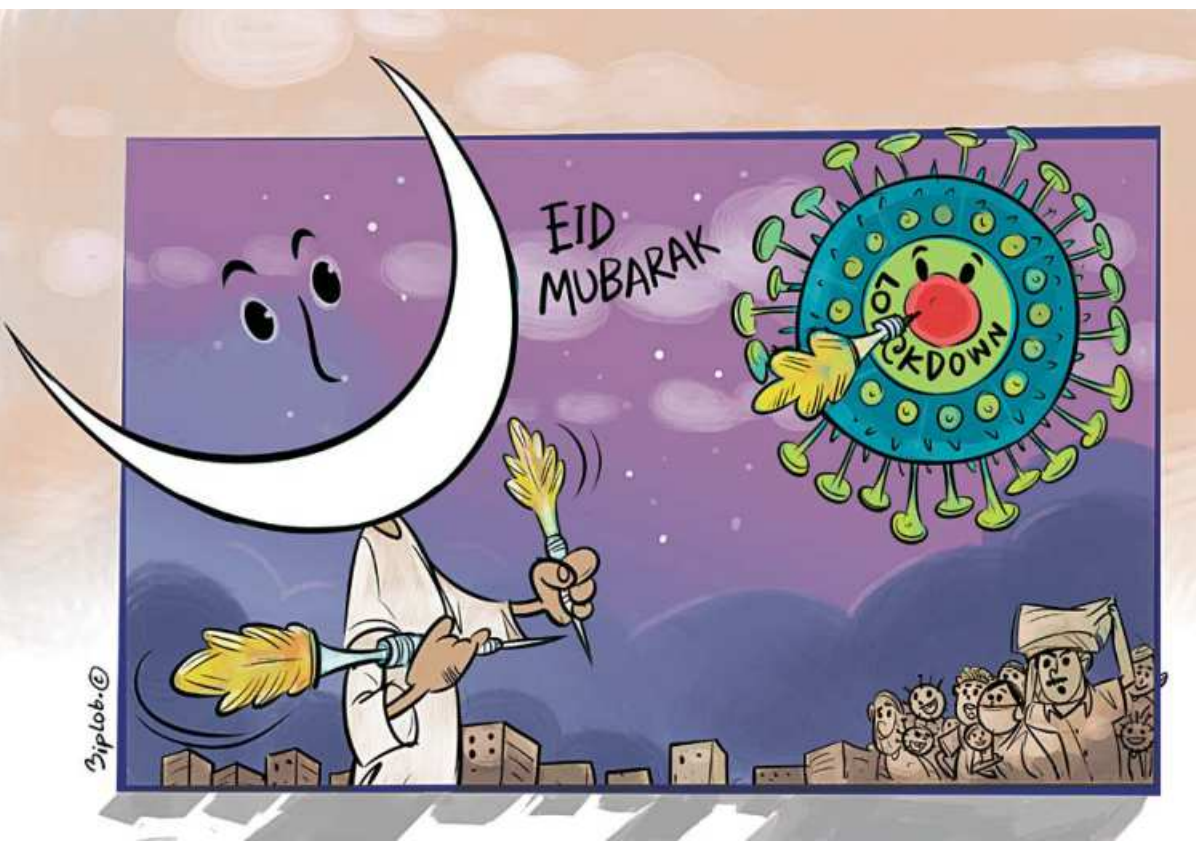
REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXXI No. 116 | BAISHARH 29, 1428 BS | RAMADAN 29, 1442 HIRI | 16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

EID MUBARAK

The Daily Star wishes its readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers a very happy Eid

HOLIDAY NOTICE

We will serve our readers only through our digital platform (www.thedailystar.net) during Eid holidays from May 12 to 14. Though there will be no newspaper in the next three days, you will be informed if you stay tuned to our dynamic web coverage in English and Bangla. If the Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated on May 14, the holiday will be extended till May 15.



Eid is here, joy is not

SYED ASHAQUL HAQUE

Eid is in a day or two, no? You have to ask just to be sure. A whole year has gone by since the last Eid-ul-Fitr. Yet, it seems time has stopped. Somehow, it has been caught in a whirl of stresses -- the new variants of coronavirus, spikes in infections and deaths, depleting bank deposits, job losses, work-from-home strictures, lockdowns, dearth of vaccines, frustration over the healthcare system and complaints about the poor's disregard for safety protocols.

This Eid will be like that of last year's -- locked down. No congregation on fields. Some people, not all, may go to mosques for Eid prayers. No traditional hugging and no handshaking after prayers. Gather together, yet not unite.

No guest is coming over and none going to visit others. Celebrations will be reduced to our own homes, spilling over into social media. Children will not go out to rooftops and make sure they see a slice

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Home-goers unstoppable

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The ban on inter-district buses and restrictions on public movement could not stop the mad rush of homebound people, as thousands made arduous journeys yesterday to celebrate the Eid with their loved ones amid the pandemic.

Braving inclement weather, the holidaymakers, mostly garments workers, left the capital and its adjacent areas for their village homes following the closure of factories ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Many of them, including women and children, waited for hours at ferry terminals and on roads, getting

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Left out in their hour of need

Many poor, marginalised people denied govt's Tk 25,000cr cash-food package

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The government could not spend two-thirds of its around Tk 25,000 crore cash-food support packages for the poor and vulnerable, frontline health workers and low-income farmers in the last year after its announcement.

During this period, 2.94 crore people and families have received financial aid and food assistance, according to a latest progress report by the Prime Minister's Office on the stimulus package prepared.

But, various studies of non-government organisations revealed, a large number of poor and marginalised people, hard-hit by the Covid-19-induced shutdown, remained outside the stimulus schemes.

After the pandemic hit the country in March last year, the government came

up with a host of stimulus packages to help absorb the economic shock. Of the schemes, there were 12 packages involving Tk 24,973 crore for these groups.

The government could only spend around Tk 8,017 crore or 32.10 percent of the amount as of March, according to the PMO's progress report.

Experts said the government's response in rolling out the economic relief schemes was prompt and crucial to helping many industries, larger ones in particular, stay afloat and boost economic activities.

But the schemes could not reach many real beneficiaries like informal sector workers and the urban poor due to the lack of a comprehensive database of targeted beneficiaries, their selection criteria, and a well-designed monitoring system, they said.

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Kajol charged in another DSA case

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI



Investigators have brought charges against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol in another case filed under the Digital Security Act stating that his purpose was to deteriorate law and order through aggressive intimidation and posting defamatory photos and writings on Facebook.

Among the 32 accused named in the first information report (FIR) of the case, police found evidence only against Kajol.

Bangla daily Manabzamin Editor-in-Chief Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, its staff reporter Al Amin, and 29 others were not named in the charge sheet of the case, filed by ruling Awami League lawmaker (Magura-1) Saifuzzaman Shikhor, as the

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QUAD, CHINA'S RESERVATIONS Uncalled for advice

International relations experts urge the govt to focus on economic cooperation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

An uncharacteristically indelicate exchange regarding a four-country alliance called "the Quad", which includes India and the US, seems to have heated up the otherwise smooth Dhaka-Beijing diplomatic relations.

Even though the Quad, a US-led initiative, is not quite open to membership, considering that it was initiated particularly to contain China, its ambassador in Dhaka had said in a statement that Bangladesh should not join the initiative.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Jahangirnagar University International Relations Professor Shahab Enam Khan said Bangladesh should carefully observe how the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) along with global vaccine politics unfold, as these two factors will determine the strategic equations in and around the Indo-Pacific region in the coming months.

"The Quad is a strategic move but its future largely depends on post-Covid India and the growing military mismatch between China and its immediate neighbours India and Japan. Therefore, Bangladesh should pursue a policy that will serve its national interests in terms of economic stability and absolute strategic autonomy."

SEE EDITORIAL ON PAGE 8

'We'll decide our foreign policy'

Foreign minister terms Chinese ambassador's statement regrettable

UNB, Dhaka

Terming Chinese envoy's recent remarks very regrettable, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh maintained a non-aligned and balanced foreign policy and it would decide what to do following that principle.

"We are an independent and sovereign state. We decide our [own] foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position," he said.

The minister made the remarks when reporters

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Metro dream whistles into a reality

First performance test starts on MRT-6; to take 6 months to a year to complete other tests

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh's first ever electricity train was rolled out on the tracks on a test run yesterday, signaling that the country is now one step closer to fulfil its dream of having its own metro rail.

As the train advanced slowly, whistling, shortly after leaving a workshop inside the metro rail depot in the capital's Diabari, government officials, project engineers, workers and journalists, who had gathered there, erupted in joy and clapped.

With bated breath, they just witnessed what could one day change the city's transport system.

Following the test run, the country entered a new era of electricity-powered trains, said officials.

Currently, all trains here run on diesel.

Some top government officials and other guests stepped inside the train while some were seen taking selfies yesterday. Journalists soon got busy to inform the nation about the progress in the project, which is expected to contribute to easing transportation for around two crore people in the city infamous for its unbridled traffic jams.

City dwellers, however, may have to wait to see the metro rail in operation as the system needs to go through other tests. Officials, based on experience of other countries, said it might take six months to a year or a bit more.

Besides, Road Transport and Highway Division Secretary Nazrul Islam yesterday said they were failing to meet the deadline -- December this year -- set for the early commissioning of the project, due to the pandemic.

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উৎসবে কিংবা প্রয়োজনে
ধামাকা শপিং-এ কেনাকাটা হবে নিশ্চিন্তে, নিরাপদে

“ধামাকা শপিং পরিবারের পক্ষ থেকে সকলকে হীদ-উল-ফিতর এর শুভেচ্ছা”

SCAN TO BUY