



Banglabandha port opens for tourists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Bangladeshi tourists have started crossing the border through the Banglabandha Land Port in Panchagarh, more than two years after their entry through the port was suspended in the wake of Covid-19.

Confirming the development, Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Immigration Police at the port, said they received instructions in this regard on Thursday and the border was opened for the tourists on Friday.

Amid increasing coronavirus cases, the authorities suspended tourists' entry through the Panchagarh-Phulbari port on March 30, 2020.

Students and businessmen from India and Nepal, however, were still allowed to cross the border after fulfilling certain conditions.

People's movement through the border was completely shut down on April 26 in 2021 after the Covid-19 infection and

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A chaotic traffic situation in the capital's New Market area causing immense sufferings to commuters. A large number of people doing their Eid shopping, makeshift shops on the street, illegally parked vehicles, and vehicles not maintaining lanes worsen the situation. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BANGLADESHI PILGRIMS

Number of hajis to be fixed in May

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government will sort out the modalities with the Saudi government by early next month such that Bangladeshi citizens can perform Hajj this year, said Faridul Haque Khan, the state Minister for religious affairs.

Just a few thousand people were allowed to perform the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in 2021 because of the pandemic, and only 1,000 the year before that. And Bangladeshi citizens were left out.

On Saturday, Saudi Arabia said it will allow one million people -- from both inside and outside the kingdom -- to perform the Hajj this year. The numbers allowed to go on the pilgrimage from each country are decided under a quota system.

"We are in close contact with Saudi Arabia -- we are hopeful of inking an agreement later this month or early next," Khan told The Daily Star.

The number of Bangladeshi citizens that would be allowed to perform the Hajj is up to the Saudi government, he added.

About 1.30 lakh Bangladeshis performed the Hajj in 2019, according to the religious affairs ministry.

This year's Hajj, which will take place in July, will be limited to vaccinated pilgrims under age 65.

Pilgrims travelling from abroad will also need to have a negative PCR test taken no more than

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EID DURING COVID LULL

Will the highways be ready?

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As the Covid-19 infection rate is at its lowest in Bangladesh, more people are expected to be leaving the capital and other major cities for Eid this year after a two-year lull.

This may result in huge traffic jams on roads; railways and waterways may also face pressure ahead of the festival.

Different government agencies have started holding meetings to take steps to keep the journeys relatively smooth and hassle-free.

The Roads and Highways Department has asked its field offices to complete all road maintenance works within April 20, some 12 days before the Eid.

It has also taken some measures to keep the Dhaka-Gazipur highway and Elenga-Rangpur highway, undergoing development right now, functional amid high pressure of vehicles.

Meanwhile, the shipping ministry has convened a meeting with

stakeholders today while the railways ministry will meet tomorrow to plan ahead for holiday-goers.

Traffic congestion on major highways and ferry terminals is a common phenomenon ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr -- the biggest festival for the Muslim community -- when tens of thousands of people go to their village homes to celebrate with their families.

Subhenkar Ghosh, joint secretary of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners' Association, said they think more people will leave Dhaka this time as the Covid-19 situation has improved.

"But we are worried about the road from Elenga to Rangpur [as works there are still going on]. Besides, ferry services are also a matter of concern [as there is always traffic at the terminals]," he told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that they are holding meetings with the authorities concerned about these issues.

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Eid shopping trip ends in tragedy

Father, son die under the wheels of lorry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A father and his infant son were killed in a road accident in Chattogram yesterday noon.

The victims are Abu Saleh and his son Abdullah Al Momin, said police.

Abu Saleh, his wife Monira Akhter and their four-year-old son Abdullah Al Mahir and seven-month-old son Abdullah Al Momin were going to a market for Eid shopping by a rickshaw, said police.

As they reached the port city's Akmal Ali Road, a speedy lorry hit the rickshaw around 12:00noon. The elder son Mahir was also injured in the accident, the law enforcers added.

Kabirul Islam, officer-in-charge of EPZ Police Station, said the lorry hit the rickshaw from the side.

"Saleh and his seven-month-old infant fell off the rickshaw and were crushed under the wheels of the lorry immediately. They died on the spot," he said.

About the Saleh's wife and elder son, he said the four-year-old boy received injuries but the mother luckily escaped any harm.

The aggravated pedestrians and locals vandalised the lorry and beat up the driver, the police official said.

Police detained lorry driver Kabir Ahmad Sheikh and seized the lorry.

The law enforcers also sent the bodies to the Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue.

Four days ago, a couple was killed in the city's Lalkhan Bazar area after a cement-mixture truck rammed their motorbike during the rush hour before Iftar.

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