



ARE WE THERE YET... Adip's eid vacation seems to have got off on a pretty rough start. When their 7:00am train got cancelled yesterday, his parents stood in line to get a refund. This turned into a four-hour-long wait. Meanwhile, the three-year-old, unable to stand the wait or heat, fell asleep on the luggage. This photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station around noon.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Hasina to join GCRG

BSS, DHAKA

Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres on Tuesday night phoned Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and invited her to join the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance (GCRG).



In reply to the invitation, the prime minister thanked the UN Secretary General and gave her consent to join the GCRG during talks between the two leaders that lasted for 12 minutes, according to a press release signed by PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim. "She (Hasina) accepted his invitation," the release said.

Guterres released the initial recommendations

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PRAYER TIMING					
APRIL 14					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4:20	12:45	4:45	6:23	7:45	
JAMAAT 4:30	1:15	5:00	6:33	8:15	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING					
RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR		
12	14		6:23		
13	15	4:14	6:24		
14	16	4:13	6:24		

An awful day for train passengers

Operation suspended for 8 hours, as staffers go on strike to reinstate benefits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of passengers suffered immensely, as operation of trains across the country remained suspended for around eight hours from early yesterday.

Running staffers, including loco-masters who were directly involved in operating trains, went on a wildcat strike, without giving any prior notice, to reinstate their post-retirement benefits. Train operation resumed around 1:35pm yesterday, following assurance of Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan of meeting their demand.

As a result, all trains got delayed for hours, making thousands of passengers spend their time at stations amid hot weather. The authorities were forced to cancel 22 inter-city as well as 103 local and mail trains.

Meanwhile, railway made NID or other valid identity cards mandatory for advance train tickets, the sales of which will begin on April 23 – ahead of Eid. A dedicated compartment for women would be added with each inter-city train during the Eid rush, Sujan said, as he was briefing media at Rail Bhaban yesterday about plans to manage the rush.

ISSUES AND SUFFERINGS

In January, running staffers threatened to go on strike to press home the demand for restoring their previous benefits for working extra hours.

These staffers have to work beyond their duty time, and they get extra pay for the additional hours they worked. Similarly, they used to get pension facilities on the basis of the pay for their extra work. But, the finance ministry last year declined to give the pension benefit, incensing the staffers.

They, however, postponed the strike in the same month, following assurance of ministry Secretary Humayun Kabir.

However, sources said the staffers went on the sudden strike yesterday, after coming

SALE OF ADVANCE TRAIN TICKETS STARTS APRIL 23

STATIONS TO GET TICKETS FROM

- Kamalapur**
All intercity trains to western destinations; Khulna bound special train
- Airport**
Ctg, Noakhali-bound trains
- Tejgaon**
M'singh, Jamalpur-bound trains; Dewanganj special train
- Cantonment**
Netrakona-bound Mohonganj, Haor express
- Phulbaria**
Sylhet, Kishoreganj-bound trains

to know that the finance ministry recently turned down the railway ministry's proposal to reinstate the benefits. Ultimately, passengers bore the brunt of the strike.

Jorina Begum arrived at Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka at 5:30am, as her train to Khulna was scheduled to depart at 6:00am. She joined the line for a refund at 7:00am. While talking to this newspaper at 10:15am, she was still unable to reach the counter.

Similar situations were reported from other parts of the country.

Later, the minister held a meeting with leaders of agitating staffers and assured to meet their demand, as he will talk with the prime minister over the issue on April 19.

In another development, the finance ministry yesterday cancelled their April 10 circular and sought more information from the railways ministry to reconsider their proposal.

ADVANCE TRAIN TICKETS
With Eid likely to be celebrated on May 3,

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ICT CASE SC to hear Shahidul's appeal on July 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fixed July 24 for hearing the leave to appeal petition filed by internationally acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam against a High Court verdict on him in a case filed under a



controversial section. In its verdict, the HC on December 14 last year rejected a petition in which Shahidul challenged legality of the case filed against him under Section 57 of Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006. In the case, he was imprisoned for 107 days. The section 57 has been abolished after formulation of the Digital Security Act in October, 2018.

Yesterday, Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice M Enayetur Rahim, however, refused to stay the trial proceedings, saying that the full bench of this court will hear the petition and take a decision.

The chamber judge set the date after Shahidul's lawyer Sara Hossain prayed for fixing a date for hearing the petition and staying

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Stuck in legal tangles for 21yrs

Death reference, appeals in Ramna Batamul attack case still pending with HC

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Twenty years have passed since two bombs blasted during Bangla New Year celebrations at Dhaka's Ramna Batamul on this day in 2001, but the final justice is yet to be delivered. Appeals and death reference in connection with the case are still pending with the High Court.

Ten people were killed and dozens injured in the blasts at an event organised by Chhayanaut. Legal tangles, including repeated adjournments and reconstitution of HC benches, have caused delays in disposal of the case.

It is still uncertain when the appeals filed by the convicts and death reference will be heard and a judgement will be delivered by the HC.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the lower court has finished trial proceedings of the case, following the initiatives he took after becoming minister. "The case is now pending with the High Court. I don't know its present status. I will inquire about it."

The case has been included in the HC's hearing lists 375 times since 2014, but the benches concerned adjourned hearing each time,

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'Quality not quantity'

Rehman Sobhan stresses changes in governance, investment to ensure quality education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Driven by market demand, the country's private education system is producing a quarter-educated generation, observed Rehman Sobhan, eminent economist and founder of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), yesterday.

"If you want to know how the market functions in Bangladesh today, you should begin by simply looking at the syllabus of the private universities. This gives you a clear idea of the nature of market demand, which has limited the structure of the syllabus to three or four subjects," he said.

Underscoring the need for quality over quantity, Sobhan said massive and revolutionary changes in the governance system are required alongside huge investments to ensure quality education.

The eminent economist was addressing a virtual discussion on a book titled, "Political Economy of Education in South Asia: Fighting Poverty, Inequality and Exclusion" organised by CPD.

Brac University Professor Emeritus Dr Manzoor Ahmed; John Richards and Shahidul Islam, University of Toronto Press, co-authored the book.

CPD Board of Trustees member Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam said, "We need not only a paradigm shift but leapfrogging into a future which will probably open up possibilities for the real education that our children should get."

"I want public discourse in education. But do you think authorities will always be listening to the voice of people? I'm really alarmed by the bureaucratisation of our education ministry."

Earlier, author of the book, Manzoor Ahmed gave a presentation on the book where he pointed out how the failure of politics is affecting the country's education.

"Wealthy people send their children to the best educational institutes. This creates a division among students," he said, highlighting the discrimination in the education system.

Unintended pregnancies hindering progress

In interview with Star, UNFPA country rep emphasises family planning, education

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Nearly 121 million pregnancies globally are unintended, among which 60 percent end up in abortion. In Bangladesh, around 59 out of each 1,000 pregnancies are unintended, reveals a report.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has launched the State of World Population (SWOP) Report 2022, which focuses on the issue of "Unintended Pregnancy".

On the occasion of the report launching, UNFPA country representative Eiko Narita sat for an exclusive interview with The Daily Star recently.

"When a pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned, it can result in worsened health, lost education, lost income and increase in family hardship for women," Eiko Narita said while talking to The Daily Star at the UNFPA country office in Dhaka.

Over the past three decades,

When a pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned, it can result in worsened health, lost education, lost income and increase in family hardship for women.

EIKO NARITA

Bangladesh has achieved significant progress with all Millennium Development Goals achieved. In 1993-94, almost a quarter of females were unable to access family planning services and that has gone down to 12 percent today and that's a significant achievement, according to Narita.

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COLOURS EVERYWHERE... Dhaka University's Charukala has been adorned with colourful, illustrative murals -- a staple tradition -- to welcome the Bangla new year. Even before the festivities began, these three friends visited the faculty of fine arts yesterday and took a quick snap to commemorate a new beginning.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS