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City dwellers with their children gather at the Hatirjheel lake on Wednesday, the last day of the Eid holidays. Children are seen having a good time. There are only a few children-friendly parks and recreation spots in the capital and most of the good ones are pay-to-use. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No Eid cheer for shrinking remittance

Inflows drop 2.9pc in April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even Eid-ul-Fitr, typically a boon for remittance inflows, failed to buck the trend of sliding receipts this year.

In April, expatriate Bangladeshis sent home about \$2 billion, down about 2.9 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The amount though is the highest since May last year, when about \$2.17 billion was received. Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest festival in Bangladesh, was celebrated in the middle of May last year.

After a spike in inflows for the global coronavirus pandemic, which broke down the informal channels of cross-border money transfer, remittance receipts began contracting in July last year and have been registering negative growth since.

To stem the trend, the government in January increased the cash incentive on remittances sent through the proper channels to 2.5 percent from 2 percent.

But that appears to be failing to work its magic thanks to the higher kerb market rate than the official exchange rate for the dollar.

Each dollar is selling for about Tk 92 in the kerb market. The official exchange rate for the dollar is Tk 86.45.

April's inflows take the remittance received so far this fiscal year to \$17.3 billion, down 16.3 percent year-on-year.

When announcing the increased cash incentive on remittance, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the move would boost receipts to \$26 billion this fiscal

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EID JOURNEY HOME

Largely hassle-free, yet 40 die on roads

STAR REPORT

People's Eid journey home was unusually smooth with less hassle than before but crashes claimed at least 40 lives during the holidays.

Illegal and risky three-wheelers and bikers on largely empty roads were behind most of the crashes since Eid day.

At least 27 others were also injured in the 28 crashes in 13 districts between Saturday and yesterday.

Most of the crashers were on Tuesday (Eid day), Wednesday, and yesterday.

Bikes were involved in 11 and three-wheelers in 12 of the 28 crashes.

The number of accidents is believed to be much higher as many crashes go unreported.

Usually, there are more crashes after the holidays when people return to the capital and there is not as good monitoring by law enforcers.

On Saturday, tens of thousands of people left Dhaka to celebrate the Eid. Over 1 crore active mobile SIM cards left

Dhaka between April 27 and May 1, giving a hint about the rush.

Although some possible bottlenecks on Dhaka-

Hadiuzzaman said.

He, however, said a large number of people left Dhaka on motorcycles, which is an

APR 30-MAY 5

Total accidents 28

Bike involved 11

Three-wheeler 12

Truck, bus, car 5

"This is new but bad a trend because bikes on long journeys are very risky."

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman

DEATHS

Rangpur 5

Joypurhat 4

Dinajpur 4

Pabna 3

Sirajganj 3

Tangail 2

Cumilla 6

Magura 1

Mymensingh 2

Dhaka 4

Bagerhat 3

Barishal 2

Cox's Bazar 1



Tangail-Rangpur and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways and two ferry terminals on the Padma had

been concerns before Eid, strict monitoring by the authorities, proper management at choking points, and some people's departure from Dhaka well ahead of the holidays made the Eid journey for others relatively smooth, transport expert Prof

ominous sign because bikes on long journeys are very risky.

He said the number of crashes increased from the Eid day as bikes, minibuses, and three-wheelers drove recklessly in light traffic.

Hadiuzzaman, also director of Accident Research Institute of Buet, said the authorities should

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Western aid can't prevent Russian victory

Says Moscow on Ukraine war

AFP, Zaporizhzhia

Russia yesterday said Western aid to Kyiv had slowed its offensive in Ukraine but would not thwart its victory, as conflicting reports emerged about efforts to rescue civilians from a besieged steel plant in the devastated city of Mariupol.

Nearly 10 weeks into a war that has left thousands of people dead, flattened Ukrainian cities and uprooted more than 13 million people, the Kremlin conceded that Western countries had prevented a "quick" end to Russia's military campaign.

"The United States, Britain, Nato as a whole hand over intelligence... to Ukraine's armed forces on a permanent basis," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"Coupled with the flow of weapons that these countries are sending to Ukraine, these are all actions that do not contribute to the quick completion of the operation," he told reporters.

The outside help, nevertheless, was "incapable of hindering the achievement" of the goals of Russia's military operation, he insisted.

Peskov was responding to a New York Times article on Wednesday that said intelligence provided by the United States has helped the Ukrainian military target "many" of the approximately dozen Russian generals who have been killed so far in the war.

Since failing to take Kyiv early on in its invasion, which Moscow launched on February 24, Russia has focused its efforts on the east and south of Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has tirelessly campaigned for help from allies, yesterday launched a global crowdfunding platform to help Kyiv win the war and rebuild the country's infrastructure.

Zelensky launches a global crowdfunding platform to help Kyiv win the war

Russian forces are on the verge of taking full control of the strategically important port of Mariupol, where Ukrainian troops holed up in the besieged Azovstal steelworks are making their land stand.

Hundreds of soldiers and civilians have been trapped in the factory's Soviet-era underground tunnels in what has become the last pocket of resistance in the area.

Russia's defence ministry on Wednesday announced a daytime ceasefire for three days at the steelworks to evacuate civilians from the plant, which started yesterday morning.

Peskov said yesterday that humanitarian corridors to get civilians out of Azovstal "are functioning today". But there was no confirmation of the evacuations by the Ukrainian side.

Elsewhere, the governor of the Donbas region Pavlo Kyrylenko said at least 25 civilians were wounded in an overnight Russian strike on the city of Kramatorsk.

As well as sending money and weapons to Ukraine, Kyiv's Western allies have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia to punish it for the invasion.

The European Union on Wednesday proposed a gradual ban on Russian oil imports, in what would be the bloc's toughest move yet over Moscow's invasion of its neighbour.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said the EU would "phase out Russian supply of crude oil within six months and refined products by the end of the year", a move that would still not touch its huge gas exports.

COVID PANDEMIC

13.3 to 16.6 million died in 2020-21: WHO

AFP, Geneva

The Covid-19 pandemic killed 13.3 to 16.6 million people in 2020 and 2021, the WHO estimated yesterday - up to triple the number of deaths attributed directly to the disease.

The World Health Organization's long-awaited estimate of the total number of deaths caused by the pandemic - including lives lost to its knock-on effects - finally puts a number on the broader impact of the crisis.

"New estimates from the World Health Organization show that the full death toll associated directly or indirectly with the Covid-19 pandemic between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021 was approximately 14.9 million (range 13.3 million to 16.6 million)," the UN health agency said in a statement.

The figure calculates what is termed as excess mortality due to the Covid-19 crisis, which has upended much of the planet for

more than two years.

"These sobering data not only point to the impact of the pandemic but also to the need for all countries to invest in more resilient health systems that can sustain essential health services during crises, including stronger health information systems," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Excess mortality is calculated as the difference between the number of deaths that have occurred and the number that would have been expected in the absence of the pandemic, based on data from earlier years.

Excess mortality includes deaths associated with Covid-19 directly, due to the disease, and indirectly due to the pandemic's impact on health systems and society.

The WHO declared Covid an international public health emergency on January 30, 2020, after cases of the new

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A frog, popularly known as Kulabang, spotted in the City Gate area of Chattogram after yesterday's downpour. Though this frog is seen in rural areas, it is not that common in urban areas.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

LPG price slashed by Tk 8.68 per kg

UNB, Dhaka

The energy regulator yesterday cut the prices of liquefied petroleum gas after three back-to-back months of hike on the back of a drop in price globally.

Bangladeshi private LPG operators mainly import the gas from the Middle East based on Saudi CP, which has come down, said Abdul Jalil, chairman of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), while announcing the new prices.

From 6:00pm yesterday, the per kilogram of LPG is Tk 111.26, down by Tk 8.68 from the previous month.

This means a 12 kg LPG cylinder, the most common form for marketing the fuel, will

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