



A child gestures at her father to call them from a train window, as the man is unable to join them for Eid celebrations in Sirajganj. The emotional moment captures the bittersweet reality of a service holder in Dhaka, torn between job responsibilities and family -- a familiar story echoing across generations in the bustling city of Dhaka. This photo was taken in Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Those who return to Dhaka for Eid

FARIHA AMBER

Crossing off every day of the Ramadan calendar draws the joy of Eid nearer. And what makes the festival even more exciting is being finally able to return home to our loved ones to celebrate this joyous occasion.

As most people head outside Dhaka in overbooked trains and buses, navigating their way through deadly traffic, there are also people taking the opposite route and coming to Dhaka to celebrate Eid -- a city they call home.

Although most people living away from their families usually end up making a home away from home and creating bonds as strong as the familial ones, there is quite nothing like being able to return home -- to the comfort of our bedroom, to the delicious taste of home-cooked food, and to finally be able to shop for oneself and loved ones.

Students and job holders living outside Dhaka get their fair share of independence to live as they will and create a lifestyle as they wish, but this independence comes at a cost, that of missing family members back home.

And this yearning can hit at any point in time. Nostalgia can hit you in a packed room joyously laughing with friends, or even on tiresome work days when you return home to an empty house and iftar table with barely any energy left to cook food.

"After spending a year and a half outside the comfort of my house, I realised what I took for basic necessities are actually things that made me privileged. Being able to go home to the relish of iftar prepared by mum and having it with the family is a privilege, and we realise it too late," remarked Najmus Sakeeb, employee at a private company.

Even for Tusher, a student at



Chittagong University, who enjoys his best life with friends on his campus, nothing hits like going home. "Before, I wouldn't be so excited about Eid, but since I've moved out for studying, this is one occasion I look most forward to. I can't wait to go back home and receive that influx of extra care and pampering from my family!" he exclaimed.

And for people living abroad, it's a different story altogether! "Although the streets here are wider and safer, my heart yearns to walk on the lanes we played in during Eid. I save up all my leaves for Eid so that I can fly back home and not miss out on the fun. Now, more than ever, I finally relate to the song 'Shopno Jabe Bari'," remarked Eliza, who moved to Australia five years ago.

But not everyone can fly back home; returning to Dhaka is a struggle on its own. If bus and train tickets are not bought early, people often resort to anything available at the last minute, from uncomfortably hanging inside buses to sitting openly above a train! Although tickets mostly sell out when we look for them, you magically seem to find them available on-spot at half the price if you just go to the bus station!

The joy of coming back to Dhaka for Eid is unmatched by any other. We rarely get to taste this feeling of euphoria, and returning home for Eid is one of those occasions. And what better time to enjoy the empty streets of Dhaka?

Every nook and cranny of Dhaka has stories waiting to be told. "My Dhaka" gives interested writers the platform to share experiences of city life. Only selected stories will make it to our print edition and digital platform. Send your Dhaka story (within 450 words) to raffat@thedailystar.net

Nat'l Eidgah set to welcome devotees: Taposh

UNB, Dhaka

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) is completely prepared to welcome the president, cabinet members, diplomats and other important persons and the people of Dhaka to the main Eid congregation at the National Eidgah Maidan, said DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh.

A total of 35,000 devotees (male and female) can offer prayers at the main Eid jamaat (congregation) to be held at Jatiya Eidgah Maidan on Eid day, he said while talking to journalists after visiting the overall preparatory activities of the Eidgah yesterday.

Inviting everyone to offer prayers at the National Eidgah, Taposh said that there will be separate arrangements for women to say prayers.

A separate gate has also been installed for the exit in the maidan to avoid rush of worshippers, he said.

He added that special measures have also been taken to handle water logging in case of any sudden rain or storm.

He also said that an arrangement of safe drinking water has been made so that no one suffers amid the ongoing heat wave sweeping the country.

Besides, the authorities concerned have kept adequate fans and medical support to tackle emergency situation.

"Law enforcers including the Special Security Force (SSF) have arranged tight security measures in Eidgah as the President will offer Eid prayers," added the mayor.

The mayor urged all the devotees who would join the prayers not to bring any kind of lighter or inflammable materials in and around the Eidgah Maidan.

During the visit, DSCC Chief Executive Officer Md Mizanur Rahman, Secretary Akramuzzaman, Chief Engineer Saleh Ahmed, Acting Chief Waste Management Officer Md Haider Ali, Chief Health Officer (Acting) Dr Fazle Shamsul Kabir, Directorate of Fire Service and Civil Defence, police and senior officers of Rab were also present.

UN shares iftar with children

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT


A UN Bangladesh team on Wednesday shared iftar with children honouring the holy month of Ramadan.

The team went to four different locations in Dhaka city -- Korail Orphanage, Gabtoli, Kamalapur, and Sadarghat -- and distributed 500 iftar and gift boxes to children.

"Spending time with children and their caregivers during iftar reminds us that they need our empathy and support," said UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis.

"I would like to thank all of the UN agencies and the UN Staff Association for making this evening's iftar a very special one," she added.

PRAYER TIMING



APRIL 21

| | Fazr | Juma | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|------|
| AZAN | 4-13 | 12-30 | 4-45 | 6-26 | 8-00 |
| JAMAAT | 4-23 | 1-15 | 5-00 | 6-36 | 8-30 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

| RAMADAN | APRIL | SEHRI | IFTAR |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 29 | 21 | | 6:26 |
| 30 | 22 | 4:07 | 6:27 |



With Eid knocking at the door, footpath traders are seeing quite a bit of crowd and sales as customers round up their last minute purchases. This photo was taken in front of Nurjahan market near Dhaka College yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Helpful initiative falling apart

DU's sanitary pad vending machines malfunctioning, causing trouble for students

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Dhaka University's attempt to break period-related stigmas and provide easier access to menstrual-hygiene products has hit a snag. Despite the installation of sanitary pad vending machines throughout the campus, many female students are left without the intended benefits due to the machines malfunctioning.

Students who have struggled to access the products despite paying money, and are now calling for urgent solutions.

The initiative was taken three years ago by Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) in partnership with ACI Group to break the taboo surrounding menstruation hygiene.

The vending machines were supposed to provide easier access to the products and lower costs for almost 12,000 female students.

Along with Ruqayyah Hall, Shamsun Nahar Hall, Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall and Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall -- the machines have also been installed at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), girls'

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common rooms at arts, business studies, fine arts faculties, and the science faculty library.

Female students said the malfunctioning machines have caused more inconvenience than comfort. The machines often offer low-quality napkins and do not provide pads even after payment.

Nineteen-year-old Sharifa Oishee had a similar experience when the vending machine took her money but provided

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1 more hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

One more person was hospitalised with dengue in the 24 hours to yesterday morning.

The new patient was admitted to a hospital in Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Twenty-two dengue patients, including 14 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 921 dengue cases, 889 recoveries, and ten deaths this year. The country logged 281 dengue deaths in 2022 -- the highest on record after 179 deaths recorded in 2019. Also, it recorded 62,423 dengue cases and 61,971 recoveries last year.

Dhaka's air quality 5th most polluted

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka's air quality was "unhealthy" yesterday morning.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 161 at 8:57am, Dhaka ranked 5th in the list of cities worldwide with the worst air quality.

Chile's Santiago, Vietnam's Hanoi and Thailand's Chiang Mai, occupied the first three spots in the list, with AQI scores of 180, 170 and 169, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 150 is considered "unhealthy", AQI between 201 and 300 is said to be "very unhealthy", while a reading of 301+ is considered "hazardous", posing serious health risks to residents.

Dhaka has long been grappling with air pollution issues. Its air quality usually turns unhealthy in winter and improves during the monsoon.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections.