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Bangladesh falls short of hajj quota

HAAB, ATAB leaders fear Saudi govt may reduce quota next year

RASHIDUL HASAN

Even after offering a one-day "special opportunity" for hajj registration on Tuesday, this year's hajj quota of 1.27 lakh people is yet to be fulfilled.

The total number of people who have completed hajj registration stood at 1,20,491 meaning that around 6,500 of the hajj quota is still unfulfilled.

Due to poor response from the intended hajjis, the government earlier extended the deadline for hajj registration eight times since it started on February 8.

Following a request from Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), the Ministry of Religious Affairs gave the special offer to complete hajj registration under government and private management on Tuesday.

However, sources at the hajj office at the city's Ashkona Hajj Camp yesterday said only 39 intended hajjis completed registration under the government management, while 757 completed registrations under the private hajj management.

This is the last chance for hajj registration this year, a press release of the ministry said on Tuesday.

According to the agreement between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, a total of 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis will get the opportunity to perform hajj this year.

Of the total, 15,000 people will perform hajj under the government hajj management while 1.12 lakh under the private hajj management.

While talking to The Daily Star, leaders of HAAB and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) said the hajj quota will remain unfulfilled this year even if more chances for registration are given.

Failure to fulfil the hajj quota may result in the Saudi government reducing the quota next year, they feared.

Abdus Salam Aref, general secretary of ATAB, said this was the first time that the hajj quota was not fulfilled, and many intended pilgrims told them that they were finding it difficult to manage the huge amount of money to perform hajj this year.

A Bangladeshi will have to spend around Tk 7 lakh to perform hajj under private and government management this year, which is up by around Tk 1.61 lakh from the previous year.

Apart from this, each pilgrim will have to pay about Tk 22,000 for a Qurbani

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



In the scorching heat, a baby finds solace in her mother's arms. With her eyes full of curiosity, she gazes out at the world, secure in the knowledge that her mother will always be there to protect her. This touching moment of maternal love was captured at the gate of the National Museum in Shahbagh yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Death anniv of Sher-e-Bangla today

CITY DESK

The 61st death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla Abul K a s h e m Fazlul Huq will be observed today.



Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq, popularly known as Sher-e-Bangla or Huq Saheb, was born on October 26, 1873, at his maternal uncle's house at Saturaia, a village in the southern part of Barishal district.

He passed away on April 27, 1962.

Huq was an eminent public leader who had held many high political posts, including the mayor of Calcutta (1935), chief minister of undivided Bengal (1937-1943) and East Bengal (1954), home minister of Pakistan (1955) and governor of East Pakistan (1956-58).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued a message paying rich tribute to the memory of Sher-e-Bangla.

In her message, the PM paid glowing tributes to the late leader and recalled his struggle for economic freedom of the peasants and toiling people of the country.

She also prayed for eternal peace of his departed soul.

Hasina mentioned AK Fazlul Huq's exceptional leadership, personality and political wisdom, for which he was dubbed Sher-e-Bangla or Banglar Bagh (Tiger of Bengal).

The ruling Awami League will also pay tribute to the great leader by placing wreaths at his grave at Suhrawardy Udyan at 8:00am today.

Besides, different political parties, alongside socio-cultural and professional bodies, have chalked out various programmes to observe the day.

PRAYER
TIMING

APRIL 27

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:20	12:45	4:45	6:29	8:00
JAMAAAT 4:55	1:15	5:00	6:34	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

BANGABANDHU TUNNEL

Delayed decision delays opening

Tunnel to likely open in September after completing vehicle scanner installation works

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The construction work of Bangabandhu Tunnel under the Karnaphuli River saw a 99.5 percent completion. However, the tunnel is unlikely to come into operation before September due to the delayed decision to install vehicle scanners there.

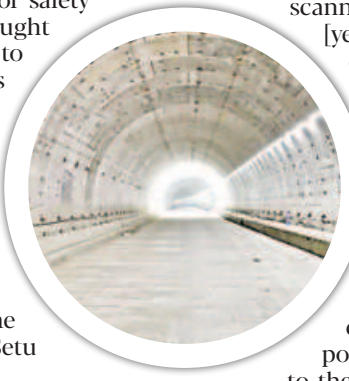
Installation of vehicle scanners was not part of the project but was included later for safety reasons. The scanners have to be brought from the UK, installed and also have to go through a test before the tunnel is open for operation, said officials.

In this given situation, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to open the tunnel by September this year.

He revealed the information at a views-exchange meeting with the officials of the Bridge Division at Setu Bhaban.

In January this year, Quader said the tunnel will open to traffic in April or May this year as 95.50 percent work of its construction had been completed by then.

The 9.1km tunnel, the first of its kind in South Asia, is being built to help develop a modern communication system between Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. It will also be linked to the Asian Highway.



After revisions, the cost of the project rose to Tk 10,690 crore. The deadline for the project was set in December this year. The original cost of the Chinese-funded project was Tk 8,446.64 crore and its deadline was December 2021.

Asked about the delay to open the tunnel, Bridge Division Secretary Monjur Hossain said, "No other work is left except the installation of the vehicle scanners for security purposes. As of today [yesterday], 99.50 percent of its works are done."

He said as per the recommendation of security experts, the scanners have to be installed before opening the tunnel to traffic.

"The scanners have to be brought from the UK, the process of which got delayed due to the Russia-Ukraine war," added Monjur.

"We will try to bring, install and commission the scanners as soon as possible. If everything goes according to the plan, we will be able to open it even before September as told by the minister," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The cost of the project will not increase as it was included in the operation and maintenance bit, said Monjur, also the executive director of Bangladesh Bridge Authority, the implementing agency of the tunnel project.

Meanwhile, Quader said the authority has collected

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Army chief off to India on 3-day visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Bangladesh Army General SM Shafiuddin A h m e d left Dhaka yesterday for India on a three-day official visit at the invitation of Indian Army Chief General Manoj Pande.

During the visit, he will take the parade salute as the chief guest at the passing out parade of the commissioned officers at the Commissioned Officers Training Academy in Chennai, reads an ISPR press release.

General SM Shafiuddin will make courtesy calls on Indian chief of defence staff, chief of army staff, chief of naval staff, chief of air staff, chief of defence staff, defence secretary and foreign secretary and other top officials.

At the meeting, they will discuss the development of bilateral relations and assistance.

General Shafiuddin will also visit different important establishments of the Indian army.

He will return to Bangladesh on April 30.



AIRPORT ROAD Traffic to be limited at 2 points for 7 hours from Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vehicular movement on the Dhaka Mymensingh highway at Balaka Bhaban and Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport points will be restricted for seven hours from Friday night due to the ongoing construction of flyover in front of the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Vehicles will be restricted at the points from 11:00pm on Friday to 6:00am on Saturday, according to a circular of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab).

The Caab has also requested all heavy and goods-laden vehicles to use alternative road during that time.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Surrender to lower court in 4 weeks

HC orders journo Jahangir in DSA case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered Muhammad Jahangir Alam, special reporter of UNB, to surrender before a lower court concerned in four weeks in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

The HC also asked the law enforcers not to harass or arrest Jahangir during this period.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali passed the order after hearing a petition filed by Jahangir seeking anticipatory bail. Jahangir's lawyer Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal told The Daily Star.

He said police filed the case under the DSA with Hatirjheel Police Station on April 14 against Jahangir and several others on charge of anti-state activities following their group discussions in the Facebook messenger.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Swindling passengers at Dhaka airport 'Ringleader' arrested

UNB, Dhaka

Members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) claimed to have arrested the ringleader of a fraud gang involved in swindling passengers at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on Tuesday night.

The arrestee was identified as Md Javed, 47. He had long been involved in swindling passengers and visitors coming to the airport, said APBn Additional Superintendent Mohammad Ziaul Haque.

APBn also arrested Javed's aides and a process is on to take legal steps against them, he added.

Javed, along with his accomplices, used to trick passengers in the name of currency exchange and flee with their hard-earned money, passport, and luggage.

40PC RENEWABLE ENERGY CONVERSION BY 2040

Budget allocation not enough to meet the target

Says Inu; energy conference starts in capital today

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh will not achieve its target of converting 40 percent of its energy sources into renewable energy by 2040 if the budgetary allocation does not increase, said Hasanul Haq Inu, chairperson of the parliamentary standing committee on information, during an online press conference yesterday.

"...the prime minister has announced to convert at least 40 percent to renewable energy within 2040. But the way we are going about it now, I think it will be difficult to achieve that goal," he said.

"But there is still time if we



Budgetary allocation is critical for transforming our renewable energy capacity into a fully sustainable energy system that is inclusively aligned with the national policies.

HASANUL HAQ INU

Chairperson of JS committee on info

plan properly now and allocate from this year's budget to that end," he added.

He said budgetary allocation

is critical for transforming our renewable energy capacity into a fully sustainable energy system that is inclusively aligned with the national policies.

Inu was addressing a webinar of the Bangladesh Energy Prosperity 2050 (BEP 2050) Conference, which is set to commence today at Bangabandhu Military Museum in Dhaka, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Inu also said now is the time to discuss how much money to allocate as part of the plan to ensure the transition from fossil fuels to alternative energy, and whether it is possible to make a transition from the current situation to a 100 percent

alternative energy system.

A proposal can be crafted and placed before the finance ministry before June, he suggested.

"It is time to discuss whether Bangladesh's electricity production is at an overcapacity and whether any misallocation has occurred," said Inu.

Along with him, the event was co-chaired by lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and lawmaker Tanvir Shakil Joy, Chairperson of Climate Parliament Bangladesh.

Representatives of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4