EID JOURNEY

Locomotive crisis cuts special train number

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

The number of special trains for Eid journey, operating from Chattogram to different destinations across the country, has been significantly reduced due to an acute shortage of locomotives (engines).

According to Bangladesh Railway, only one pair of Eid special trains will be available this time, which will operate between Chattogram and Chandpur.

There were four pairs of special trains were scheduled to accommodate the heavy demand during Eid journeys last year, one on the Chattogram-Mymensingh route, two on the Chattogram-Chandpur, and one on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar route.

The limited train availability is likely to cause considerable inconvenience for the homebound people during Eid rush.

Syedul Alam, a regular passenger on the Chattogram-Chandpur route and a businessman from Riyazuddin Bazar, expressed concerns, saying, "This route typically experiences heavy passenger demand during Eid. Every year, the railway operates two pairs of trains on this route to accommodate the demand. However, I've heard that only one pair will be running this year. If that is the case, Eid home journeys will be much more difficult this time."

Officials from BR's transport department said they did not receive enough locomotives from the mechanical department for the Eid schedule.

"We wrote to the mechanical department for allocating engines to run additional trains during Eid, but they failed to provide engines as per our demands," said Tarek Imran, deputy chief operating superintendent of BR.

"The shortage of engines will lead to a reduction in number of Eid special trains, which is likely to place additional pressure on existing trains," he added.

According to Sajid Hasan Nirjhor, divisional mechanical engineer of the BR (Chattogram), several locomotives from the 3000 series remain idle in workshop due to a lack of necessary parts for repairs.

While the department requires 65 locomotives daily to run scheduled trains, currently only 52-55 engines are available for operation, he added.

Asked why the store department failed to supply the necessary parts for engine repairs, Anwarul Islam, chief controller of BR's Eastern Zone store, explained that the department could not purchase crucial engine parts due to a shortage of funds.

"The finance ministry has yet to allocate the required budget in line with the BR's demand for repair work. As a result, the department has been unable to procure the necessary parts, which has significantly impacted the repair and maintenance of locomotives," he added.

A farmer sprays pesticide on watermelon plants to protect them from pests. As summer approaches, farmers in Khulna are busy cultivating watermelons. According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, watermelon is being grown on 8,100 hectares of land in Dakop upazila. The photo was taken at Kalinagar village yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BAGERHAT MUNICIPALITY

Residents suffer as water crisis worsens

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, *Bagerhat*

The persistent crisis of water in Bagerhat Municipality has worsened in recent time, leaving the residents suffering immensely.

The municipal authorities have been unable to supply clean water adequately, prompting many residents to purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

According to municipal officials, Bagerhat town, with a population of nearly 1,25,000, requires approximately 8 lakh gallons of water daily. However, the daily supply has been only a little over 5 lakh gallons. As such, there has been a daily shortfall of nearly 3 lakh gallons, significantly impacting the daily lives of residents. Currently, only 60-65 percent of the town' s population has access to municipal water supply. As the warmer days have arrived, the situation is likely to worsen further throughout the summer due to power outages.

Daily shortfall is nearly 3 lakh gallons. Aging pipes and delays in a Tk 40 crore project worsen the situation, forcing many residents to buy bottled water. Authorities promise improvements, but urgent action is needed.

Moreover, the crisis has been compounded by the town's poor water distribution network. The aging water pipes are riddled with leakages, allowing drain runoff to contaminate the water. As a result, the water supplied to households is often malodourous and unsafe for consumption, leaving many residents with no choice but to buy bottled water for cooking and drinking.

The town's water is sourced from a deep tubewell in Shatgambuj union, pumped into overhead tanks in Dashani and Basabati Padmapukur areas before it is distributed.

However, only 6,550 residents are connected to the municipal water system, and many of them have been experiencing inconsistent supply and poor water quality. Only a selected few, including 135 freedom fighters, receive municipal water free of charge.

"The supply to my house gets disconnected every other day, and the water smells awful. I have to buy water for cooking and drinking since the supplied water is

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MODONPUR-MODONGANJ ROAD

Tk 54cr road repair fails in months

Overloaded vehicles to blame

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, *Narayanganj*

Barely six months after repairs at a cost of Tk 54 crore, the 11-kilometre Modonpur-Modonganj road in Narayanganj has become dilapidated yet again.

During a recent visit, this correspondent observed large potholes at several spots, while asphalt surface was found worn off across vast stretches of the road. Despite the risky conditions, commuters have no choice but to continue using the road.

Persistent movement of overloaded trucks and lorries, particularly at night and often exceeding the weight limits, has been the primary cause of the road's rapid deterioration, according to the Roads and Highways Department.

Transport owners and officials of cement factories acknowledged the issue but argued that they have no alternative route.

The road was constructed around three decades ago over an abandoned, old railway track to facilitate commute for residents of Bandar upazila of Narayanganj. Initially, it was used mainly by lighter vehicles, including CNG-run auto-rickshaws.

However, after the third Shitalakshya Bridge was opened to traffic in October 2022, the road's importance grew significantly and became one of the busiest roads in Narayanganj, as it shortens travel distances to the southern regions via the Padma Bridge by at least 9

kilometres, while providing direct connectivity for the local industrial and commercial hubs.

RHD initiated a Tk 54.5 crore project to widen and repair the road, involving asphalt overlaying, construction of four culverts and a bridge, and completed it by the end of 2023.

However, within six months of the repairs, the road became almost impassable as the asphalt surface eroded and cracks, potholes developed, said locals and regular commuters.

Major cement manufacturers -- including Shah, Premier, Crown, Metrocem, Akij, and Seven Rings -- operate on both sides of the Shitalakshya and Dhaleshwari rivers in Narayanganj and Munshiganj. While their trucks usually travel via Moktarpur-Panchaboti road, ongoing construction work on that route forced them to divert through the Modonpur-Modaoganj road in recent times.

The road's repair work was poorly done using substandard materials, alleged Mohammad Baten, a local resident.

Accidents have now become common on the road, with vehicles often overturning due to potholes that turned the road into a death trap, said Md Shawon, another local resident who recently suffered a motorcycle accident on the road.

According to Bandar Police Station, at least five major accidents on the road were reported in last six months. However, locals claimed that the actual number is much higher.

"Day and night, heavily loaded lorries and trucks ply the road disregarding regulations. The road gave way as it simply cannot withstand such weight," said Bachchu Miah, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver.

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MOHTASSIM MURDER

Buet students protest bail of accused

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of students from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) protested on campus yesterday against the bail granted to three accused in the murder case of Mohtassim Masud.

Masud, a second-year student at Buet, was killed two and a half months ago when a private car hit a motorcycle on the 300-feet road in Narayanganj's Rupganj.

At a protest rally, the students, who have been demonstrating for several days, placed a six-point demand, including reconsideration of the bail granted to the accused

Other demands include a comprehensive and impartial investigation and a travel ban on the

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Ministry to revoke passport of envoy to Morocco

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has initiated departmental actions and the revocation of passports for former Bangladesh ambassador to Morocco, Mohammad Harun Al Rashid, and his family, citing his activities as having ulterior motives.

In a statement yesterday, the ministry said Harun was recalled on December 11, 2024, and instructed to report to the ministry without delay.

However, he postponed his return to Bangladesh citing various reasons and eventually relinquished his post on February 27, 2025. He reportedly moved from Rabat, Morocco, to Ottawa, Canada. Although he was expected to return to Dhaka from Ottawa on March 6, he did not, the ministry said.

The ministry also addressed a Facebook post by Harun, in which he wrote, "A Plea for Bangladesh

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Workers drop geo-bags filled with sand along the banks of the Kirtankhola river in Barishal. In preparation of the upcoming monsoon season, these bags will help prevent erosion at vulnerable points along the riverbank. The photo was taken in the city's DC Ghat area yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS