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Another Eid for children without Shishu Park

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Overcoming stigmas, girls get vaccinated

P5



Built on sand, bribery, and blind faith

P8



Sanjida Khatun: Different and defiant

P9

Easy ride home

Long Eid vacation, staggered RMG closures cut travel woes

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Holidaymakers' journeys have been relatively smooth this year, thanks to the extended vacation, staggered closures of garment factories, and improved traffic management, according to operators, officials, and experts.

The involvement of army personnel in traffic management in congestion-prone areas, the removal of some bottlenecks on the highway connecting the capital to the north, and the opening of the Jamuna Rail Bridge have also contributed to this, they said.

However, many private bus operators, particularly those running AC buses, have been overcharging passengers, causing distress. Additionally, a shortage of vehicles during peak hours has worsened the situation.

Despite measures by the authorities, illegal and risky rooftop journeys on many trains and launches were still observed, highlighting the need for further action during the Eid rush, they added.

Eid-ul-Fitr will likely be celebrated on March 31 or April 1, depending on the sighting of the moon.

Like the past few days, thousands of people have left Dhaka and adjacent districts by bus, train, and launch yesterday as well.



A gleeful child and his uncle at Kamalapur Railway Station before they board a train to leave for their hometown Netrakona and spend the Eid holidays there.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Myanmar quake toll soars past 1,600

Toll likely to rise as true scale of disaster starts to emerge; foreign aid begins to tickle in

AFP, Mandalay

The death toll from a huge earthquake that hit Myanmar and Thailand passed 1,600 yesterday as rescuers dug through the rubble of collapsed buildings in a desperate search for survivors.

The shallow 7.7-magnitude quake struck northwest of the city of Sagaing in central Myanmar early Friday afternoon, followed minutes later by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock.

The quake destroyed buildings, downed bridges, and buckled roads across swathes of Myanmar, with massive destruction seen in Mandalay, the country's second biggest city and home to more than 1.7 million people.

"We need aid," said Thar Aye, 68, a Mandalay resident. "We don't have enough of anything."

At least 1,644 people were killed and more than 3,400 injured

in Myanmar, with at least 139 more missing, the junta said in a statement. Around 10 more deaths have been confirmed in Bangkok.

But with communications badly disrupted, the true scale of the disaster is only starting to emerge from the isolated military-ruled state, and the toll is expected to rise significantly.

In Mandalay, AFP journalists saw rescuers pull a woman alive from the remains of one apartment block where a Red Cross official said more than 90 people could be trapped.

After hours of painstaking work at the Sky Villa Condominium, half of whose 12 storeys were flattened by the quake, Phyu Lay Khaing, 30, was brought out and carried by stretcher to be embraced by her husband and taken to hospital.

Another woman at the apartment block was less fortunate. Her 20-year-old son, an employee at the building, is still missing.

"We cannot find him yet. I only have this child – I feel so heartbroken," said Min Min Khine, 56, a staff who cooks at the building.

"He ate at my dining room and said goodbye. Then he left, and the earthquake happened. If he was with me, he might have escaped like me," she told AFP.

Elsewhere in Mandalay, AFP journalists saw dozens of people preparing to bed down for the night in the streets, preferring to sleep in the open rather than take the risk in quake-damaged buildings.

This was the biggest quake to hit Myanmar in decades, according to geologists, and the tremors were powerful enough to severely damage buildings across Bangkok, hundreds of kilometres (miles) away from the epicentre.

AFP journalists saw a centuries-old Buddhist pagoda in Mandalay that had been reduced to rubble.

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“Long holidays are an ad-hoc measure... Decentralisation of various facilities from Dhaka to other regions is one of the key permanent solutions to the perennial problem.”

PROF HADIUZZAMAN, transport expert.

No major traffic congestion was reported on highways, except for the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway in the morning. A one-kilometre tailback formed around Joydevpur Chowrasta from 7:00am to 10:00am before the situation returned to normal, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Most intercity trains, except two, left Dhaka on time. Meanwhile, 100 launches had departed from Sadarghat launch terminal by 8:00pm yesterday.

With tens of thousands of people leaving the capital and surrounding industrial belts in a short period, there is always immense pressure on the transport and infrastructure of roads, railways, and waterways.

As a result, holidaymakers often face difficulties due to traffic congestion, vehicle shortages, overcharging, inadequate train tickets, and overcrowded trains and launches – a familiar scenario in Bangladesh.

However, since the opening of the Padma Bridge and the widening of three major bridges on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, people have not experienced significant traffic congestion in recent years, especially ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Nevertheless, the prolonged expansion of the Dhaka-Rangpur highway from Elenga in Tangail and the single-day closure of garment factories in Savar, Ashulia, and Gazipur industrial belts often caused traffic jams.

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ARREARS, BONUSES

TNZ group agrees to Tk 3cr pay out

Workers to resume demo on Apr 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The workers of TNZ Group have decided to suspend their demonstration for a week upon the assurance of receiving Tk 3 crore ahead of Eid.

TNZ management said factory machinery would be sold to arrange the fund, and it would be disbursed among some 3,500 workers who are owed around Tk 16 crore in arrears.

In response, the union leaders have agreed to temporarily halt their programmes, provided the amount was disbursed by last night.

"However, we will be staying at the Sromo Bhabon until the agreed amount is disbursed," said Joly Talukder, vice president of the Garment Workers' Trade Union Centre.

She also announced that

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Some of the demonstrating workers of garment factories owned by TNZ Group break down in tears in front of Sromo Bhaban yesterday. The workers have been protesting for payment of their overdue wages and Eid bonuses for over a week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NEWS ANALYSIS