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Holidaymakers return to the capital as the Eid-ul-Azha vacation ends, ahead of government offices and schools reopening today. The photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Locals block two advisers’ motorcade
Protest govt ban on stone lifting
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The motorcade of Power and Energy Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan and Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan faced a blockade by local residents in Jallong of Sylhet yesterday.

Around 11:45am, a group of agitated locals blocked the road at Jallong Bazar area, chanting slogans and lying down on the road protesting the government ban on stone lifting from river in Jallong, temporarily halting the advisers’ convoy while they were returning from a visit to the Ecologically Critical Area.

Confirming the incident, Sarkar Mohammad Toufayel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Gowainghat Police Station, said police intervened and cleared the road. The advisers reached the Haripur Guesthouse by 12:30pm, he added.

Later, the advisers cancelled their visit to Bholaganj area in Sylhet’s Companiganj upazila over security concern.

Abdul Kalam, a protester and the general secretary

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Without safety, sanitation, or choice

Dhaka’s lack of safe, hygienic public restrooms severely impacts women’s daily lives and well-being

TANGILA TASNIM

S M Moon, a 24-year-old graphic design student and small business owner from Dhaka’s Bashundhara Residential Area, faces a daily struggle just to move around the city.

Diagnosed with diabetes, she needs access to a toilet every 45 minutes. But in a city of over 20 million, finding a clean and safe public restroom is nearly impossible – turning even short trips into a source of stress.

“Before going out, I avoid drinking anything – even when I’m already dehydrated,” Moon told The Daily Star. “It’s traumatic not to find a restroom when you need one. I feel anxious every time I leave home.”

Nasrin Akhter Khanom, a deputy manager at BRAC, shared a similar experience. “I’ve suffered severe mental stress while travelling for work,” she said. “The shortage of public washrooms has a serious impact on women’s lives. It’s so difficult that many of my colleagues have left their jobs because of it.”

Moon and Nasrin are not alone, as women across the capital face the same struggle. Despite being the busiest city in the country, Dhaka has a very limited number of public toilets.

TOILETS EXIST, BUT NOT FOR WOMEN

According to official data, the city has just 198 public toilets—120 under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and 78 under Dhaka South (DSCC).

Of the DNCC facilities, 82 are government-funded, while the rest are operated by NGOs such as WaterAid, Bhumijo, Arban, and Space. Many are in poor condition, and around 15

We’re seeing more women with kidney disease and uterine infections. Most are students or professionals who spend long hours outside without access to clean toilets. They drink less water or delay urination, which causes serious harm to the body.

DR FARHAD HASAN CHOWDHURY
Bangladesh Renal Association

This is not just an issue of convenience. It’s about safety, dignity, employment, and health. Women skip meals, avoid drinking water, limit their travel, and give up job opportunities – all because the city has failed them.

HASIN JAHAN
Country director, WaterAid

percent were vandalised during the political unrest in July last year and have remained unusable since.

Even where toilets exist, they are often

male-dominated, unsafe, and unsanitary – making them practically unusable for women.

Under DNCC, there is no dedicated public restroom service for women. Only one “pink toilet,” designated for women, is currently under construction at the Mohakhali Bus Stand, with support from WaterAid.

Meanwhile, of the 78 public toilets under DSCC, 42 are rented out, 10 are NGO run, and at least seven are either non-functional or abandoned, said Hasiba Khanom, senior assistant secretary of DSCC.

“These toilets have been leased to private operators who are responsible for maintenance,” she said. “But in many cases, they neglect hygiene and safety to maximise profit. That’s one of the main reasons women avoid using them.”

Even where restrooms are available, women rarely feel comfortable using them. According to the daily ticket book at the Farmgate Public Toilet, an average of 40–50 women use the facility each day, compared to 600–700 men. On April 14, during Pahela Baishakh celebrations, the number of female users peaked at just 85.

“Women don’t feel safe or comfortable due to the poor hygiene and lack of security,” said Dipu, a security worker at the Farmgate facility. “Cleaners work in shifts, but it’s not enough.”

Renu Khatun, a hawker, shared, “I always feel uneasy in public toilets. Even though nothing has happened to me, it feels like someone is watching.”

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Govt considers mandatory mediation before lawsuits

Says Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering making alternative dispute resolution mandatory before filing a lawsuit to resolve disputes more efficiently, said Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul yesterday.

“However, accepting the outcome of the mediation will remain voluntary,” he said.

He made the remarks while presiding over a views-exchange meeting on the preliminary draft of the “Legal Aid Services (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025”, held at the office of the National Legal Aid Services Organisation (NLASO) on Bailey Road in the capital.

Leaders of bar associations from various districts, officials from the law ministry and NLASO, and representatives of different organisations attended the event and shared their views on the draft ordinance.

Addressing the event, Prof Asif said anyone not satisfied with the mediation outcome will still have the opportunity to file a case.

“In other words, participating in mediation will be made mandatory, but accepting its outcome will not be. So, no one’s right is being taken away,” he added.

The adviser noted that around five lakh cases are filed in Bangladesh each year, while only about



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CTG PORT
Sramik Dal protests move to lease NCT terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal yesterday launched a six-day programme at Chattogram Port protesting the government’s decision to lease the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to UAE-based operator DP World.

The protest programme will continue till June 19 and will include mass outreach campaigns and sit-ins to press home a nine-point demand, said Mozaher Hossain Showkat, former assistant general secretary of the organisation.

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Full services resume amid tight security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical services at the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital resumed fully yesterday, more than two weeks after operations were suspended due to a clash on the hospital premises.

Total 1,443 patients took treatment at outdoor while 67 patients got admitted and an emergency operation was carried out till 2:00pm yesterday, Zane Alam, acting director of the NIOH, told The Daily Star.

Talking to reporters, he said although they have been trying to normalise the services, they were still not out of security concerns.

“We are having to run a hospital under police and army guard,” he said. Zane Alam was carrying out his duties from resident physician office, instead of his own due to security concern.

A doctor at the facility said that

around 20 individuals injured in the July uprising – who had received treatment at the hospital but left without notifying the authorities – attempted to re-enter the premises on two occasions till 12:30pm.

Police prevented them from entering, he said wishing not to be named.

Zane Alam said, “According to hospital regulations, they [July injured] have been declared absconders. Therefore, they are not permitted to enter the hospital.”

He added that five individuals injured in the July incident remain at the hospital but they were no longer requiring admission.

“We have prepared their discharge letters, and they may leave at any time,” he said.

Asked what would happen if they refused to leave, he stated, “We will act

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Residents of the same neighbourhood cool off in the rain, seeking relief from the intense heatwave that had persisted for days. The photo was taken in a lane of the capital’s Moghbazar area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN