

## Flight chaos

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For security concerns, these countries largely closed their airspace, triggering widespread flight cancellations across the region.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, about 447 of the 895 scheduled flights on migrant-heavy Middle Eastern routes were cancelled until March 13 following the war broke out.

At least 20 people were killed and over 200 injured in the Gulf countries by Iranian attacks. Of them, at least four Bangladeshis were killed and eight others wounded in the Gulf where an estimated 60 lakh Bangladeshis live and send much-needed foreign currency home.

The Bangladesh government has said protection of migrants in the Middle East is the first priority. The foreign ministry has already spoken with the envoys of the Gulf countries in Dhaka as well as the officials in the Gulf countries seeking to support the Bangladeshi migrants.

Many of the migrants' visas might have expired, while jobs of some are also being partially affected.

A good number of hotels and shopping complexes near the US bases in the Gulf are closed, fearing missiles or drone attacks by Iran. Even though the attacks are intercepted, the debris of the missiles or drones falling on civilian areas causes fatalities.

Many of the executives also started working from home like that of Covid period amid security concerns.

Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Bahrain, Rais Hasan Sarower, said there is a sense of fear amid attacks, but

authorities regularly alert the people well ahead of time so that they can remain in safe place.

"We have planned to charter a flight for Bangladesh, but its fare would be high and it will need at least 200 passengers. We have notified it to the migrants who want to go home, but we have not yet received enough response," he said.

An official at the Bangladesh mission in Qatar said there are flights from Doha to Dhaka, but the number is far below the usual four flights per day.

"During the Eid time, the number of Dhaka-bound passengers is a few times higher, but this time it is the opposite," he said.

In Lebanon, where Israel is conducting targeted attacks on the Hezbollah and Shia-dominated areas, there is no way for the Bangladeshis to return home on leave this Eid.

In the suburb of Beirut, several thousand Bangladeshis, among others, have been affected by the attacks.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Abdul Karim, president of Lebanon Probashi Worker Union in Beirut, said the Bangladeshis are not even thinking of going home at this time. "They are worried about whether they can sustain their jobs and what the impact of the war will be."

A foreign ministry official said the Bangladesh government will support migrant workers in any way it can to ensure their safety. "If needed, we will arrange shelter centres and food.

We are not yet thinking of any repatriation, but will do so in coordination with international organisations if required."



Rajshahi District Administration launches an anti-mosquito drive at Gangapara canal near Baya Bridge in Paba upazila yesterday. The programme, aimed at preventing mosquito-borne diseases, was, among others, attended by Land Minister Mizanur Rahman Minu.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## LOCOMOTIVE SHORTAGE

# Only one pair of Eid special trains to run from Ctg

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

A severe shortage of locomotives has forced Bangladesh Railway (BR) to keep Eid special train services from Chattogram to a minimum for the second consecutive year, causing suffering to home goers.

Despite high demand during Eid-ul-Fitr, only one pair of special trains will run from Chattogram this year — on the Chattogram-Chandpur route — similar to last year.

Railway officials said BR could not add more trains ahead of Eid due to a severe shortage of locomotives.

In 2024, BR operated four pairs of Eid special trains from Chattogram — one on the Chattogram-Mymensingh route, two on the Chattogram-Chandpur route, and one on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar route.

Last year, however, the number was sharply reduced due to the same shortage.

Elderly passengers, patients and many women often prefer trains

over buses as they are considered safer and less physically demanding for long journeys.

Commuters said the limited service will cause hardship for homebound passengers ahead of Eid.

Tasmia Afroz, a resident of Cox's Bazar who regularly travels on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar route,

harder to secure during the holiday rush. Many travellers may be forced to take buses.

Abdul Karim, 68, a resident of Chandpur who frequently travels by train, said long bus journeys are uncomfortable at his age. "Trains are safer and more convenient for elderly people, patients and women. But if there are not enough trains during Eid, we will have no choice but to travel by bus," he said.

Tarek Imran, deputy chief operating superintendent of BR said, "this limited train service from Chattogram will increase pressure on existing trains during the Eid rush."

"We asked the mechanical department to allocate locomotives to run additional Eid trains, but they could not meet our demand."

Mizanur Rahman, chief power controller of BR's East Zone, said around 119 locomotives are needed daily to operate scheduled services across the region. "However, only around 75-77 engines are currently available," he said.

The limited service is also expected to increase pressure on regular trains, making tickets

said passenger pressure on the route rises sharply during Eid.

"I heard no Eid special train will run on this route this year. If that happens, it will be very difficult to get tickets and travel home," she said.

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## Weak reading culture holding

FROM PAGE 3

The country has failed to build a strong reading culture because libraries in schools and communities are largely absent, he added.

"If we want good books, we must first create readers from childhood," he said.

Essayist and author Ahmad Mazhar said the industry suffers from weak connections between writers, publishers, and readers, as well as an ineffective distribution system.

"Even good books often fail because publishers do not think about readers, and bookstores cannot properly sell or return books," he said.

He said building a reading culture requires professional publishing, effective distribution, and well-managed libraries.

"Without connecting readers to books and

libraries, even books worth millions will not reach the right audience," he said.

Addressing the shortage of good books in Bangladesh, Faisal Ahmed of Dhoritri Rokhaya Amra (DHORA) said many excellent works remain unnoticed because promotion and marketing focus on popular authors rather than quality writing.

He called for better support for authors and stronger book distribution systems.

"If the government and publishers properly support good books and authors, the shortage will end, and readers will benefit," he said.

He also called for reforms in state institutions and literary awards to encourage living authors rather than honouring them only after death.

Gronthik Prokashon Publisher Razzak Rubel said

many good books are being published but fail to reach readers outside Dhaka due to weak distribution and marketing.

He also highlighted the difficulties faced by publishers and authors, including low cash flow, high production costs, and a lack of professional editing and promotion.

"Even when excellent books exist, they often remain unnoticed because of weak support systems and poor library networks," he said.

Rubel called for stronger public libraries, better government support, and greater participation in international book fairs.

"If distribution and promotion improve, good books can reach more readers and the publishing industry can grow," he said.

The event was coordinated by The Daily Star journalist Emran Mahfuz.

## Book sales worse than pandemic

FROM PAGE 3

This year's fair declined by about 70% compared with other normal years. Political and economic instability, along with the fair being held during the month of Ramadan, resulted in lower visitor turnout, causing significant financial losses for most publishers.

The publishers said they had participated in this year's fair despite anticipating business losses, mainly as a gesture of support and cooperation for the newly elected government. However, the lack of expected visitor turnout resulted in financial setbacks for most publishers.

## First session

FROM PAGE 3

A total of 468 questions were received for the session, including eight for the prime minister and 460 for other ministers. Besides, 27 notices were submitted under Rule 71 for call-attention notices.

Committee members who also took part in the meeting were Opposition Leader Md Shafiqur Rahman, Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Local Government Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, Chief Whip Md Nurul Islam, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman, ATM Azharul Islam, Opposition Chief Whip Md Nahid Islam, and Muhammad Naushad Zamir.

## Worker dies after falling from building

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A construction worker died after falling from the roof of an under-construction building in Rajshahi city yesterday morning.

The deceased, identified as Sabbir, 27, was a resident of the Malda Colony area under Rajshahi City.

The accident occurred around 10:30am behind City Garage in the Shalbagan area under Chandrima Police Station.

According to the victim's elder brother, Shakil Ahmed, the duo were working together on the roof of the under-construction building when his brother fell.

"While lifting a table, Sabbir suddenly slipped and fell onto the roof of a two-storey building behind it and passed," he said.

Building owner Ismail Hossain said he was at the market when he heard about the incident.

Confirming the cause of the incident after an on-site investigation and statements from locals, Sub-Inspector Md Ziaur of Chandrima Police Station said that the body was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

## Two missing men found dead in waterbodies

STAR REPORT

Two missing individuals were found dead in waterbodies in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Noakhali, police recovered the body of Ranjit Kuri, 53, from the Sadar upazila, two days after he went missing.

Locals spotted a body floating in a pond in the Gonai Ramshankar area around 12:00pm and informed the police.

Meanwhile, in Khulna, police recovered the body of a rickshaw puller from a river, three days after he went missing while bathing.

The deceased, Hanif Sheikh, of the No 4 Ghat area, was found floating near the Jaikhana Ferry Ghat around dawn. His body was later sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for an autopsy, police said.

Locals said they first spotted the body after seheri and informed police, who then alerted river police. Officers later recovered the body and handed it over to the family.

## Teen held over rape in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A teenager was detained yesterday in connection with the rape of a 13-year-old girl in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila.

The accused, a 15-year-old boy, was beaten by locals and handed over to police after the incident, confirmed Abhaynagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Nuruzzaman.

The incident took place around 8:30am yesterday in Kapashhati village of the upazila.

According to locals and police sources, finding the victim alone in her house, the boy entered the house and raped her. Hearing her screams, family members and neighbours rushed to the scene.

When the accused tried to flee, locals caught him and beat him up before handing him over to the police. Police went to the spot and took the accused into custody.

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ই-টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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