



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Characters you meet on every EID JOURNEY!

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With Eid right around the corner, the rush of homebound people has begun. Regardless of your choice of transport, you will encounter a number of “characters” on your journey, and it’s not negotiable. Some of them will chew your ears out, others might blow peanut skin, and that one middle-aged uncle will tell you how younger people these days have no respect for the elderly.

Interestingly, these are not the only types of people you meet on your journey. Tick your checklist because here are a few more.

The Atlas

Just like Atlas was carrying the weight of the heavens or sky in mythology, these types of people carry way too many baggage and it makes you wonder: ‘How long are you planning on staying?’ While it is not good to judge people so quickly, you can not help but wonder. There are usually two or three people who carries around six pieces of luggage, and that is not counting their backpacks. These are the people who hoard the trunks of vehicles, so the rest of the people have a hard time storing their luggage.

Team baby

It’s always ‘the baby and the team’ and never ‘the couple with the baby’ because the baby is always the main character in this group of people. The baby will either be very cool or super loud; there is no middle ground unfortunately. Depending on the mood of the baby, the rest of the passengers will either have a pleasant journey or they will know that the baby ‘does not want orange juice.’

The lovebirds

Almost in every journey, there is a couple who are very much in love. You can tell by their body language; the matching outfits, the way they carry the bags, the way they share the crisps, and the way they giggle every five minutes. Sometimes, you can even hear some heated words, which might suggest an argument but that could very well be the exhaustion from the traffic jam.

The family guy

And we don’t mean the TV show. In

every Eid journey, there is that one person who is on the phone, almost the whole time. Family, friends, co-workers; they call everyone to let them know that they are on their way home; which is sort of enviable, and a bit mythical; because how do you even maintain such good terms with everyone past your 30s?

The one who is too good for this

Sometimes you see a person walking in with an ostentatious swagger. They move like they are annoyed with everything; they speak like it costs to use normal words, and they behave like they would rather be anywhere else. It almost feels like they are too rich to be on that vehicle and they make sure everyone knows that.

Sometimes, they even say it out loud: “The only reason I am on this bus is because I could not find tickets in first class. I never travel economy,” is their

go-to choice of phrase, and it stays like this for half the journey. Then they dial it down a bit and reassume this persona at the end of the journey when it’s time to get off.

The podcast host

Regardless of how terrible the journey is and how harshly Dhaka punishes everyone, there are a few people who just can not stop being friendly and loves to chat. And there will be at least one of them in every bus, train compartment, launch; basically, within earshot. You can hear them striking up a conversation with everyone and wonder: is it possible to learn this power?

Remember; if you cannot find the podcast host, you are the podcast host.

The quiet and impatient one

Last but not least, the quiet ones who do not speak much; or at all. They move like they can not wait for this journey to be over so that they can go home and let themselves drop on a bed. They have their earbuds plugged in the whole time; sometimes they get a call that lasts less than thirty seconds and they get absolutely impatient whenever there is a traffic jam.

I’m from the last group. What about you?



Govt plans big for edn

FROM PAGE 1

The government’s 12-point agenda covers budget reform, teacher training, access to digital content, improvement of school infrastructure, midday meals, “One Teacher, One Tab”, and the learning of a third language.

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon recently announced a 180-day programme that includes equipping classrooms with multimedia technology, providing technical education to all students, and free education up to the university level for the children of martyrs and those injured in the July Uprising.

The government also said sports, physical and mental health education, and arts would be made mandatory from Class IV starting next academic year.

Officials said the initiative would begin with seven disciplines and students would be assessed through theory and practical participation.

At the primary level, the government plans to provide free uniforms and jute bags to students under a pilot programme covering two schools in each upazila. Officials earlier said the programme would begin in July, with one lakh students expected to receive the items in the first month.

The government also said that the midday meal programme is being implemented in 151 upazilas and will be expanded in phases.

Referring to the government’s performance so far, Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, said 100 days may not be enough to fully assess an elected government, especially because Ramadan, Eid and other holidays fell within the period.

She further said the government’s repeated commitment to the sector should be acknowledged. “We have seen a strong position from the government on education after a long time.”

On the spending pledge, Rasheda said, “Only increasing the budget will not be enough. There has to be accountability and transparency.” The government must explain where the money will be spent and how the spending will be monitored.

Rasheda welcomed the move to bring sports and culture into education and initiatives such as “Notun Kuri”.

She noted that the initiatives could help reduce children’s dependence on

devices, but they would require proper planning, investment and monitoring.

The government has scheduled the next SSC exams for January 7 and the HSC exams for June 6, 2027, as part of efforts to align public examinations more closely with the academic calendar.

Meanwhile, its decision to reintroduce the primary scholarship exam has drawn criticism from educationists.

Rasheda said the scholarship exam puts pressure on children and encourages them to take the help of guidebooks and coaching centres.

- 180-day programme launched focusing on technical edn, digitisation
- SSC, HSC exams rescheduled to align with academic calendar
- Midday meal programme running in 151 upazilas

Besides, if the exam is held as per the current structure, it may increase inequality because it is quota-based and allows only 40 percent students of a school to take the test, she said.

“There is no need for quota. The exams should be open for all schools and all students.”

She also pointed out that the government has not taken strict measures to close coaching centres and curb the use of guidebooks.

There is also shortage of teachers in general, madrasa and technical streams.

The education minister recently told the parliament that at least 92,081 teaching posts remain vacant in government and non-government institutions.

Manzoor said the crisis runs deeper than numbers. He pointed out that around 34,000 to 35,000 primary schools are without head teachers, while government secondary schools also lack permanent heads.

“If a school does not have leadership, how will change happen?” he asked.

There have also been concerns over political influence in the appointments of vice chancellors (VCs) and campus

activities at higher education institutions.

Manzoor said students may engage in politics, but they should not act as agents of political parties on campuses.

Since taking office, the government has appointed VCs to at least 18 public universities, with almost all appointees having prior or current affiliations with BNP-aligned teachers’ organisations.

Regarding this, Rasheda said such appointments have long been part of Bangladesh’s political culture.

She further said the key question remains whether these VCs would be accountable to students and institutions, or to political parties.

When contacted, Bobby Hajaj, state minister for primary and mass education said the government’s biggest achievement in its first 100 days was the launch of “systemic” reforms to address long-standing problems in primary education.

Work has already begun on training and policies for teachers, curriculum and improvement of school infrastructure and classroom standards.

On the 180-day programme, he said the ministry would decide on new curricula and teacher training framework by mid-August after receiving feedback from different committees that are working on these issues.

Referring to the 12-point pledge, Bobby said all commitments made by the government were being pursued and that “nothing will be left out”.

Free textbooks, free education, school uniforms and the midday meal initiative would serve as incentives for students and guardians, he said, adding that the government plans to introduce midday meals in all government primary schools next year.

Bobby said the “One Teacher, One Tab” initiative would be implemented as part of a wider digital ecosystem, not as a separate device distribution project.

Asked where progress had fallen short, Bobby said the ministry had set realistic targets and was on track to meet them.

Over the next 80 days, the ministry would prioritise pilot projects, including the distribution of uniforms, bags and shoes, while continuing structural work, he added.

‘Her body has already turned blue’

FROM PAGE 1

The baby, only days old, was among six newborns who died early yesterday morning at the hospital in Dhaka’s Moghbazar area.

Authorities said the deaths may have been linked to a technical malfunction, though the exact cause remains under investigation.

Police and CID officials visited the hospital, while health authorities formed an inquiry committee to probe the tragedy.

Jakir said the infant was the first child of his younger brother.

“Her body has already turned blue,” he said softly, exhaustion replacing rage. “We cannot leave her here like this.”

A few feet away, seated silently in a wheelchair, was the baby’s mother,

Meem Akter.

She stared blankly down the corridor, motionless amid the noise and chaos around her.

Just hours earlier, she had become a mother for the first time after months of waiting, carrying and hoping. Now, before she could even hold on to the feeling of motherhood, she was preparing to leave the hospital without her child.

Outside the ward, the grandmother wept uncontrollably, leaning against a wall as relatives tried to console her.

It was the day before Eid. But for this family, celebration dissolved into mourning.

“We decided to stay at the hospital because we thought it would be safer if our daughter-in-law faced any

complications,” said Masuda Begum, the baby’s grandmother. “We listened to the doctors.”

Her voice faded as she spoke of her daughter-in-law, who, according to relatives, had remained nearly unconscious from shock since morning. Masuda recalled the final hours before the tragedy unfolded.

“My granddaughter cried a lot around 3:00am,” she said. “Her mother tried to calm her. I tried too. Even her other grandmother tried.”

She had left before dawn for sehri, intending to keep a fast.

“I left the baby with her mother and also went for sehri,” she said. “After sehri and Fajr prayer, I came back and heard that my granddaughter was no more.”

Six newborns die in 2 hours

FROM PAGE 1

been admitted to the NICU.

Speaking to reporters at the hospital, Prof Zahid said one of the guardians in the post-operative room complained around 2:00am that the babies were feeling cold.

“Following the complaint, the air conditioning system in the room was reportedly shut down for around an hour.... The condition of one of the newborns deteriorated around 4:00am, and the child was shifted to the NICU. About half an hour later, the baby was returned to the post-operative room after showing signs of improvement.”

He added that around 6:00am, a nurse found one of the babies motionless. “The child was then taken to the NICU. Then, as the condition of the other newborns worsened, all of them were shifted there.”

The six infants died within one to two hours, Prof Zahid said.

Prof Nahid Yasmin, director general (hospitals and nursing) of the Ad-din Foundation, said they suddenly came to know about respiratory problems among the six newborns.

“The six babies were rushed to the NICU around 6:00am, when it was found that two of them had

already died while the others were in critical condition. They were put on ventilation support but could not survive,” she told reporters.

About the allegations of mismanagement made by the victim families, she said the incident happened so suddenly that they did not get time to assess the situation properly.

“Our doctors did their best, but their respiratory problems were so severe that they could not be saved,” she said, adding that such an incident had not occurred at the hospital before since it started providing services in 1997.

However, Janu Begum, grandmother of one of the babies, said her three-day-old grandchild was fine earlier. “Around Fajr, all the children in the room started crying and were later taken to the NICU.”

“We came to this hospital from Dohar, on the outskirts of Dhaka, hearing about their good service. But now many mothers have lost their babies due to the hospital’s mismanagement. I want you [journalists] to write about this properly so that no other mother has to lose her child,” she told this newspaper at the hospital premises.

3 die after falling off train roofs in two districts

STAR REPORT

Three people died after falling from the roofs of moving trains in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Natore, two passengers riding on the roof of a train were killed after being hit by a footbridge near Madhnagar Railway Station in Naldanga upazila in the morning.

The deceased are Rabbi Hossain, 24, of Rangpur, and Ibrahim Hossain, 19, of Dinajpur, said Md Obaidul Haque, sub-inspector of Santahar Railway Police Station.

They were taken to Naldanga Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared them dead, said the SI.

Following legal procedures, the bodies were handed over to their families in the afternoon, he added.

In Gazipur, railway police recovered the body of an unidentified man, aged around 45, from beside the railway tracks on the Dhaka-Mymensingh railway route in Sreepur upazila in the afternoon.

Police suspect that the man died after falling from the roof of a moving train while travelling home for Eid.

Kaiyum Mia, inspector of Joydebpur Junction Railway Police, said efforts were underway to identify the deceased.

Man held for attempted rape of 9-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police have arrested a man on charges of attempting to rape a nine-year-old girl in Kaliganj upazila of Gazipur.

The accused, Md Shahin Mia, 30, was taken into custody after the victim’s family filed a case with Kaliganj Police Station on Tuesday night, said Md Ashraful Islam, inspector (investigation) of the police station.

Shahin was sent to jail by a court yesterday afternoon.

According to the case statement, the incident occurred on Monday afternoon when the victim was playing with Shahin’s daughter near his house. With his wife absent, Shahin confined his own daughter to a room and forcibly took the victim to the toilet, where he attempted to rape her.

The child managed to escape when Shahin’s mobile phone fell, distracting him. She ran home and informed her family. Her grandfather later filed a case with the police station, leading to Shahin’s arrest during a raid.

N Korea tests new multi-purpose missile launch system

AFP, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday it had tested a new lightweight multi-purpose missile launching system and a multiple tactical cruise missile weapon system the previous day.

The tests, previously reported by South Korea’s military, were overseen by the North’s leader, Kim Jong Un, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

South Korea said on Tuesday the North fired several projectiles, including a ballistic missile, off its west coast, the latest in a flurry of tests this year. Seoul said the missiles flew about 80 kilometres (50 miles).

Cuba appeals

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dire economic conditions for years, with shortages of food, medicine and other basics. Nationwide power blackouts are common.

Things got worse when Trump cut off the supply of oil from Havana’s ally Venezuela after the ouster of Maduro. The Trump administration tightened the screws last week by indicting Raul Castro over the downing of two small US-based planes in 1996, fueling fears the United States was seeking a pretext to overthrow the government in Havana.

The day after the Castro indictment was announced, Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Cuba that the United States was laser-focused on changing the communist system.