

Govt vows strict action against overcharging ahead of Eid travel on river routes

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Dhaka: The government has undertaken comprehensive preparations to ensure safe, orderly, and hassle-free river travel for homebound passengers during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr 2026. Strict legal action will be taken against any operator found charging fares above the government-approved rates or carrying excess passengers and cargo, Shipping Minister Sheikh Robiul Alam said today.

The directives were issued at a preparatory meeting held at the Ministry of Shipping, chaired by the minister, who is also in charge of the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges and the Ministry of Railways. Representatives from relevant ministries and agencies attended the meeting, read a press release.

The minister emphasized that passenger pressure on waterways

increases significantly during Eid. Ensuring passenger safety, comfort, and fair fares remains a top government priority. He categorically stated that no operator will be allowed to charge fares beyond those approved by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA). Approved fare charts must be visibly displayed at all river ports, terminals, ghats, and aboard vessels.

If allegations of overcharging or carrying excess passengers or cargo are proven, the route permits and licenses of the vessels concerned will be cancelled, and strict legal action will be taken against owners and operators. Regular mobile courts will operate at ferry terminals, launch terminals, and speedboat ghats to enforce compliance.

To prevent accidents, sand-laden bulkheads and small boats will remain suspended from 16 to 25 March 2026, round the clock. Speedboat operations will be banned at night, and wearing life jackets during daytime travel will be mandatory. From 17 to 24 March, ferry crossings for general trucks and covered vans—except those carrying essential and perishable goods—will remain suspended to facilitate smooth passenger movement.

Unfit vessels and ferries have been strictly prohibited from operating on inland waterways. Authorities have been instructed to prevent the boarding of passengers from mid-river points and to take firm action against any schedule violations.

Law enforcement agencies, including traffic police, river police, Ansar, and community police, will work in coordination to maintain order, particularly in busy terminals such as Sadarghat. Special vigilance and night patrols will be intensified to prevent robbery, extortion, and passenger harassment.

From the 15th of Ramadan until the third day after Eid, at least four Ansar members will be deployed on each launch to strengthen onboard security. Vigilance teams comprising district administration, police, coast guard, and river police will operate at key terminals. A central monitoring team led by ministry officials will oversee the overall situation.

Rescue vessels will be kept on standby to respond to emergencies, while the Fire Service and Civil Defence authorities have been instructed to maintain maximum preparedness at major river ports. Necessary

dredging, channel marking, and ghat improvements will be carried out to ensure navigability on all ferry routes.

The minister urged all concerned agencies to work in close coordination, warning that no irregularities or disorder would be tolerated during Eid travel. He reiterated that the government remains fully committed to ensuring safe journeys and protecting passengers from fare manipulation and exploitation.

Passengers have been advised to contact the National Emergency Service at 999 in case of emergencies and BIWTA's hotline at 16113 for travel-related complaints.

Senior officials from the concerned ministries, law enforcement agencies, coast guard, river police, and fire service attended the meeting.

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