



**COVID VACCINE**  
90pc of Sinovac employees, families took it  
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PM ON MOSQUE CONSTRUCTION

## Ensure proper plan for safety

*Asks for checking if all mosques built with proper designs and nod from authorities*



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that it is necessary to look into whether mosques are constructed according to the designs and with permissions from the authorities concerned so that incidents like the Narayanganj mosque blast never recur.

Describing the blast as a tragedy, she said there were many mosques that were being built without proper planning, while air-conditioners were also being installed without following due instructions.

"Therefore, it's now absolutely essential to oversee if the place is suitable for construction of a structure or permission is taken from the authorities concerned or whether the design of the structure is made properly. Otherwise, such incidents [like the Narayanganj mosque blast]

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Sheikh Alauddin is crying in despair for his son Imam Hossain, who sustained more than 90 percent burns in the fire inside a Narayanganj mosque on Friday night. This photo was taken in front of the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery's emergency department in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

MOSQUE TRAGEDY

## Investigators start digging for gas leaks

STAR REPORT

The Fire Service and Civil Defence-led probe body is to dig up the floor of the blast-hit Narayanganj mosque today to see if the gas pipeline that runs beneath the three-storey structure is leaking.

There has been a widespread allegation that the explosion was caused by the gas that leaked from the underground pipeline and accumulated inside the ground floor of the mosque.

Meanwhile, four more people, who suffered severe injuries in the incident, died yesterday while undergoing treatment, raising the death toll to 25.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Ali, 55, Zulhas Farazi, 35, and Shamim, 45 and Abul Bashar, 51.

They succumbed to their injuries while undergoing treatment at Sheikh Hasina

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**N'GANJ MOSQUE BLAST | DEATH TOLL 25**

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

## Mutation rate faster here than global average

*Says study based on data from eight divisions*

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

The Covid-19 mutation rate in Bangladesh is faster than the global average rate, says a study based on data of 263 cases of genome sequencing.

It was recorded 12.6 percent in the study by Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), while the global average rate is 7.23 percent.

A mutation is a change in the virus' genome: the set of genetic instructions that contain all the information that the virus needs to function, according to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private global health partnership.

Mutations can have a negative or positive impact on the virus' ability to survive and replicate, depending on where in the virus the genome mistakes occur.

Mutations can also change the characteristics of a virus, causing the original virus to either weaken or become more aggressive.

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## She drew ire from land grabbers

*Say locals about UNO Wahida; 'some local ruling party men behind land grabbing'; govt employees stage demo for justice*

STAR REPORT

Land grabbing by a group of people associated with the ruling party was rampant in Ghoraghat and UNO Wahida Khanam, who also acted as the assistant commissioner of land, became a problem for them, locals said.

A gang led by some local Jubo league leaders is behind the land grabbing and a top leader of Ghoraghat Awami League backs them, residents said, requesting anonymity.

"The entire Ghoraghat upazila is a safe haven for land grabbers," said Municipality Mayor Abdus Sattar Milon.

The post of assistant commissioner (AC) land in the upazila has been vacant for the last 25 years, and Wahida was in charge of it since she joined in September 2018.

Wahida's strict dealing of land issues may have angered the land grabbers, the mayor told The Daily Star.

Faruk Siddiqui, a resident of Koroni area of the municipality, said UNO Wahida helped him sell five bighas of land he almost lost to grabbers. He sold it for Tk 20 lakh.

He added that land grabbers led by a top Jubo League leader attempted several times to grab his land in the last one year and his family members

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## PRY STUDENTS Even final tests may be cancelled

*Top edu officials hint*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Primary school students might be promoted without having to sit for class final tests, top officials of primary and mass education ministry hinted yesterday.

"There will be no examinations if schools cannot be reopened this year," Primary and Mass Education Senior Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain said while addressing a press conference at the secretariat, marking the International Literacy Day tomorrow.

He, however, said if the schools could resume activities in October or November, they would consider an evaluation of the students for their promotion to new classes.

Akram was replying to queries from reporters whether the government would promote students

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## Ray in the darkness

The mission of a visually impaired torchbearer

NILIMA JAHAN

Those with disabilities in the country have long faced societal barriers, negative perceptions, and discrimination, and 53-year-old Md Saidul Huq was no exception.

Saidul lost his vision due to typhoid when he was just six years old and the challenges he faced in his education drove him to form Blind Education and Rehabilitation Development Organisation (BERDO) in 1991.

His mission was to ensure equal access, active participation, and a dignified life for those with disabilities by empowering and mainstreaming them in society.

From his earliest days in a school for visually impaired children in his hometown of Barishal, Saidul felt the overall education system was not in favour of students like him.

Even at the special school, there were no braille books, no trained teachers, and more importantly, no inspiration for the students.

Although he was soon brought to Dhaka by an acquaintance of the family to be admitted to a NGO-run primary



Md Saidul Huq

school which taught using braille, Saidul had to return to Barishal for his secondary and higher secondary studies in the mainstream system.

He went on to finish school and was admitted to study philosophy at the University of Dhaka in 1988 where despite limitations relating to scribes and supporting materials like books and records, he

impressed with his merit.

While studying for his bachelor's degree, he first aspired to do something for those who were visually impaired -- for whom there seemed to be no books, jobs, or prospects.

"When I started, I had no funds, staff, or office space. All I had was my self-confidence," said Saidul.

That confidence, this year, helped BERDO step into its 30th year.

While BERDO started with the idea of a library with braille and audiobooks for the visually impaired -- over time, it has evolved into an organisation working with people with other disabilities as well.

In 2006, BERDO established a residential school for visually impaired

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



1,592

New cases in 24hrs



3,25,157

Total cases



4,479

Deaths



2,21,275

Recoveries



A Dhaka University student walking with a few of her possessions in front of Shamsunnahar Hall yesterday. Like all other educational institutions, the university has been closed for nearly six months due to the coronavirus pandemic. Inset, recently residential students have been making appointments with the university to come and collect their belongings. The photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Positivity rate dips to 3-month low

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The positivity rate of Covid-19 has decreased to the lowest in more than last three months.

In the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday, the health directorate reported 14.02 percent or 1,592 positive cases out of 11,354 people tested across the country.

This rate is the lowest during the last 112 days.

Earlier on May 16, the positivity rate was 13.71 percent -- lower than the yesterday's one.

With yesterday's new cases, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 325,157 in the country.

Bangladesh continued to keep holding 14th position among the countries hit by coronavirus.

In the same 24 hours, 32 Covid-19 patients died. The total number of casualties due to Covid-19 rose to 4,479 which is 1.38 percent of all confirmed cases.

Besides, new 3,423 patients were added to the total 221,275 recovered patients in those 24 hours.

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