

PM to inaugurate 50 model mosques nationwide today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will launch 50 out of 560 model mosques today.

The model mosques and Islamic cultural centres will be built across the country with an estimated cost of about Tk 8,722 crore.

Once implemented, about 5.50 lakh devotees will be able to offer their prayers in the mosques, said Shafique Talukder, deputy project director, at a briefing on the premises of Savar Upazila Model Mosque yesterday.

He said there will be facilities for persons with disabilities so that they can offer prayers at the mosques.

Talukder said 69 mosques will be built in 64 districts and city corporations, 475 in upazilas and 16 in coastal areas.

The district mosques will be four-storied with parking facilities. The mosques at upazila level will be three-storied while the ground floors of the mosques in the coastal areas will be kept vacant to provide shelter during disasters, according to project documents.

Besides, 100 more model mosques will be inaugurated by the end of this year,

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The Savar Upazila Model Mosque and Cultural Centre will be one of the mosques that will be inaugurated today by the prime minister. Last-minute touches were being put at the large, picturesque structure before the opening yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

39 ICU beds in Rangpur division

Six of eight districts have none

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

Even though Covid-19 cases have been rising alarmingly since the last couple of weeks in Rangpur, there is still no ICU support at the hospitals in six districts of the division.

The districts are Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha.

There are eight districts in the division and only hospitals in Dinaipur and Rangpur have the ICU support, said health officials.

In recent weeks, the number of Covid-19 infection cases in the division almost doubled, raising the demand for ICU beds in these hospitals.

The daily positivity rate was 32.03 percent on Wednesday while at least 110 people were hospitalised at different hospitals in the division with coronavirus. Of them, 24 were able to receive ICU support.

According to the director of health (Rangpur), there are only 39 ICU beds in the division -- in Dinaipur and Rangpur. The health authorities increased the number from 13 recently to deal with the influx of Covid-19 patients.

Health officials of the above mentioned six districts said they have been struggling to cope with the rising number of critically ill Covid patients.

"Can you imagine a district hospital that does not have ICU support?" said a civil surgeon wishing anonymity. "Besides, many other patients often need the ICU support, but we cannot provide that," he added.

According to health officials in Rangpur, 12 hospitals in eight districts of Rangpur are treating covid-19 patients. And, all together there are 677 beds available for that purpose.

Of them, there are 151 beds in Rangpur (100-bed Children Hospital,

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SURGE IN COVID PATIENTS

Khulna's lone dedicated hospital full to the brim

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

With the number of Covid-19 patients on the rise, the dedicated hospital for treating coronavirus in Khulna is struggling to cope with the pressure.

To accommodate patients, beds are being laid on the floors of the hospitals.

A 100-bed dedicated hospital for Covid patients has been set up on the ground floor of Khulna Medical College Hospital to treat patients in the division.

If a patient is admitted with Covid-19 symptoms, he or she is kept in the yellow zone. Once tested positive, that person is taken to the red zone. If found negative, they are being sent to another ward at the hospital.

According to hospital authorities, 130 patients were admitted to the hospital till yesterday morning. Of them, 62 were in red zone and 29 suspected patients in yellow zone while 21 in HDU.

In the last 24 hours, six people have died while undergoing treatment at the hospital. At present, 18 patients are being treated in

the ICU.

Three more patients died with Covid-19 symptoms yesterday. Besides, in the last 24 hours, 80 tested positive out of 331 samples, which raised the positivity rate to 24 percent.

Dr Suhash Ranjan Halder, resident medical officer at KMCH and focal person of the dedicated coronavirus hospital, said in the last 24 hours, 57 patients were admitted to the hospital.

Of them, 23 are in the red zone and 29 in yellow zone while 3 each in HDU and ICU, he added.

Due to lack of beds, patients are also suffering as they have to wait outside the hospital in long queues to get admitted.

Abdul Hi Shikder (80) of Bagerhat was brought to the hospital around 12:30pm on Monday.

Three days before, his test results showed that he was Covid positive. The family brought him to the hospital as he was having breathing complications.

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Anchored trawler sinks in Karnaphuli

No casualty reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

An anchored fishing trawler capsized at Karnaphuli river early yesterday.

FV Crystal-8, was anchored near Shikalbaha, upstream from Karnaphuli Third Bridge, said Mijanur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadarghat River Police Station.

There was no casualty during the incident, as there was no one on the trawler when it sunk, the OC said, quoting witnesses.

He could not confirm the exact time of sinking and the reason behind it.

The ocean-going fishing trawler is owned by Hamida Doza Limited -- a subsidiary of Crystal Group, the family business organisation of former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) Murshed Murad Ibrahim.

Ibrahim, who is accused in two cases filed by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in connection with Tk 275-crore loan scam at state-run BASIC Bank, is now residing in Canada.

Quoting locals, OC Mijanur said the trawler was anchored at the spot three days ago, while some crewmembers were seen working in the last few days.

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it was not too long ago that these book stores in the capital's Banglabazar buzzed with students from nearby schools. But since the lockdown hit, their once-everbusy sales staff sit at the counters idly passing time.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Not the Banglabazar it once used to be

Shopkeepers giving up businesses, publishers incurring losses amid pandemic

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

A few yards south of the capital's Bahadur Shah Park, near Sadarghat terminal, is a bend where you will find the age-old Banglabazar Government Girls High School and missionary-run Heed International School. And surrounding them is a long series of book stores and stationery shops, where students and their guardians would throng to on a usual day to buy books, pens and pencils.

To widen profits, shopkeepers put comics, cartoon books, colourful stickers and slime toys on display shelves, so that the children would get enticed by the items and convince their parents to buy them something.

This used to be a common sight in the pre-Covid-19 era.

The unprecedented long closure of educational institutions has taken a tremendous toll on the book and stationery business in Banglabazar. It troubled some shopkeepers so badly that they had to give up the business.

Take the example of Rahat Varieties Store, a stationery shop located next to the entrance of Heed International School. Every morning the bookshop would be crammed with students. Now, a cutlery shop has taken its place, and utensils line the display instead of stationery.

"He [Rakib Sheikh, owner of the store] failed to pay six months' rent. Later, he adjusted it with the advance payment and

left Dhaka," said Md Ali, proprietor of Protasha Library, which was right next to Rakib's shop.

Asked about his business, Ali said, "Daily sales now stand between Tk 180-300. It used to be Tk 5,000-7,000 before."

Ali is also distressed about five months' outstanding rent. "It's now hard to run family expenses; at least Tk 300 is needed to buy daily essentials," he said.

In trying to deal with the situation, Ali has eaten up his savings worth about Tk 1 lakh, and borrowed another lakh to run his family.

In front Sonali Bank's footpath at Sadarghat intersection, there are some makeshift shops that sell old textbooks, and guidebooks up to honours levels among other items.

Md Khaza, who has been involved in the business for more than two decades, said their customers are mainly students, but due to the closure, very few show up at the shop.

"Selling even one or two books has become a challenge now. No one is there to look at our pain," he said out of frustration.

There are scores of old bookshops adjacent to Dhaka Sadar Post Office in Banglabazar.

Sixty-year-old Monirul Islam was asking passers-by to visit his shop, hoping for some potential buyers.

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TRAFFICKING TO INDIA

Two of the arrestees confess involvement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two members of a transnational human trafficking racket yesterday confessed to a magistrate that they were involved in trafficking young women and girls to India for one year.

They are Mehedi Hasan Babu and Mohiuddin.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Debbrata Biswas recorded the confessional statements of the two after they were produced at his chamber on completion of a five-day remand in a case filed for trafficking a young girl, who returned home from India last month after escaping captivity of 77 days, court sources said.

Details of their confessional statements could not be known immediately.

The magistrate sent them to jail after wards. Besides, another accused Abdul Kader was also sent to jail.

On June 3, the three were placed on a five-day remand in the case after police arrested them on June 2.

After returning home, the victim on June 1 filed the case with Hatirjheel Police Station, accusing 12 people, including Rifadul Islam Ridoy (26), also known as "Ridoy Babo" on mobile app TikTok.

Publish gender budget report

Speakers at Mahila Parishad webinar urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a post-budget webinar urged the government to publish the gender budget report during the final release of the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2021-2022 and take the necessary initiatives to ensure women empowerment and gender equality by allocating specific budget for women and taking necessary work plans in the development programmes.

They made the demand at a post-budget webinar organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) yesterday.

Jahangirnagar University Prof Dr Sharmind Neelormi, also a member of BMP's central committee, presented the keynote at the webinar. She said although the gender budget report was published in the 2019-2020 budget, considering the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not formulated in the last year's budget.

The same thing has happened this year, and it will not be possible to know what benefits will be available for women from development projects, she said.

Demanding publication of the gender budget for this fiscal, Prof Neelormi also said the allocation in the budget should be kept in check so that it is spent for the betterment of women.

Mentioning the reduction of allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, she urged journalists to verify whether the last allocated

budget was spent properly and whether services of the adolescent-friendly health corners along with other services were provided appropriately.

Prof Neelormi also stressed the distribution of more agriculture cards to the female farmers and urged the Department of Agricultural Extension to give more attention to female farmers.

Dhaka University Economics Prof Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, also the research director of South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (Sanem) said the imposition of tax on e-commerce and mobile banking-based services will have a negative impact on women entrepreneurs working from home.

To make the gender budget successful, emphasis should be given in preparing gender-segregated data, creating gender-sensitive structures, and ensuring monitoring and evaluation of the gender budget, she said.

Prof Bidisha also demanded providing low-interest loans or interest-free one-time financial assistance to women who have lost their jobs in the pandemic.

Bangladesh Development Research Institute (BIDS) senior research fellow Nazneen Ahmed said even if the gender budget is not published as a book, a brief record of the progress of the projects should be published for the development of women and prevention of violence against them.

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QS UNIVERSITY RANKING 2022

DU, Buet see no improvement

Both still in 801-1,000 bracket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) have failed to make any progress in the latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) world university ranking of 2022 published yesterday.

Like the previous year, both universities have been placed in the 801-1,000 bracket.

DU, which was in the 601 bracket in 2012, slipped to the 701+ bracket in 2014 and further below in 2019.

Contacted, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "Ranking is not our focus. We are working on improving quality of education and basic research. If we can continue it, we will achieve better ranking soon."

Meanwhile, North South University and Brac University, two top private universities in the country, have been placed in the 1,001-1,200 bracket in the 2022 index.

QS evaluates 1,300 universities across the world according to six metrics: Academic Reputation, Employer Reputation, Faculty/Student Ratio, Citations per faculty, International Faculty Ratio, and International Student Ratio.

QS does not assign specific positions for universities rated below 500.

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By picking out reusable or recyclable plastic from the city's garbage, these women earn Tk 6,000-7,000 per month. They work in a scrap shop where the trash gets collected on Barishal city's Hatkhola Masjid Road. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

BY-POLLS IN 3 CONSTITUENCIES

JP names candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party yesterday finalized its candidates for the by-elections to three parliamentary constituencies -- Sylhet-3, Dhaka-14 and Cumilla-5 -- scheduled to be held on July 14.

The candidates are Atikur Rahman Atik (Sylhet-3), Mostakur Rahman Mostak (Dhaka-14) and Jashim Uddin (Cumilla-5).

The JP selection board finalised the candidates at a meeting held at the party's chairman GM Quader's office at the capital's Banani.

Earlier, the party strongly opposed the Election Commission's decision of holding the by-polls on July 14 as it coincided with the death anniversary of its founder and late president HM Ershad.

Ruling Awami League is yet to announce its candidates for the by-polls.

BNP standing committee has decided not to take part in the elections, citing possible vote rigging and irregularities.

According to the EC polls schedule, the last day for submission of nomination papers is June 15, selection of nomination papers is on June 16, the last day for withdrawal is June 23 and symbols will be allotted on June 24.

Sylhet-3 seat fell vacant following ruling Awami League MP Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury's death on March 11, Dhaka-14 following AL MP Aslamul Hoque's death on April 4, and Cumilla-5 after AL MP Abdul Matin Khasru's death on April 14.