

**RAISI SWORN IN**  
Challenges ahead as Iran's new  
ultraconservative president  
takes oath replacing moderate  
Hassan Rouhani  
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THE DAILY

SECOND EDITION  
**Star**

ON FRIDAY

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 195

SRABAN 22, 1428 BS

Your Right to Know

ZILHAJ 26, 1442 HIRI

16 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE PRICE : Tk12.00



## IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID Govt failing to engage people

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

Lack of instructions from government high-ups and coordination between different government bodies has left in a shambles the move to ensure community engagement in the fight against Covid-19.

The government had formed committees at the grassroots level across the country after the pandemic struck in March last year. The committees were supposed to work to make sure that people actively participate in health safety measures, including wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and keeping patients isolated.

Most of those committees, however, have remained inoperative since their formation because the government did not give much efforts to make them functional, The Daily Star has learned lately after talking to dozens of public representatives.

Health experts said Covid rules were being flouted in the absence of effective community engagement, causing the coronavirus situation to worsen every day.

They said the government also depended too much on administrative officials for the engagement, apparently ignoring the grassroots committees involving public representatives, different professionals and volunteers, and the decision did not help the cause much.

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The government enforced restrictions on public transport to curb the spread of Covid. But key streets in the capital often see tailbacks caused mostly by private vehicles. The photo was taken at Mohakhali yesterday morning.

PHOTO:  
PRABIR DAS

## Country hits another grim milestone

Logs record 264 daily Covid deaths; 12,744 infected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country yesterday recorded the highest number of Covid-19 deaths in a single day.

A total of 264 people died in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Earlier, the record was 258 deaths on July 27.

The total number of Covid deaths in the country now stands at 21,902 and the Covid death rate stands at 1.66 percent.

As the country's healthcare system grapples with the wave of Covid cases caused largely by the Delta variant, 12,744 new cases were reported yesterday.

A total of 46,995 samples were tested across the country during the 24-hour period.

Yesterday's positivity rate was 27.12 percent. So far 13,22,654 Covid cases have

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## Messi to leave Barcelona after two decades

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi will end his 20-year career with Barcelona even though he had reached an agreement with the club, Barcelona said yesterday, citing economic and structural obstacles to the renewal of deal.

Messi was free to negotiate a transfer with other clubs after his deal ran out at the end of June, but Barcelona had always maintained he wanted to stay with the club.

The 34-year-old, who has spent his whole career at Barcelona, had been expected to sign a new five-year deal with the Catalan club, which would have included a salary reduction of 50%.

Barcelona needed to financially restructure in order to get the deal over the line, which proved impossible in the end.

The news of Messi's exit comes a day after La Liga agreed in principle to sell 10% of a newly formed company housing



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## PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF INFO Govt organs faring better than NGOs

Finds a TIB study based on RTI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In terms of proactive disclosure of information, based on the Right to Information Act, government organisations are doing better than NGOs, a Transparency International Bangladesh study has found.

The anti-graft watchdog, however, said the progress of both in proactive publishing of information on websites was not satisfactory.

The TIB collected information from 153 government organisations and 39 NGOs between August last year and January 2021.

The organisations were given scores in 25 indicators -- 19 on the extent of the information, four on accessibility, and two on compatibility. The organisations were categorised on the percentage of their scores -- a 0 to 33 percent score is "alarming", 34 to 66 percent "inadequate", and 67 percent and above is "satisfactory".

Findings of the study -- Proactive Disclosure of Information by Government Institutions and NGOs on the Basis of Right to Information Act: An Assessment -- was unveiled at a webinar yesterday.

The websites of most government organisations received relatively better scores than that of NGOs, said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman during the programme.

The TIB also ranked the organisations in a list. The best scoring NGO was 21st in the ranking but behind 123 organisations.

Overall, only about 8.5 percent of the sampled government institutions were categorised as alarming.

However, 94.9 percent of the NGOs were of alarming category.

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## Delta variant found in 98pc Covid samples

Says BSMMU after testing 300 samples in a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The highly contagious Delta variant has been found in 98 percent of the Covid-19 samples tested by BSMMU as part of a survey.

A total of 300 samples were collected between June 29 to July 30 and genome sequencing

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## Tale of an upazila in throes of extremism

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Narayanganj

It was mid 2017. A group of about a dozen young men in Arahazar, Narayanganj, suddenly started telling their neighbours that the way of saying prayers at their local mosques was not right.

They even observed Ramadan and Eid a day earlier than the Arabic calendar.

This prompted the elders in Shatgram and Noagaon villages to call for an arbitration, summoning the young men.

The young men told the villagers that they learnt about real Islam from the books of Mufti Jashimuddin Rahmani, the

spiritual leader of militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team.

Arrested in 2013, Rahmani is now in jail. The village elders then warned them of consequences if they followed Rahmani any longer.

A year later, one of the young men, Mohammad Hafiz, was arrested by Rab on charges of militancy in Madhabdi, Narsingdi.

"We thought the young men would return to normal life after we warned them. We did not realise they would be more radicalised in the following days," Faizul

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Thick columns of smoke billowing from a warehouse of Singer Electronics in the Fulbaria area of Savar. Eight fire engines doused the fire around 12:30pm yesterday, about four hours after it was detected. A spokesperson of Singer said the cause of the fire was yet to be known.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Pori shown arrested in narco case

Placed on 4-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Actor Pori Moni and film producer Nazrul Islam Raz were shown arrested yesterday in two separate cases filed by the Rapid Action Battalion under the Narcotics Control Act.

Raz, owner of Raz Multimedia, will also be sued under the Pornography Control Act, Khandaker Al Moin, director (legal and media) of Raz, said at a

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SPECIAL VACCINE DRIVE

## Now a trial run tomorrow

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The last-minute retreat regarding the special vaccination drive has exposed the lack of coordination and planning on the government's part, experts said.

It may also put the government in a credibility crisis and could make people lose interest in taking Covid-19 jabs, they said.

As part of the special drive, the government had planned to inoculate around one crore people in six days from August 7. But it held back its decision and decided to conduct a trial instead due to a shortage of vaccines.

Field-level officials have already started preparing for the trial run.

Tamijul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of Jashore, yesterday told

The Daily Star that he was instructed to conduct the trial run on August 7 and the main special vaccination campaign will begin on August 14.

He said 600 doses will be administered in each of the 93 unions and 1,800 in the district's municipality area on August 7.

"People are now keen on getting vaccinated and registering on the Surokha app."

Habiganj DC Ishrat Jahan said they are prepared to inoculate around 50,000 people in the district on Saturday.

The special drive is mainly aimed at vaccinating the elderly and people in rural areas.

On Wednesday, a high-profile meeting, with the prime minister's principal secretary in the chair, decided to shorten

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