



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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"Mass Covid-19 vaccination campaigns will not be held in the country anymore."
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



"We are working diligently to make sure we've increased the ability to get [people] out."
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
ON AFGHAN EVACUATIONS



"Delta does raise some big questions that we're going to have to grapple with, you know less than a 24-hour period for someone getting it and passing it on to others..."
NEW ZEALAND MINISTER FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE CHRIS HIPKINS

COVID-19 TREATMENT COST

Families go broke at pvt hospitals

Crisis of ICU beds at public hospitals drives the poor, middle class to despair

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

When Covid patient Rokeya Sultana was fighting for her life in the ICU of a private hospital last week, her son Mamunur Rashid was found frantically talking over the phone with someone trying to convince that person to buy a piece of land from him.

Approached by The Daily Star, he said his mother, 50, had been in the ICU for four days and doctors could not tell him how long she would have to stay there. The family had brought Tk 1.2 lakh for her treatment and all the money was already gone.

"Half the amount was borrowed from our relatives. Now we're selling two decimals of our courtyard for Tk 1.5 lakh, which is much lower than the market price. We need more money. We are even ready to sell our home," Mamunur said, adding that treatment at the private hospital was extremely expensive.

Mamunur and all his brothers are day labourers. Their elderly father is bed-ridden. Selling the little they have seemed the only way for them to get some cash.

Rokeya, however, died on August 20.

The impoverished family of Rokeya Sultana, 50, had to spend over Tk 4 lakh in treatment cost, which included a hefty bill of Tk 3.20 lakh for her six-day stay in a private hospital in the capital.

By that time, the family had spent over Tk 4 lakh for her treatment, which included a hefty bill of Tk 3.20 lakh for her six-day stay in the private hospital.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Mamunur said after her mother was diagnosed with Covid-19, they took her to a local upazila health complex in Cumilla. She then started complaining of breathing difficulties and was rushed to Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

But finding no bed over there, her family admitted her to a private hospital in Cumilla. She was brought to Dhaka when

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Eighty-year-old Sayra Khatun lying on a gurney in an ambulance in front of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital's emergency department as her granddaughter offers her some water around noon yesterday. Residents of Munshiganj, Sayra and her 96-year-old husband Yusuf Ali were infected with dengue and got admitted to Khanpur Hospital in Narayanganj two days ago. There, they tested positive for Covid-19 and were referred to the Covid unit at DMCH. Yusuf, seen behind the granddaughter, and Sayra were taking turns in drawing air from the same oxygen cylinder. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Vaccinate industrial workers, families

PM directs authorities to take up programme for this; no more special mass inoculation drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to design a separate programme to bring the industrial workers and their families under the Covid-19 vaccination coverage soon.

She also asked to consider whether it would be possible to shorten the existing two-month gap between two shots, reports UINB.

The PM made the directives while chairing the cabinet meeting held virtually, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at a press briefing. Hasina joined the meeting from the Gono Bhaban and the others from the secretariat.

She came up with the directives a week after the government struck a trilateral agreement for bottling, labelling and dispensing six crore shots of China's Sinopharm vaccine at a Bangladeshi pharmaceutical company plant. Health officials at that time said it would need around three months to go for production.

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BARISHAL VIOLENCE

Top bureaucrats disagree with BASA statement

Local admin, BCC, AL decide to settle dispute

STAR REPORT

Secretaries and divisional commissioners do not agree with the statement of Bangladesh Administrative Services Association (BASA) over the recent conflict between Barishal City Corporation authorities and the local administration, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam has said.

"I had a meeting with secretaries yesterday [Sunday]. They disagreed with the statement. The language used in it was not right," he said.

Anwarul further said that even the BASA members present at Sunday's meeting did not endorse the language used in the statement that sought immediate arrest of the BCC Mayor and legal action against him.

"Use of such language was not welcome," he told reporters in reply to a query at a briefing after a cabinet meeting yesterday.

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Shut down Savar tannery estate

JS body recommends as the industrial zone lacks adequate waste treatment facilities

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended shutting down the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate in Hemayetpur because the estate does not have adequate facilities to treat all liquid waste generated by the tanners it houses.

The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change made the recommendations at a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. "The Tannery Industrial Estate has the capacity to treat around 25,000 cubic metres of liquid waste every day, but the tanners generate around 40,000 cubic metres of liquid waste per day. That means 15,000 cubic metres are dumped into the [Dhaleshwari] river without any treatment, causing severe pollution," Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chief of the parliamentary watchdog, told reporters.

In 2003, the government had taken the initiative to build the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industry Corporation (BSCIC) Tannery Industrial Estate on 200 acres at Hemayetpur after moving all tanneries from the capital's Hazaribagh in order to prevent environmental pollution and to protect the Buriganga.

Also an Awami League MP of Dhaka-9 (Bashabo-Mugda) constituency, Saber said the most alarming matter is that the Tannery Industrial Estate

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HINDU INHERITANCE LAW

Citizens' coalition denounces propaganda

STAR REPORT

The Hindu Ain Pronoyon e Nagorik Udyog Coalition has issued a statement protesting the propaganda against a number of individuals and organisations that are not involved in the formulation of a Hindu inheritance law.

The coalition recently formulated a draft of Hindu inheritance law for equal rights of Hindu citizens to the property of their parents. It's the Hindu citizens who have demanded formulation of the law. Hindu citizens from various human rights organisations are involved in the process. It involves not only Manusher Jonno Foundation, but also Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), PRIP Trust, Naripokkho, RDRS and Banche Shekha, the coalition said in the statement yesterday.

"We feel ashamed as the name of The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam has been mentioned at a press conference of Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote over the formulation of the Hindu law.

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AFGHAN EVACUATION

No extension to deadline

Warn Taliban, say no new govt until last US soldier leaves the country

AGENCIES

The Taliban said yesterday they would not extend the August 31 deadline for Nato forces to leave Afghanistan, jeopardising hopes of extending the evacuation of thousands of foreign nationals and vulnerable Afghans.

US President Joe Biden said on Sunday night he would consider extending the deadline for all American troops to leave the country amid growing pressure from allies including Britain.

However, the Taliban said no western government or leader had approached them to request an extension and that they would not agree even if that happened.

"If the US or UK were to seek additional time to continue evacuations -- the answer is no. Or there would be consequences,"

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A view of the road surface of the Padma multipurpose bridge. The project reached a milestone yesterday as the last road slab was installed, thereby linking both sides of the river and making it possible to walk across the 6.15km structure. Inset, The country's longest bridge as seen from the Mawa side.

PHOTO: COURTESY/SAJJAD HOSSAIN

It's possible to walk across the Padma now

All 2,917 road slabs in place on Padma bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Padma bridge project yesterday moved one step closer to completion after the authority finished the installation of all road slabs linking both sides of the Padma river through the roadway.

Now it is possible to cross the Padma river by walking across the 6.15 kilometre-long bridge.

The last road slab was installed on the span that linked the pillars 12 and 13 of the Padma bridge at 10:12 am yesterday, said project engineers.

The installation of road and rail slabs began more than two years and five months ago. In June, the rail slabs were laid and now all 2,917 road slabs are done.

"We have reached a new milestone. With this, we have moved one more step forward," Project Director Shafiqul Islam told journalists at the project service area yesterday.

The long-cherished bridge, whose physical works started in November 2014, is expected to be open for the public in June next year.

Once in service, the double-decker bridge, which has a roadway on the upper side and rail line on the bottom, will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts and is expected to boost Bangladesh's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

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