



At the port city's Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, work was underway to fix its flood lights recently. However, the workers could be seen climbing these tall structures without head gear, harness or any other kind of protective equipment, putting them under heavy risk of accidents.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

**Covid-19 infection rate declining in port city**

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The Covid-19 positivity rate in the port city has been showing a downward trend for four consecutive days now.

The rate was 16.89 percent yesterday, while it was 18.88 on Thursday, 21.39 on Wednesday and 24.39 on Tuesday, said sources in Chattogram Civil Surgeon Office.

In the last 24 hours till yesterday, 539 new cases were detected after 3,190 samples were tested. No patient died by this time, said Dr Elias Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Chattogram.

Termining the trend a sign of decreasing infection rate for the days to come, head of Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases Laboratory Prof Shakeel Ahmed said perhaps the district is inching towards herd immunity.

"But we should not be satisfied until the infection rate decreases below 5 percent," he said. "We should all follow health guidelines strictly. Those who are still unvaccinated should get jabs as soon as possible."

Dr Abdur Rob, head of Covid-19 ward at Chattogram General Hospital, said patients who test positive these days only show mild symptoms and don't need to be admitted to hospital.

**'Dredging for nothing'**

Green activists say Ichhamati river should be freed from grabbing first



AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The Water Development Board has restarted dredging the Ichhamati river in Pabna, following a six-month halt.

However, following legal complexity, an eviction drive against illegal structures on both sides of the river is yet to begin, something that's necessary for the dredging project to work, according to experts.

Originating from Padma, an 8km section of the 84km Ichhamati flows through Pabna's middle part. But over the years, it has turned into a narrow channel after losing its water flow, as well as navigability, due to siltation and encroachment.

"Only during flood does the water of the river flow in Banglabazar Launch Ghat area and Shibrapur point. For the rest of the year, it remains dry," said Abdul Hamid Khan, a green activist.

Md Rafikul Islam, executive engineer of WDB in Pabna, said they've already completed dredging a 2.67km area at the confluence of the river from the sluice gate of the flood protection embankment in Shibrapur. "We have already submitted a mega project of Tk 1,200 crore under which three more of the river's channels will be dredged," he said.

Meanwhile, a project to dredge 5.67km of

Ichhamati and another 2.67km at its confluence at a cost of Tk 5.46 crore, as well as another project worth Tk 2.69 crore to free the river from encroachment has resumed on March 15 last year, said WDB officials.

Encroachers, however, filed seven petitions with the High Court, claiming ownership of land, halting the projects. After this, the dredging project resumed for a 1km area on January 17.

"WDB has already identified over 1,100 illegal structures on the river's banks, but legal complexity arose after only 100 structures were removed from the 1km area," said Md Mosharaf Hossain, assistant director (land and revenue) of WDB.

"Before getting court approval, we can't resume the eviction drive and dredging," he said.

Meanwhile, SM Mahabub Alom, president of Ichhamati Protection Movement, said, "If the illegal structures are not removed from the both sides of the river, the dredging will be meaningless."

"Additionally, the dredged soil piled beside the river will enter the river again if it rains," Mahabub added.

WDB Engineer Rafikul said the dredged soil will be removed from the bank after it dries.



At that time, both a kilo of flour and a notebook cost Tk 10. If we bought flour, my education would have been hindered, so my mother chose to buy notebooks over our bread.

Sheuli Akter



**Won't back down, no matter the cost**  
Sheuli overcomes poverty, child marriage and abuse to become doctor

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi



An utter tragedy struck 13 years ago. Still only a ninth grader, Rajshahi's Sheuli Akter was married off owing to her family's unimaginable struggle with poverty.

It only got worse. Soon after her marriage, she was ousted from her in-laws' house, as she was made to choose between them or her education. Persistent and full of grit, she chose the latter.

Her hardship eventually bore fruit as Sheuli, overcoming all barriers of poverty, child-marriage and abuse, became a doctor by achieving an MBBS from Barind Medical College in Rajshahi in January.

Talking to this correspondent, Sheuli said she developed her enthusiasm for education during her time at Sardaha Government Primary School. "I was fond of watching boys and girls studying at school and the way they spoke. I wanted to be just like them."

Sheuli learned that only the brightest students studied at the school and insisted her mother enrolled her there. Her mother soon took her to a private tutor.

"I noticed the private tutor offered my mother a broken chair to sit on and treated her differently than others. I don't know how she made him agree to teach me," Sheuli said.

Sheuli's father, Zahangir Hossain, could barely afford his family of seven earning a meagre sum from a tea stall.

"At that time, both a kilo of flour and a notebook cost Tk 10. If we bought flour, my education would have been hindered, so my mother chose to buy notebooks over our bread."

She caught the attention of her teachers when she obtained stipend in fifth and eighth grades.

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Celebrations centring the goddess of knowledge, Saraswati, is about to ensue for believers of Hindu faith today, but preparations for the festivities had started months back. Sculptors have been hard at work, carefully grafting the goddess, coating her in bright colours, so that she can take her rightful place at temples for worship. This photo was taken from Barishal's Kalibari road recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

**Death-row convict finally caught after 20 years**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) in a drive has arrested a death-row convict of the gruesome Jane Alam murder from the port city's Nimtala area.

The arrestee is Jashim Uddin (50) from Chattogram's Lohagara.

Jashim was arrested around 10pm on Thursday, 20 years after the murder, said Rab.

"Jashim went into hiding soon after the murder of trader Jane Alam, who was shot and hacked to death by a group of criminals in Lohagara upazila on March 30, 2002," said Nurul Absar, assistant director of Rab-7 media wing, yesterday.

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