

## Covid-19 infection rate on the rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily positivity rate of Covid-19 has surged to 9.26 percent in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, up from 8.41 percent just the day before. However, no Covid-related death was reported in the country during this period.

Meanwhile, 40 new cases have been reported, taking the total number of confirmed cases to 20,46,901, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

DGHS data shows there has been a sudden rise in the daily infection rate, with 5.14 percent on Monday followed by 8.62 percent on Tuesday. On December 23 last year, it was 2.51 percent.

The total positivity rate currently stands at 13.09 percent, the same as last month.

In a press release yesterday, DGHS said the number of deaths remains at 29,481 and the overall fatality rate at 1.44 percent. So far, DGHS has reported four Covid-related deaths this month.

## SAGIRA MURDER

### Verdict on

### February 8

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set February 8 to deliver verdict on four accused in connection with the murder of Sagira Morshed in Dhaka in July 1989.

The four accused are – Sagira Morshed's brother-in-law Hasan Ali Chowdhury, his wife Sayedatul Mahmuda alias Shahin, Hasan Ali's brother-in-law (wife's brother) Anas Mahmud alias Rezwana and "hired killer" Maruf Reza.

Judge Mohammad Ali Hussain of the Special Judge's Court-3 of Dhaka set the date.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 17 prosecution witnesses, including complainant of the case.

On July 25, 1989, Sagira, 34, was going to Viharunnisa Noon School on the capital's Bailey Road by a rickshaw to pick up her daughter Saharat.

Sagira, however, could not reach her daughter as muggers shot and killed her in front of the school.

Abdus Salam Chowdhury, husband of the victim, filed a murder case against unnamed people with Ramna Police Station the same day.

## PRAYER TIMING



	Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5:35	12:30	4:15	5:46	7:15
JAMAAT	6:10	1:15	4:30	5:50	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Choking a river TO DEATH

## Dam, bridges, encroachment restricting Mayur river's natural flow



Mayur, which was once a 22-km-long river with fierce tides, can hardly be recognised due to its dying state. Rampant pollution and encroachment, alongside the construction of a dam and two bridges, have been pushing the river to its deathbed. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The 22 kilometre-long Mayur river, which used to flow through the western side of Khulna city while being a source of fresh water for locals, is now on its deathbed.

Not just a major lifeline for the city, the river was also home to a diverse range of aquatic species, including "shushuk" (South Asian river dolphin), which is on the IUCN red list of endangered mammals.

The once majestic river flows through Alutola, Nirala, Gallamari, Boyra, Dayana, Arongghata, and Beel-Dakatia areas. Earlier, it had a confluence with Rupsa river, but no more due to the construction of sluice gates

68.70-metre long and 3.70-metre wide, each about five-metre height above water level, are being constructed to replace two old bridges that were demolished earlier.

The Roads and Highways Department is implementing the Tk 68 crore project following a design inspired by Dhaka's Hatirjheel. The construction work was inaugurated on October 12 last year, and piling work is ongoing at present.

A construction firm, National Development Engineers Limited, has been tasked with the project, scheduled to be completed by April 2025.

According to environmentalists, these construction works will only ensure the

coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

"Choking the river with bridges and dam on one part of the river while dredging it on another part is nothing but an instance of double standard of government authorities," he said.

"The contractor firm is not removing the soil from the bridge construction site, causing it to accumulate in the river bed and obstruct its flow. The Water Development Board should be taking steps to stop this menace, but their officials did not even visit the site for once," Mukul added.

"Years back, the river had plenty of fish. I have seen dolphins in it too. Now you won't



**The construction materials of the broken bridge are kept on the site for the time being and will be removed soon. We have placed a pipe there, through which water is flowing.**

**Md Anisuzzaman Masud**  
RHD executive engineer

**Choking the river with bridges and dam on one part of the river while dredging it on another part is nothing but an instance of double standard of government authorities.**

**Mahfuzur Rahman Mukul**  
Bela divisional coordinator

to control the tide.

Over the years, these sluice gates, alongside illegal encroachment of the river's land and rampant pollution, reduced the river's flow significantly and caused it to shrink while wiping out its fish and other species.

Recently, construction of an embankment and two bridges on the river has added to its woes, choking its natural flow further and practically leaving it to die.

Visiting the Gallamari area of the city recently, this correspondent saw the 30-foot-wide dam constructed near the construction site of one of the two bridges, with just a three-foot-wide pipe on the western side of the embankment to drain out water.

The two new steel-arch bridges,

river's impending demise while destroying its marine ecosystem. Due to pollution, the river no longer has adequate dissolved oxygen to sustain aquatic organisms.

Meanwhile, in an ironical twist, the Khulna City Corporation is excavating another part of the river at a cost of Tk 7.59 crore for the second time in a bid to restore its flow. It was previously dredged in 2014 at a cost of Tk 5.78 crore across 5,900 metres for the drainage of rain water to prevent waterlogging.

"Much of the river has been already lost to illegal encroachment. The embankment should not be constructed on the river, while the construction of bridges should be done only after reviving its natural flow," said Mahfuzur Rahman Mukul, Khulna divisional

even find a single fish in its water," said Nimai Chandra Roy, a retired teacher and resident of Batiaghata upazila.

"We used to come to Khulna on boats through this river. It got killed right in front of our eyes," he lamented.

Atiar Rahman, a businessman in Gallamari Bazar, said the river's flow has reduced drastically after constructing the dam.

RHD executive engineer in Khulna Md Anisuzzaman Masud seemed indifferent to the situation when contacted.

"The construction materials of the broken bridge are kept on the site for the time being and will be removed soon. Also, we have placed a pipe there, through which water is flowing," he said.

## 100-day work plan to save environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the slogan "healthy environment, smart Bangladesh," the environment, forest and climate change ministry announced its 100-day work plan yesterday.

In this phase, the ministry will focus on its priority areas – institutional capacity building, pollution control, waste management, environment, forest and biodiversity conservation, and climate change.

Environment Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury made the announcement at a press conference at the ministry.

The 100-day programme of his ministry began yesterday, and it will conclude on June 30.

"We want to point out our problems. First, we want to focus on the problems, and then we will strive to solve them on a priority basis," said the minister.

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## 'We will buy ten Airbus planes when economy permits'

### Foreign minister says Yunus case won't impact foreign investment

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will buy 10 planes from European company Airbus when the country's economy permits, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

He made the comment after attending separate meetings with French and German ambassadors Marie Masdupuy and Achim Troster respectively at his ministry office.

French President Emmanuel Macron, during his visit to Bangladesh in September last year, had said, "I thank you for your trust in the European aerospace industry. This commitment for 10 Airbus A350 is important."

Sources said officials of Biman Bangladesh

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