

Next Polls

## Several parties discuss launch of a political platform

Organisers allege police tried to stop the meeting at Rob's Uttara house  
Staff Correspondent

Leaders of several political parties last night met to discuss the launching of a political platform with eye on the next general election due in late 2018 or early 2019.

Law enforcers allegedly tried to disrupt the meeting at Jatiya Samajpraktik Dal (JSD-Rob) President ASR Ahmed's residence in Uttara.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nagonik Oliya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manni said they sat to discuss the launch of a political platform ahead of the election.

But Rob said it was an informal gathering after Eid.

He alleged police tried to prevent them from gathering, citing "instructions from the higher authorities".

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## Qatar crisis

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refusing Qatar access to their airways and returning their citizens back from Qatar.

They also presented the emirate with a list of 13 demands which to comply to end the worst political crisis in the region for years.

Qatar denies the charges of extremism and called the demands "unrealistic".

It also claims the boycott has led to human rights violations, and one group yesterday said abuses were a concern.

"Hundreds of Saudis, Bahrainis and Emiratis have been arrested into the impossible situation of either disregarding their countries' orders or leaving behind their families and country," said Sarah Leah Whitson of Human Rights Watch.

It was also claimed that in Doha after meeting Saudi Arabia's King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman 24 hours earlier.

On his previous visit on Tuesday, the US and Qatar signed an agreement to combat terror funding, subsequently dismissed as "insufficient".

The United States, a longtime ally of Sunni-led Saudi Arabia, has given mixed signals about its policy on the Gulf crisis.

While President Donald Trump to the US states' decision to eschew the label like their Gulf neighbours, the US Department has taken a more neutral position and Tillerson has sought to broker a diplomatic solution.

The crisis has pitted Tillerson, well known for his hawkish foreign policy role as chief of staff of giant ExxonMobil, with his first big challenge as Washington's top diplomat.

The United States and its Western allies have vast economic and political interests in the Gulf, which pumps one fifth of the world's oil supply.

While Saudi Arabia is a key US ally, Qatar is home to the US military's largest air base in the region, Al-Udeid. Rival Bahrain houses the US Navy Fifth Fleet.

On Tuesday, speaking in Doha, Tillerson described Qatar as being "reasonably" in its dispute with the West, at least according to one analyst.

For public consumption at least, the US State Department is trying to send out a signal that it is working closely with other allies in the region.

While Saudi Arabia is a key US ally, Qatar – to try to find a mutually agreeable solution," Christopher Davidson, an expert on Middle East politics at Britain's Durham University, told AFP.



A child suffering from a yet-to-be-identified disease receiving IV drip at the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Disease (BITID) in Foudharkhat of Chittagong. Parents taking their sick children to hospital, top right, yesterday after they started showing symptoms similar to those shown by several children before their deaths at Sonachhori Para in Sitakunda Para of Chittagong. A small branch of Neem tree is wedged into the wall of a home in Sonaichhori Para, bottom right. The inhabitants believe the branch would keep diseases away.

PHOTO: AnURUP KaNTI Das



## 'Disease new', problem old

FROM PAGE 1

diarrhoea.

Health officials had already taken samples of the children and sent them to India, typhoid and paratyphoid. But the results were negative, he said, adding: "We will now try to find out whether it is chikungunya, swine flu or any other disease."

Health officials said they would see the water and food eaten in Tripura later.

Talking about the children who became ill yesterday, Civil Surgeon Azizur said: "They were very weak. But their condition was improving as they were on a nutrition diet at the hospital in Foudharkhat."

Faruk said Dr Md Ekramullah, assistant professor of medicine at the hospital, echoed the same.

As children were falling sick one by one

since early last week, their parents did not take them to the hospital. They opted for local quacks and shamans, said locals.

Some parents said they performed different rituals seeking their recovery.

Nishara Tripura, the oldest man in Tripura where some 64 indigenous families live, said he had never seen so many children die at a time.

"When the children were dying or becoming sick, we performed many rituals. Some of the ailing kids were washed with boiled water," said the man in his late 80s.

Some were given homeopathic treatment in cases of diarrhoea.

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Health Complex, which is about 15kms away.

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