

## 'Yet to decide on joining alliances'

### GM Quader on upcoming national elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday said they are yet to decide whether the party will join an alliance with anyone in the upcoming elections.

"We are currently preparing for the elections. We are selecting candidates for all 300 constituencies and trying to strengthen our party," Quader said.

The JP chief made the remarks while talking to reporters at Palli Niwas in Rangpur's Darshana area.

Earlier, he visited the grave of Jatiya Party founder and former president HM Ershad with the party's leaders and activists.

Regarding the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the next parliamentary elections, Quader said, "We have been saying repeatedly that EVMs can be rigged. The ruling party can influence and steal votes using the machines."

"Even the Election Commission has admitted that it is not possible to conduct elections properly with EVMs," he added.

Regarding the government's mega projects, he said, "The prime minister said a few days ago that there could be famine in the country due to a food crisis. The government needs to prepare from now to deal with it instead of focusing on mega projects."



A tree fell down in front of Ideal School and College campus in Motijheel after the storm caused by cyclone Sitrang went through the capital. Even though this tree fell at night and locals informed authorities to deal with the situation, it wasn't removed till 12:00pm yesterday, causing gridlock on the busy road.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Iran is ready to help

### Says envoy on safe, dignified Rohingya repatriation

BSS, Dhaka

Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mansour Chavoshi yesterday said his country will support Bangladesh for safe and dignified repatriation of Rohingyas -- the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals -- to their homeland.

The envoy said this while calling on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Gono Bhaban yesterday morning.

The prime minister's press secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

The ambassador appreciated Bangladesh for sheltering Rohingya people on humanitarian grounds during the meeting, in which issues related to bilateral relations and trade and commerce were also discussed.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said both countries

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## Hope for a healthy life restored

### 22-month-old given medication worth Tk 22cr to treat chronic neurological disease

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 22-month-old child was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a chronic neurological disease, at the beginning of this year.

SMA is a rare and complex congenital disease of the nervous system caused by genetic disorders. It destroys the nerve cells of the spinal cord, which control the muscles, making them weak as a result.

This in turn restricts the mobility of the children affected. Every year, many affected children die due to respiratory complications caused by this condition.

The family of the child, whose father is an expatriate labourer in Saudi Arabia, was at a loss as to how they were going to ensure his treatment, which required gene therapy, a rare form of treatment in the country.

Moreover, the medical cost of gene therapy is unaffordable for common people.

That is when the child was selected under Global Managed Access Programme (GMAP) to get treated. For the first time in Bangladesh, gene therapy has been applied to treat SMA, under the initiative of Novartis, with support from the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospitals (NINS), said a press release yesterday.

A single dose of medication, worth around Tk 22 crore, has been provided free of cost to the child by the multinational pharmaceutical company Novartis Bangladesh. So far, this medicine has been administered to 2,300 patients worldwide.

Dr Mohua Chandra, junior consultant of NINS, said the 22-month-old child from Manikganj was chosen out of three candidates, through a lottery process by Novartis.

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**PRAYER TIMING OCT 26**

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-50	12-45	4-00	5-32	7-15
Jamaat	5-25	1-15	4-15	5-35	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## An evident disparity in quality of life

### Hijra, transgender communities continue to be deprived, speakers tell meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the hijra and transgender communities continue to be discriminated in every aspect of their lives, including healthcare, housing, employment opportunities, and emergency aid, said speakers at an advocacy meeting yesterday.

There is also a knowledge gap and lack of sensitivity among medical practitioners, law enforcers, and officials of the government and judiciary regarding the communities, they said.

Somporker Noya Setu (SNS) organised the meeting, titled "Mobilise Emergency Support for Gender Diverse Populations of Bangladesh", at a city hotel.

Parbati Ahmed, chairperson of Sustha Jibon, shared how one of her community members was initially denied treatment for being a hijra, and later was sexually harassed at the operation theatre of the capital's Sir Salimullah Medical College.

"At first, she was denied treatment and labelled as a fake hijra. Later, when she went in for her surgery, she was mocked for identifying as a hijra and was told that she was faking it for benefits," she said.

Parbati also urged separate laws and services for establishing the rights of the gender-diverse population, ending all forms of discrimination towards them, and reforming the definition of rape in the penal code, which only caters to women and children.

Ivan Ahmed Katha, president of Shachetan Shamjashaba Hijra Sangha, said doctors should treat

patients regardless of their gender identity.

SNS President Joya Shikder said hijras are not born as hijras, and during puberty, most of them are abandoned by their families and society.

"Since they are kicked out, they face sexual harassment everywhere and take the shelter of their gurus. They are deprived of their

transgender communities were not allowed to get a Covid test done and were not considered for relief or financial aid during the pandemic."

"Moreover, law enforcers are more than often reluctant to file their complaints of sexual violence and rape," she claimed. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) Junior Advocacy Officer Shova Sarker said there is a knowledge gap regarding where members of these communities can go when they face harassment.

"For example, although there are some services for the gender-diverse population in the one-stop crisis centre or National Legal Aid Services Organisation, in reality, most of them do not know about it," she said.

Transwoman S Srabonti said although the gender-diverse population is approximately 1,50,000 in Bangladesh, the recent population and housing census of 2022 included transgender people as a separate gender and found only 12,629 members belonging to these communities.

"An overwhelming majority of them were left out from the calculation. This would not be the case if there were at least one representative from the gender-diverse communities in every district," she said.

In his keynote presentation, Supreme Court lawyer Md Tazul Islam recommended that all the laws and policies contradictory to the rights of this population be identified and reformed.

He also urged to incorporate the needs of transgender adolescents and the community in general

basic human rights. If there is a dedicated shelter for them, they too can flourish and do better in life," said Joya.

Rany Chowdhury, general secretary of Sheman Welfare Association, said, "The plight of the gender-diverse population is not prioritised in emergencies. Many members of the hijra and

transgender communities were not allowed to get a Covid test done and were not considered for relief or financial aid during the pandemic."

"Moreover, law enforcers are more than often reluctant to accept their complaints of sexual violence and rape."

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## WATERLOGGING

### Unplanned mega projects to blame

### Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government's unplanned mega projects are to blame for waterlogging in the capital and Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, following the downpour induced by cyclone Sitrang.

"I came here overcoming a lot of difficulties, as Uttara road was closed today [Tuesday]. The DMP commissioner issued a circular not to use the road," he said.

Speaking at the anniversary programme of Daily Nayadiganta at its Motijheel office, he said the road from Airport to Gazipur is no longer usable due to the rainfall caused by Sitrang. "This is the result of unplanned mega projects and mega development."

Earlier in the day, Dhaka Metropolitan Police requested commuters to avoid the route from Khilkhet via Uttara to Gazipur due to a long tailback triggered by waterlogging at points where the construction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has been going on for 10 years.

## 750 new dengue cases in 24 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the new 750 dengue patients admitted to different hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday, the total number of cases this year has crossed the 32,000 mark.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), total cases rose to 32,716 till yesterday, of which, 9,634 are from outside Dhaka. This year's death toll so far stands at 118.

Among the deaths, 69 were in Dhaka, 22 in Cox's Bazar, 13 in Chattogram, five in Barishal, three each in Khulna and Mymensingh, and one each in Narsingdi, Narail and Feni.

A total of 29,466 patients have already been released, of which 8,677 are from outside Dhaka.

Some 3,416 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, of whom 1,192 are from outside Dhaka.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman of National University suggested the authorities take effective measures after the rain stops to destroy all breeding sources, so that Aedes mosquitoes cannot breed and spread further. He also suggested involving people in the process of raising awareness.

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## Qatar emir likely to visit Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is likely to visit Bangladesh after the Fifa World Cup ends later this year.

Qatar's Ambassador to Bangladesh Seraya Ali Mahdi Saeed Al Qahtani said this during a courtesy call on Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the foreign ministry yesterday.

The ambassador said the emir is keen on taking bilateral relations to new heights, and he has accepted the invitation from the Bangladesh president to visit Dhaka following the Fifa World Cup.

Momen expressed satisfaction at excellent

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## A sigh of relief for the birds

### Forest Department rescues hundreds of black kites after storm

DU CORRESPONDENT

When cyclone Sitrang took the city by storms and rains, it was not just the human populace who went through immense troubles to go by their natural course of the day.

It was particularly hard for the animals too, who were at a loss as to where they could take shelter. The birds of the capital were no different.

Incassant heavy rain accompanied by gusty wind had harmed the life and habitats of many black kites as they fell from trees at different places in Dhaka.

But on the bright side, members of the Forest Department's Wildlife Crime Control Unit yesterday rescued 200 injured black kites during the cyclone last night from different places in Dhaka.

Sanaullah Patwary, the department's director, said their team had rescued 130 black kites from Central Shaheed Minar, Curzon Hall area. The rest were rescued from National Press Club and in front of the secretariat building.

"The respective authorities informed us and



we rushed there to rescue the birds. Some of the injured birds felt better after we fed them saline," he said.

After receiving information from the proctorial team of Dhaka University, members of the Wildlife Crime Control Unit, led by Sanaullah, rushed there and rescued the birds.

"After giving the birds saline, and arranging heat for them, 100 of them felt better and flew away," he said.

The rest of the injured birds were taken to Forest Department's premises and were

released after treatment, he added.

Ashim Mollick, the unit's inspector, said many birds, including the injured ones, fell ill.

Big trees in Dhaka University and its surrounding areas are home to thousands of birds, especially black kites.

"Apart from the damaged ones, at least 20 big and small trees at Dhaka University fell after the storm, and one person was injured after a tree fell near the university's Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall," said Mihir Lal Saha, director of Arboriculture Center.

## BB RECRUITMENT TEST

### SC clears way for exam on Oct 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday cleared the way for Bangladesh Bank to hold examination on October 28 to recruit 225 assistant directors.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice M Enayetur Rahim stayed a High Court order that halted the process for holding the exam on that day.

The apex court chamber judge passed the order following a petition filed by BB, seeking a stay on the HC order.

In the petition, the central bank said the authorities have already taken preparation for holding the exam on October 28.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin and lawyer

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