

## '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."



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Prof Rounaq Jahan receiving a crest from Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, and Foreign Minister Abdul Momen, in presence of State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam and BIDS Director General Dr Binayak Sen.

PHOTO: STAR

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## Bangladesh to get 50MW electricity from Nepal

### Envoy tells Hasina

#### AGENCIES

Nepal will initially supply 40-50 MW of electricity to Bangladesh, and supply will rise further after completion of a mega power project, said newly appointed Nepalese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ghanshyam Bhandari.

The diplomat made the comment when he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban yesterday, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told reporters.

The envoy said his country is currently implementing a mega power project.

"Once the project is completed, Nepal will be able to export more electricity to Bangladesh," Ihsanul said, quoting the ambassador.

Bangladesh is eager to buy 500 MW electricity from the 900-MW Upper

## 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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## A gift to society

### Akbar Ali Khan, Rounaq Jahan awarded 'Gunijon Sombardhana'

STAR REPORT

For their extraordinary contributions in society, Akbar Ali Khan and Prof Rounaq Jahan were awarded the "Gunijon Sombardhana" by Daily Bonik Barta and Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies yesterday.

Many eminent personalities, government high ups, scholars and researchers gathered at the capital's Sonargaon hotel to honour the two distinguished individuals, who dedicated their lives for the welfare of people and society.

At the event, a family member of late Akbar Ali Khan and Rounaq Jahan received crests from Foreign Minister Abdul Momen and Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister.

Khan was an adviser to the caretaker government, but he resigned from the post as he was unable to perform his duties as an adviser in 2006-07.

With an illustrious career in bureaucracy already, Khan turned into a well-reputed public intellectual for his research work and literature. The eminent economist passed away on September 7 this year.

Recalling memories, Momen said he had a very good relationship with Khan.

Momen said when Khan was the economic minister at the Bangladesh embassy in the US in 1989, there was a big flood in Bangladesh. The minister then formed a forum involving Bangladeshis in the US to collect funds for the flood-hit people.

Back then, Khan had advised Momen to involve India and Nepal, and it was a great idea, Momen said, recalling his memories with Khan.

The foreign minister also said he

has been acquainted with Jahan, a distinguished fellow and trustee of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), for a long time.

Jahan was a senior research scholar and adjunct professor of international affairs at the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University, US.

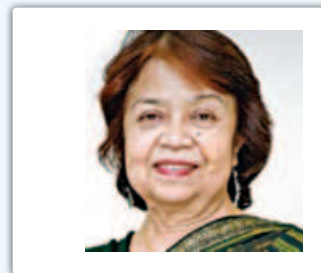
She was also a professor of political science at Dhaka University, and headed the

books and numerous articles. Most of her research focuses on issues of politics, governance, gender, development and health.

At the event, Jahan recalled her struggles while studying. As her father was a government employee, she had to study at different schools in her early life. But she passed an amazing time as a student at Harvard, where she learnt that the sky's the limit.



**With an illustrious career in bureaucracy already, Khan turned into a well-reputed public intellectual for his research work and literature. The eminent economist passed away on September 7.**



**Jahan is the author of several internationally acclaimed books and numerous articles. Most of her research focuses on issues of politics, governance, gender, development and health.**

women's programme at UN Asia-Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur and the International Labour Office, Geneva.

On top of that, she was a research fellow at Harvard, Chicago and Boston universities in the US and Chr Michelsen Institute in Norway.

Prof Jahan received her PhD in political science from Harvard University. She is the author of several internationally acclaimed

Mashiur Rahman said yesterday was a special day for him, as two of his close friends have been awarded.

Rahman also suggested translating Jahan's English books into Bangla, to make them accessible to the country's people.

CPD Chairperson Rehman Sobhan reminisced about his interactions and experiences with Khan.

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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.

## An evident disparity in quality of life

### Hijra, transgender communities continue to be deprived, say speakers

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.

**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.**

RANY CHOWDHURY

General Secretary of Sheman Welfare Association

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

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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

## 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.

Incessant 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 the capital.

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.