



Saving a few minutes is more important to this biker than his own safety as he was driving on the wrong side of the road to avoid the gridlock on the other side. As a result, a car coming from the opposite direction bumped into the motorcycle slightly. A serious accident was avoided and the rider was left with only a few scratches, as the car managed to hit the brakes right at the last second. This photo was taken in Shikha Bhaban area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

No alternative to Hasina

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Re-elected Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said Awami League and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina should be brought to power again for the welfare of the country.

“We must save Awami League to save Bangladesh,” he said while presenting the general secretary’s report at the first session of the AL’s 22nd national council at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan in the city.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, urged all the pro-liberation forces to be united and said, “There is no alternative to Sheikh Hasina...”

“No matter how many disasters and catastrophes came (in the country), we will always be beside people. It’s our commitment to stand by the country’s people,” he also said.

Referring to BNP, Quader said, “BNP leaders think that if Sheikh Hasina government is toppled, all the defeated forces will come to power. But that will not happen. They could not do so on December 10. We are ready to face them.”

He said Hasina has been the most popular, courageous, and efficient administrator and diplomat in the last 47 years. Hasina is the troubleshooter and there is no alternative to her, he said.

7 inter-district robbers held

BSS, Dhaka

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-4) claimed to have arrested seven members of an inter-district gang of robbers with stolen garments products worth Tk 5 crore in the Demra area early yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Tawhidul Kaushar, 42, Md Nazim, 35, Md Masud, 35, Md Dulal, 45, Md Miraj Uddin, 33, Abdul Al Masud, 30, and Md Saiful Islam, 22, said Rab officials.

Lt Col Mohammad Abdur Rahaman, commanding officer (captain) of Rab-4, told the news agency that acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-4 arrested them in the Demra area. The officials also seized a covered van filled with a large number of exportable clothing items.

A process is underway to take necessary action against them, the official added.

The unheard plight of those with rare diseases

Amid dearth of treatment options, patients suffer due to misdiagnosis, lack of awareness

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

In 2014, Iraboti Roy, 40, a patient with the disease Myasthenia Gravis, died a day after a doctor in the country’s top neurological hospital used a sedative on her.


Myasthenia Gravis is a rare, long-term condition that causes severe muscle weakness and often remains undetected in patients, leading to misdiagnosis and wrong treatment.

“Had the doctor not jabbed her with that injection, my sister could have survived. But I would not blame the physician because most doctors are unaware of rare diseases present in the country,” said Shashanka Baran Roy, Iraboti’s brother.

Myasthenia Gravis is one of approximately 7,000 rare diseases discovered so far. These conditions affect the lives of around 300 million people worldwide at any time, according to Global Genes -- a US-based organisation that works for individuals and families fighting rare and genetic diseases.

Being rare, there is a lack of awareness among physicians about these diseases, and medication to treat them is not widely available, leaving patients helpless.

For instance, Jakia Abedin, a 36-year-old Myasthenia Gravis



THE PROBLEMS

- » Lack of awareness among doctors
- » Medication expensive, not widely available
- » No govt policy, fund
- » Arrangement for diagnosis inadequate
- » Flaws in educational curriculum
- » Absence of referral system

Initially, my parents even discouraged me from discussing my illness, assuming that it was all in my head. Later, physicians too made mistakes time and again. Throughout this time, I was the one who suffered.

SUMONA MONZUR
Who has Myasthenia Gravis

We have highly qualified physicians, but access to them is an issue. Besides, even the country’s top hospitals often lack state-of-the-art technology for diagnosis.

PROF MOHAMMAD HOSEN
Dean of neurosurgery faculty at BSMMU

patient in Munshiganj, lost two babies just days after giving birth to them in 2006 and 2014.

Before conceiving the second child, Jakia asked her doctor -- who first identified her as a Myasthenia Gravis patient in 1999 -- whether her disease was responsible for the death of her first baby.

“My doctor told me there was no connection. But now I know there was and my baby would have lived if we had taken

precautionary measures,” Jakia told The Daily Star.

Abandoned by her husband, Jakia, now lives in a rented house in Munshiganj all alone. She needs Tk 4,000 a month to buy medicines for her rare illness but cannot afford the regular doses.

“I take medicine only when I need to move from my bed,” said Jakia between her sobs.

Jakia’s life could be easier if her thymus gland were removed through surgery, which her

doctor advised back in 2004. But she could not manage the required amount -- between Tk 2 to Tk 10 lakh -- for her surgery.

Amid the absence of policy and government funds, many patients with Myasthenia Gravis and other rare diseases lead a miserable life in Bangladesh, where out-of-pocket expenditure for treatment is 68.5 percent of the total cost.

Meanwhile, nine-year-old Anisur Rahman has

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HIGH COURT BAIL

Fakhrul, Abbas may have to wait 8 more days

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and the party’s Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas may have to wait for at least eight more days to seek bail from the High Court in the case filed over the December 7 clash between party activists and police.

The High Court is scheduled to reconvene on January 2 after its ongoing annual vacation.

Mirza Fakhrul and Mirza Abbas, who have been denied bail four times by the lower courts concerned in the case, have scope to seek bail from Dhaka court and the High Court.

On December 21, Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court rejected their bail petitions, and also fixed January 25 next year for hearing the petitions.

Advocate Zainul Abedin, a senior lawyer for the accused BNP leaders, told The Daily Star on December 24 that they are yet to receive the copies of the bail petition rejection orders of Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Mirza Abbas in the case.

“After getting the certified copies, we will decide whether we will move petitions before the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court again or High Court seeking bail for the detained BNP leaders. We will take the decision when the High Court and Dhaka judge court will reopen following their ongoing vacation,” he said.

Contacted, BNP’s Legal Affairs Secretary Kayser Kamal told this correspondent, “Unfortunately their [Fakhrul and Abbas] bail petitions were rejected despite not being named accused in the FIR [first information report].”

“Political motivation and consideration are

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TEKNAF, UKHIA

Govt building 50 cyclone shelters

BSS, Dhaka

The government is building a total of 50 multipurpose cyclone shelters and schools under the Emergency Multi-Sector Rohingya Crisis Response Project (EMCRP) at Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas in Cox’s Bazar district.

Under the project, the government is also building and improving relief administration and distribution centres, multipurpose community service centres, bazaars, firefighting warehouses, roads, footpaths, drains, culverts, bridges, lightning arresters and installs solar street lights inside the camps, said a press release yesterday.

EMCRP, aided by the World Bank, was launched to provide greater protection for the around 11.00 lakh

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PHOTO: COLLECTED



BHALO KAAJER HOTEL (MEAL FOR A GOOD DEED)... Dozens of people were sitting on the footpath and enjoying their afternoon meal -- khichuri with egg curry -- at this strange “restaurant” that does not charge customers. One simply needs to do one good deed a day to get food from here. The place mainly provides food to those afflicted with poverty, who cannot afford three square meals a day. This photo was taken in Tejgaon area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON