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Bangladesh  
belongs to all  
Says army chief at  
Janmashtami rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz-Zaman yesterday reaffirmed that Bangladesh belongs equally to people of all religions and communities, stressing that the armed forces will always stand beside citizens to safeguard peace, security, and harmony.

He made the remarks while addressing devotees at the inauguration of the central Janmashtami rally at Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

**Water gone,  
wounds remain**  
As rivers retreat, signs of destruction  
surface in the north



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Floodwaters along the Teesta and Dudhkumar river basins have receded, but families in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, and Rangpur are still grappling with severe hardships.

Many who returned home after spending weeks in shelters found their croplands buried under sand, houses damaged, and livestock lacking sufficient fodder.

Strong currents left deep pits in homesteads and yards, while poultry, goats and cattle were washed away in several areas.

Agriculture officials said Aman paddy largely survived the

flood, but vegetable fields were devastated.

Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Kurigram, yesterday said Aman may even benefit from fresh silt deposits.

"Vegetables suffered some damage, but on a limited scale. Where sand accumulated, farmers can still find fertile silt beneath it if cleared," he said.

Water Development Board officials also warned of riverbank erosion in several areas.

"The flood situation has

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

**Two held over  
Banani shisha  
lounge killing**

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gazipur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) has arrested two key suspects in the murder of Rahat Hossain Rabbi at a shisha lounge in Banani.

The accused, identified as Munna, 27, and Maksudur Rahman Hamza, 26, were arrested in Cumilla during a joint operation by Rab-1 and Rab-II.

According to a press release issued yesterday morning by Rab-1 Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police and media officer Salman Noor Alam, the suspects have been handed over to Banani Police Station.

Rahat's father, Robiul Awal, has filed a murder case in connection with the incident.

The incident occurred in the early hours of August 14 at the Three Sixty Shisha Lounge in Banani. Rahat

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



A procession in the Dhaka University area carries a child in a basket, symbolising the birth of Lord Sri Krishna, as part of Janmashtami celebrations yesterday. Hindus across the country marked the occasion with various programmes, while a grand procession was brought out from the capital's Palashi intersection in the afternoon, organised by the Bangladesh Puja Uddyan Parishad and the Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## A tug of war over 'plough' symbol

JP factions seek EC recognition after council, injunctions

RASHIDUL HASAN

The two factions of the Jatiya Party -- one led by GM Quader after the lifting of injunctions against him, and the other by Anisul Islam Mahmud following the party's council -- are locked in a dispute over control of the party.

Both sides have approached the Election Commission to claim legitimacy and the right to use the party's "plough" symbol.

After holding the council and forming a new committee, Anisul's faction amended the party constitution and sought the EC's recognition, including the party's registration and symbol. GM Quader, however, informed the EC that the council and committee were illegal.

According to sources, following the party's 10th council under Anisul, a letter was submitted to the EC secretary with details of the newly elected leadership. The letter stated that the controversial clause 20/1/a of the JP constitution, which gave the chairman absolute power, had been annulled.

The amendment requires presidium approval before expelling or relieving any central member or dissolving district bodies, and even if the chairman takes such action, it must be

approved at a presidium meeting.

On August 10, a day after the council, the list of the top four leaders of the new committee was submitted to the EC. The faction, claiming itself as the party's mainstream, argued that only its committee had the legal right to the plough symbol. They also said they would send a legal notice to GM Quader to hand over the party office and funds and refrain from using registration number 12.

Meanwhile, GM Quader's faction submitted a letter to the EC, citing clauses of the party constitution that they argued made the council illegal. They said those who convened it had been relieved from the party and that only the chairman has the authority to call a council.

Led by JP secretary general Shameem Haider Patwary, Quader's faction told reporters on Thursday that no one other than GM Quader could use the plough symbol or claim the chairmanship. He made the remarks after meeting Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at Nirbachan Bhaban.

Patwary said under section 20(Ka) of the party charter, only the chairman can appoint an acting chairman. "There is no alternative

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



**EC alone cannot  
ensure fair polls**  
Says Badiul Alam Majumdar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Reform Commission chief Badiul Alam Majumdar yesterday said the Election Commission alone cannot ensure a fair election without the cooperation and will of the government.

He made the remarks at a mock parliament event titled "The Election Commission's role is key to ensuring a fair upcoming national election," held at the FDC in the capital. The event was organised by Debate for Democracy.

Badiul Alam said, "There is no uncertainty about the upcoming election. It is essential that the election be held within the timeframe announced for February."

He added, "This time, a level playing field will be maintained in the election. If all stakeholders act responsibly, voters will stand in queues and cast their votes without hesitation. However, if political parties remain engaged in hooliganism, muscle power, and the game of money, a good election will not be possible. While the Election Commission's role is central in holding a fair election, all stakeholders -- including candidates, voters, civil society, and the media -- must act responsibly."

He further warned that if the election is held without reforms, it may become controversial. Subservient student politics is not acceptable, he said, adding that students should not act as musclemen for any political party. The outcome of student union elections in

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



A bus emits thick black smoke, choking the air and harming pedestrians and residents. Despite ongoing discussions on Dhaka's poor air quality and the need to regulate city buses, such unfit vehicles continue to ply the streets. The photo was taken in the capital's Tikatuli area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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## Janmashtami celebrated nationwide

STAR REPORT

Hindus across the country celebrated Janmashtami, the auspicious birth anniversary of Lord Sri Krishna, yesterday.

Various programmes were organised in Dhaka and across Bangladesh. The events included Sri Bhagavad Gita Yajna (recitation), colourful Janmashtami processions, Krishna puja, religious discussions, kirtan, arati, distribution of prasad, cultural competitions, and cultural performances.

The main attraction, a grand procession, was brought out from Palashi intersection in the capital in the afternoon under the initiative of the Bangladesh Puja Uddyan Parishad and the Mahanagar

After the inaugural ceremony, the procession, like every year, passed through Jagannath Hall, Shaheed Minar, Doel Chhattar, High Court intersection, Bangabazar, and Golap Shah Mazar before concluding at Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka. Earlier in the morning, the Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee organised a Gita Yajna at the Dhakeshwari National Temple, seeking peace and prosperity for the country and the nation. It was conducted by Shankar Math and Mission from Sitakunda, Chattogram.

Additionally, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) undertook a four-day programme marking Janmashtami. The activities included recitation of the Srimad Bhagavatam Gita, devotional songs and kirtan, bhog arati, distribution of maha prasad, discussion meetings, cultural programmes, and religious drama and kirtan mela.

**People united  
to resist efforts  
to derail polls**  
Says Salahuddin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the people of Bangladesh are united and determined to resist evil efforts to derail the upcoming national election and the country's democratic transition.

"Those who are now casting doubts about the election through various statements against democracy are neither on the side of democracy nor on the side of the people of Bangladesh," he said while speaking at a milad and doa mahfil.

Salahuddin, a BNP Standing Committee member, said for one reason or another, some are subtly making statements intended to delay, disrupt, or even resist the election.

"But the people of Bangladesh are united. They are determined to exercise their right to vote for democracy. Whoever makes such statements or raises false arguments to obstruct the democratic journey, the people will stand firmly against them," he warned.

The programme was arranged by Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal at BNP's Nayapaltan central office to mark the 81st birthday of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.



SEE PAGE 9 COL 5