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Pedestrians carefully make their way through a heavily excavated road strewn with piles of earth, bricks and concrete slabs in Block E of Mohammadpur, near Asad Avenue in the capital yesterday. The Dhaka North City Corporation has been carrying out drainage development work on sections of the road for over a month, leaving residents and commuters struggling to navigate the hazardous stretch. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

IN FOCUS

Next polls under caretaker govt

Says Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election will be held under a caretaker government, with the system restored through a constitutional amendment, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

"Of course, the next election will be held under a caretaker government," he told a press briefing at the home ministry.



Salahuddin said political consensus had already been reached on the issue.

Referring to the Supreme Court's decision on the 13th amendment, he said the court had overturned the earlier judgement by Justice Khairul Haque and judicially revived the caretaker government system. However, a constitutional amendment was needed to formally restore it.

"We are committed to this. Restoring the caretaker government system was one of the demands of our movement," he said.

Asked about social media reports that ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina might return to Bangladesh in December, Salahuddin said the government was aware of the claims.

He said Bangladesh had sent several requests to India through the foreign ministry seeking her

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DAP amendments threaten Dhaka's ecology: BAPA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recent amendments to the Detailed Area Plan 2022-2035, particularly changes to land-use provisions, open spaces, Wetland Overlay Zones and Floor Area Ratio regulations, could threaten Dhaka's ecological balance and climate resilience, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) warned yesterday.

BAPA demanded public hearings and consultations with environmentalists, urban planners, professional organisations, local communities and other stakeholders before major DAP changes.

In a statement, the organisation expressed concern over the amendments, published in the Bangladesh Gazette on October 14, 2026, and called for a fresh environmental assessment, greater transparency and consultations with relevant stakeholders.

The statement, signed by BAPA President Professor Dr Nur Mohammad Talukder and General Secretary Md Alamgir Kabir, questioned whether the environmental consequences

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Dengue, measles rage on as govt drives fall short

October sees sharp rise in cases, hospitalisations; experts point to flaws in prevention, vaccination efforts

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Both dengue and measles cases, hospitalisations, and deaths are rising sharply in October, despite the government's launch of a three-month dengue control drive and an intensified measles catch-up vaccination campaign last month.

Dengue cases hit a record daily high for the year yesterday, with 2,249 patients admitted, while the monthly total has already surpassed September's figure.

Meanwhile, daily averages of measles cases and hospitalisations reached a six-month high, while the average daily death toll is the highest since May. The outbreak has so far claimed 1,227 lives, mostly children.

The measles outbreak has been somewhat overshadowed by the sharp rise in dengue cases and deaths. However, the twin outbreaks are straining hospitals, with 14,193 patients -- 8,029 with measles and 6,164 with dengue -- remaining hospitalised yesterday.

Dengue testing should be available at community level, while high-risk patients should be monitored at upazila-level hospitals. For measles, secondary healthcare has to be strengthened. But the necessary steps are missing in both outbreaks.

MUSHTUQ HUSAIN, Public health expert

The rise comes more than a month after the government launched a three-month nationwide dengue prevention and cleanliness campaign on September 12.

Meanwhile, the government launched an intensified measles-rubella catch-up vaccination campaign on September 26 amid rising infections and deaths.

The move followed emergency measles-rubella campaigns in April and May and a mop-up campaign in July, which failed to contain the unprecedented outbreak.

Health experts attributed the

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'Implement July charter as per referendum verdict'

Shafiqur questions govt failure to stop cross-border money flow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Leader of the Opposition and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday warned that attempts to implement the July charter through constitutional amendments could be struck down by the courts, urging the government to carry out reforms in line with the referendum verdict.

"If you amend it again, a court will completely whitewash it. We are not accustomed to following this futile path and repeating the mistakes of the past," he said at a discussion organised by Jamaat

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Biman extends Riyadh, Dammam flight suspension till November 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday extended the suspension of all Dhaka-Riyadh and Dhaka-Dammam flights till November 4, citing passenger safety amid continued attacks on Saudi airports.

Biman had earlier suspended Dhaka-Dammam flights scheduled for October 23-25 and all Dhaka-Riyadh flights until October 31.

Meanwhile, the airline said it has been operating two Dhaka-Jeddah flights daily since October 16 in response to passenger demand. The arrangement will continue until November 4.

Regular Dhaka-Madinah flights are also continuing.

Passengers needing urgent travel may use Jeddah or Madinah airports to travel to Saudi Arabia or return to Bangladesh, Biman said. It advised passengers to contact its nearest sales offices for ticketing and travel information.

Further updates on flight operations and schedules would be announced later, the release added.

St Martin's reopens to tourists Nov 1

Daily visitor cap raised to 3,500; environmentalists raise concerns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

St Martin's Island will reopen to tourists on November 1 for a four-and-a-half-month season ending on March 15.

A maximum of 3,500 tourists will be allowed to visit the island daily, with each visitor required to pay Tk 100 as an environmental conservation fee.

Previously, the island allowed up to 2,000 tourists a day from November 1 to January 31, with overnight stays permitted only in December and January.

This time, however, it remains unclear whether overnight stays will be allowed in November.

The environment ministry yesterday issued instructions to relevant ministries and departments to implement the decisions.

Under the instructions, neither the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority nor the Department of Shipping can permit vessels to operate to St Martin's without approval from the environment ministry.



FILE PHOTO

Authorised tourist vessels will operate from Nuniachhara Ghat, while the Department of Environment has been asked to collect the conservation fee.

Meanwhile, cruise ship operators expressed concern over whether the necessary approvals could be secured before November 1.

Hossain Islam Bahadur, general secretary of the Sea Cruise Operators-Owners Association, said operators hoped to resume services within four days if they received administrative support.

"Three vessels are currently ready to operate and can carry 2,300 tourists cumulatively," he said, adding that at least six more vessels might join the service.

However, Bahadur said obtaining clearances from the DoE, Department of Shipping, BIWTA and district council was complicated. "We are communicating with the relevant departments in this regard," he said.

Businesspeople, politicians and residents brought out a celebratory procession on the island yesterday, welcoming the decision to resume tourism.

However, environmentalists raised concerns over the decision.

Alamgir Kabir, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said, "We believe the government's decision to increase the number of tourists allowed on the island and extend the tourism season in the interests of businesses conflicts with the need to protect Saint Martin's biodiversity. We hope the government will reconsider its decision."

Probe Purbachal raid, release arrestees

Demand 101 citizens, 4 rights groups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 101 citizens and four rights organisations have demanded an independent investigation into alleged rights violations during a Detective Branch raid on a house in Purbachal, Dhaka, on October 20, and the subsequent arrests and sentencing of those detained.

The citizens, including teachers, lawyers, journalists, writers and rights activists, expressed deep concern over the arrest of at least 85 people, including 26 women, and their subsequent sentencing through summary trials.

"The allegations that they were denied the opportunity to consult lawyers are also a matter of serious concern," their statement said.

They demanded an impartial investigation into who authorised the operation, its purpose and legal basis, and whether due process was followed in the arrests and sentencing.

The signatories also called for accountability if the investigation found legal violations or abuse of power.

They criticised police for bringing

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