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COUNTERING BNP AL to keep its presence on Dhaka streets today

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

The ruling Awami League men will hold rallies on the thoroughfares of Dhaka and take position at entry points of the capital as the BNP is going to stage its scheduled mass procession today.

The BNP will bring out the procession in front of its Nayapaltan central office to realise the party's 10-point demand, including the resignation of the government and restoration of a election-time caretaker government system.

AL leaders of Dhaka city (south and north) units earlier in meetings instructed their activists to resist the BNP men with an iron hand if they try to incite any of kind violence in the name of the movement.

Riaz Uddin, office secretary of Dhaka city (south) unit AL, said, "We held several meetings and instructed all activists to take position at every

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Passengers waiting outside their vehicles as movement on the Bangabandhu bridge was halted from the early hours till at least 2:00pm yesterday. Kilometre-long tailbacks were created on both approach roads of the bridge in Tangail and Sirajganj as authorities suspended toll collection due to poor visibility caused by dense fog.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BNP embarks on simultaneous movement today 32 like-minded parties also take to streets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP and 32 other like-minded political parties will take to the streets for the first time today as part of their simultaneous movement.

The procession will be held to press home its 10-point demand that includes the resignation of the government, dissolution of parliament, transfer of power to a non-partisan caretaker government before the next national election, and formation of a new Election Commission.

BNP, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the seven parties that form Ganatantra Mancha, 12-party alliance, and the 11-party Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote will hold their programmes separately at different points in the capital.

The parties want to stage a show of might in the city while BNP leaders will throng to the party office with small processions, said insiders of the parties.

They also said all the parties are likely to stage a sit-in protest on January 11 at their divisional headquarters, demanding that their 10-point demand be met. They are likely to announce this today.

BNP standing committee members sat in a meeting yesterday afternoon to work out the next course of action.

A party standing committee member, wishing anonymity, said they may announce a sit-in programme as the next step of the simultaneous movement.

Later in the day, the BNP held a meeting with like-minded political parties to finalise the sit-in programme.

BNP sources said they have already sent a message to party men to bring out processions peacefully and systematically.

At a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltan central

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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Licence renewal, legal complexity big hurdles

Global report says about Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that deal with human rights, democracy and good governance have been experiencing setbacks in the form of legal procedures and renewal of registration in the country, as Bangladesh remains static in the global index done to measure CSO sustainability and freedom.

Bangladesh lags behind in four criteria out of seven, which the global report took into account to prepare the index titled Civil Society Organisations Sustainability Index: 2021. It was revealed in a press conference yesterday on a virtual platform.

Bangladesh's overall score is 4 in 2021; it was the same last year.

The score of 4 in this index means "sustainability is in the stage of flourishing".

The global report listed four setbacks faced by CSOs in Bangladesh -- bureaucratic harassment in legal process, complicated registration process, renewal issues and delayed approval for foreign support.

Shedding light on freedom

of expression, the report said Bangladesh has seen a decline in civic space to speak out due to the digital security act, which prevents CSOs from functioning effectively.

Increasing restrictions on civic space also posed challenges for CSO operations, especially media, in 2021. As in previous years, the Digital Security Act was used to severely limit freedom of expression, stifling dissent and perceived criticism, it added.

Increasing restrictions on civic space also posed challenges for civil society organisations operations, especially media, in 2021.

"CSOs were hesitant to carry out advocacy campaigns that may challenge the government, especially in regards to policy-making, and the public image of CSOs deteriorated slightly with an increase of negative media coverage," the report reads.

Since inclusion of Bangladesh in the annual estimate in 2014,

Bangladesh saw a gradual decline in terms of sustainability of CSOs, said the report prepared by US-based development organisation FHI 360 with financial support from the USAID.

The report says that NGO Affairs Bureau increasingly delayed approvals of foreign grants in 2021, imposing new conditions in the process.

"The organisational capacity of CSOs also declined slightly in 2021 as funding cuts limited CSOs' ability to retain full-time, qualified staff. Financial viability, service provision, and the infrastructure supporting the sector remained unchanged in 2021," the report noted.

This happened despite the fact that the CSO sector in Bangladesh has long depended heavily on foreign and local donors, including government, multilateral institutions like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and UN, and bilateral donors like USAID, FCDO, UKAid and Sida.

CSOs register under various government departments, making it difficult to determine the total

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1ST UNIT OF ROOPPUR PLANT Commercial production to be delayed by a year

STAR REPORT

Commercial production of the first unit of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is likely to be delayed by six months to one year due to the setbacks caused by the Covid pandemic.

The plant may start supplying electricity by the end of 2024, though it was supposed to begin in December 2023, said Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources.

He was talking to journalists after visiting the construction site of the project in Pabna's Ishwardi yesterday, reports BSS.

The state minister, however, said the overall progress was satisfactory and that 87 percent of the work of the first unit had been done.

RNPP Project Director Md Shawkat Akbar was also present there.

As per the schedule, Unit-1 of the 2,400MW nuclear power plant was supposed to be commissioned by December 2023, he said.

"However, because of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the deadline has been pushed back to the middle of 2024," Shawkat added.

When asked about recent media reports claiming that a US-sanctioned Russian ship carrying RNPP project materials, was denied

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1 killed, 25 hurt as train hits bus at level crossing



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A person was killed and 25 others were injured after a train hit a bus in Sirajganj Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Babul Miah, 35, was a resident of Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari, said police.

Padma Express, heading for Rajshahi, hit the bus going towards Dhaka around 4:30am at Koddar Level Crossing, said Harunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Sirajganj Railway Police Station.

On information, police rushed to the spot and rescued the injured people. Some of them were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital, said the OC.

The level crossing is near the Bangabandhu Bridge West Railway Station.

Contacted, Station Master Md Sarwardi said there was a gateman at the level crossing, but he failed to close the gate on time. The bus got on the level crossing quickly, he added.

Rail communications between Dhaka and southern and northern districts remained suspended for an hour, said Anwar Hossain, Pakshey divisional transportation officer of Bangladesh Railway.

The railway authorities have formed a three-

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Hearing aids can help prevent dementia: study



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The usage of hearing aids is linked to a decreased risk of subsequent cognitive decline and dementia, according to a new review of studies.

Previous studies have found hearing loss to be one of the biggest risk factors associated with cognitive decline and it has been unclear if devices like hearing aids and cochlear implants have had a beneficial impact on cognition, pointed out scientists from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

A growing number of studies are revealing that people with dementia begin showing signs of cognitive decline, sometimes several years before an official diagnosis.

While some of these signs are often subtle, researchers said spotting them can be a step towards screening

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THE GOLD OF GUMAI
... Thousands of Red Breasted Parakeets flock the Gumai Beel, filled with ripe paddy ready for harvest. The Gumai, in Chattogram's Rangunia, is the second-largest beel in the country, after the Chalan Beel, with an area of about 3,000 hectares. It starts from Mariam Nagar in the upazila and stretches all the way to Rangamati's Nishchintapur. Farmers there firmly believe that the paddy grown on the beel is enough to feed the entire country for over two days. Mainly Aman and Boro are grown on the field, which is covered in gold when it's time for harvest. For parakeets, who feed on grains, the Gumai is an absolute paradise at that time. However, the beel remains in danger due to various kinds of construction taking place on the road adjacent to it.

PHOTO: AL NASIM TALUKDAR RAJIB