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BNP secures backing of allies for Feb programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has secured the support of its allies from the 12-party alliance and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh for its upcoming programmes demanding the general election be held this year.

The allies reached a consensus about the programmes during separate meetings with the BNP's liaison committee at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

They will also protest against rising prices of essential commodities.

Leaders from the 12-party alliance and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam assured the BNP of their full support to maintain pressure on the interim government to realise their demands.

Representatives from all the parties in the 12-party alliance and 10 leaders from Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam attended the meetings.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan were also present.

Sources from the meeting said that

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Traffic on the capital's Siddheshwari road squeezes past a large hole that Dhaka South City Corporation had dug for sewer maintenance, but did not bother to cordon off. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Titumir College students block road again

They threaten blockade unless institution declared univ by today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Government Titumir College blocked the Mohakhali-Gulshan road for the second day yesterday, issuing an ultimatum demanding that the institution be declared a university by 4:00pm today.

Otherwise, they would block any roads or railways in Dhaka North indefinitely under a programme titled "Barasat Barricade to North City".

Their hunger strike, which entered the third day yesterday, would also continue, the organisers of the protests said at a press briefing around 11:30pm.

Considering the Biswa Jitema, the blockade will be eased from 6:00am to 11:00am, the protesters said.

The students launched a hunger strike at 5:00pm on Wednesday and enforced the blockade outside the college at 11:30am on Thursday.

They ended the blockade at 4:00am yesterday, considering public suffering, said Ali Ahmed, one of the demonstrators. Around 20 students

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Check the manuscripts before books hit Boi Mela

DMP urges Bangla Academy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has requested that the Bangla Academy review manuscripts for books before they hit the shelves at Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

"We've suggested the academy make sure the manuscripts don't contain anything that could disrupt social harmony, incite communal tension, make anti-national statements, or destabilise the government. We request Bangla Academy to ensure that such books don't appear at the fair," said DMP Additional Commissioner SN Nazrul Islam told journalists yesterday after inspecting the security measures taken by the police for the book fair.

"Hopefully, from next year, we will be able to make it happen...," he added.

DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali, who was also with him at the time,

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Trump repeats 100% tariffs threat to BRICS nations

Warns them not to replace US dollar, pledges to go ahead with 25% tariffs on Canada, Mexico

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump has warned the BRICS member countries against replacing the US dollar as a reserve currency by repeating a 100 percent-tariffs threat he had made weeks after winning the November presidential elections.

"We are going to require a commitment from these seemingly hostile Countries that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty US Dollar or, they will face 100% Tariffs," he said on Thursday on Truth Social in a statement nearly identical to one he posted on November 30.

Trump posted his warning to the BRICS as Canada and Mexico await for his decision to follow through on a pledge to impose 25 percent tariffs on the United States' North American trading partner from today.

The BRICS grouping includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and a few other countries that joined in the past couple of years.

The Kremlin yesterday brushed off the repeat threat by Trump to impose tariffs on the BRICS grouping of countries, saying there was and never had been such a plan.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said BRICS was not talking about setting up its own currency, but



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2,500 Gaza children at 'imminent risk' of death

Warns UN chief, demands their immediate evacuation

REUTERS, United Nations

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has demanded that 2,500 children be immediately evacuated from Gaza for medical treatment after meeting with US doctors who said the children were at imminent risk of death in the coming weeks.

The four doctors had all volunteered in Gaza during the 15-month-long offensive that has devastated the enclave of more than 2 million people and its healthcare system.

Just days before a ceasefire began on January 19, the World Health Organization said more than 12,000 patients were waiting for medical evacuations and it had hoped they could be ramped up during the truce.

Among those patients urgently needing treatment are 2,500 children, said Feroze Sidhwa, a California trauma surgeon who worked in Gaza from March 25 to April 8 last year.

"There's about 2,500 children who

are at imminent risk of death in the next few weeks. Some are dying right now. Some will die tomorrow. Some will die the next day," Sidhwa told reporters on Thursday after meeting with Guterres.

The UN Palestinian relief agency UNRWA said yesterday that if its humanitarian work in Gaza is forced to halt, it would put a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas at risk.

U N R W A , however, said its humanitarian work across the occupied territories and Gaza was still ongoing yesterday despite an Israeli ban that took effect a day before and what it described as hostility towards its staff.

Meanwhile, Hamas said yesterday it would free the father of the youngest hostages seized on October 7, 2023 and two others including a dual US citizen today in the next exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners.

Israel is also set to free 90 inmates today in exchange for the three Israeli hostages in the fourth swap of Gaza ceasefire, a Palestinian advocacy group said.

- Israel, Hamas to conduct fourth round of prisoner-hostage exchange today
- EU restarts Rafah border crossing mission
- Trump insists Egypt, Jordan will take Gazans

'Building blocks of life' found on alien asteroid

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The building blocks of life have been found on an alien asteroid, scientists have said.

Samples taken by Nasa from the asteroid Bennu have not only the ingredients required to life but also show the leftovers of an ancient water world, researchers said in new findings.

The findings suggest more strongly than ever that life on Earth might have come from an asteroid that crashed into our planet. They also show that those ingredients might have been in the water also thought necessary for life from early on.

"That's the kind of environment that could have been essential to the steps that lead from elements to life," said the Smithsonian Institution's Tim McCoy, one of the lead study authors.

Nasa's Osiris-Rex spacecraft returned 122 grams of dust and pebbles from the near-Earth asteroid Bennu, delivering the sample canister to the Utah desert in 2023 before swooping off after another space rock.

It remains the biggest cosmic haul from beyond the moon. The two previous asteroid sample missions, by Japan, yielded considerably less material.



US FUND CUTS 1,000 icddr,b staffers lose jobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The impact of newly-elected US President Donald Trump's decision to halt foreign aid has also reached Bangladesh's International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (icddr,b).

As a result, the jobs of over a thousand officials and employees engaged in various projects under the organisation have become uncertain.

icddr,b has issued termination letters to over a thousand employees. Those who received these letters primarily worked in programmes funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). All of these officials and employees were employed on a contractual basis.

icddr,b Senior Manager (communications) AKM Tariful Islam Khan confirmed the matter to The Daily Star last night.

AKM Tariful Islam Khan said, "As per the directive of the US government, we have suspended projects and research funded by them until further notice. We express our sympathy and regret for any inconvenience caused to our service recipients, various stakeholders, and colleagues. We hope to resume our activities soon."



The bamboo bridge on the Chhetra river in Brahmanbaria's Aruail serves as the sole road connection to Sarail upazila town for the people of 15 villages in Aruail and Pakshimul. Locals have been demanding a concrete bridge there for years since they have to use the bamboo bridge even to carry their farm produce, besides travel for other purposes. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

12 lives lost in road crashes

Three of a family among them

STAR REPORT

At least 12 people, including a married couple, died in separate road collisions in Sirajganj, Rangpur, Mymensingh, and Kushtia yesterday.

In Sirajganj, three members of the same family were killed and four others injured when a bus hit a three-wheeler near Mulibari Overpass on the Tangail-Sirajganj highway around 8:30pm.

The deceased are Shafikul Islam, 35, his wife Sumona Khatun, 30, and his sister Laki Khatun, 25, of Purbo Baoitara village in Sadar upazila, reports our Pabna correspondent.

They were all passengers of the battery-run autorickshaw, said Md Anwarul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge (West) Police Station,

Quoting family

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