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Commuters jostle to get onto an already packed bus on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at the end of office hours yesterday afternoon. There was a huge rush on the road as metro rail services were suspended for hours, following a tragic incident in which a bearing pad fell from a pillar near the Farmgate metro station, killing a pedestrian around noon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP seeks symbol sharing within alliances

Slams RPO amendment at meeting with CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has opposed the recent amendment to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) that requires political alliances to contest the next national election using each party's own symbol, instead of a single alliance symbol.

Ismail Zabihullah, BNP chairperson's advisory council member, shared the party's stance with reporters yesterday following a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin and EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed at the EC headquarters in the capital.

Former acting EC secretary Mohammad Zakaria was with the two-member BNP delegation.

On October 24, the advisory council approved major changes to the RPO, 1972.

In the past, smaller partners in alliances led by major parties like the Awami League and BNP were able to run with the larger party's symbol.

Zabihullah said that in previous polls, political alliances in Bangladesh have always been free to either use their own symbols or contest under the symbol of an alliance partner, a process that, he

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Rally behind the chosen or face consequences

Tarique warns grassroots leaders

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP will take strict action against grassroots leaders who refuse to support the candidates selected for the election, said the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday.

During the hour-and-40-minute-long meeting with leaders of the BNP's Chattogram and Rangpur divisions, Tarique said he expects them to maintain discipline and adhere to the party's decisions without deviation ahead of the polls.

He also asked them to work together in the constituencies where the party has decided not to field any candidate to accommodate alliance partners.

During the meeting, Tarique delivered a nearly 40-minute speech, while standing committee members Jamiruddin Sircar, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Salahuddin Ahmed spoke among others.

"BNP leader Salahuddin said that if the aspirants do not accept the party's

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Metro's 2nd pad fall rings alarm
Kills man at Farmgate; sparks Dhaka-wide traffic chaos; experts raise safety concerns

Staff Correspondent

A pedestrian was killed and two others injured yesterday when a bearing pad from the metro rail line fell and struck them in the capital's Farmgate area, disrupting the widely used service for several hours.

The incident occurred just 13 months after another bearing pad fell from the metro line near the same location, raising concerns about the safety of this highly technical mode of transport.

Metro rail authorities suspended operations around 12:20pm following the incident, citing safety concerns and causing significant disruption for thousands of commuters. The incident also triggered severe traffic congestion across several parts of Dhaka.

Although services resumed on the Uttara-Agargaon section by 3:00pm, the Agargaon-Motijheel route remained suspended till the filing of this report around 9:00pm. Operations on the Motijheel-Shahbagh section resumed at 7:15pm.

Contacted by this newspaper around 10:15pm, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd Managing Director Faruk Ahmed said works on the pier will continue overnight, after which a trial run will be conducted today. "If all goes well, we will announce when operations will resume."

The deceased was identified as Abul

Kalam Azad, 35, from Naria upazila in Shariatpur. Azad worked at a travel agency and commuted regularly from Chashara in Narayanganj to his office in Uttara, according to his relatives.

One of the injured was identified as Amir, a shopkeeper, while the identity of the other injured person could not be confirmed.

Meanwhile, a senior metro rail official said two bearing pads fell, but only one could be traced.

On elevated structures such as bridges and metro rail lines, bearing pads are placed between the viaduct and the pier. In this case, four bearing pads were installed on each pier. Experts said these pads transmit loads from the superstructure to the piers and absorb vibrations caused by the movement of metro trains.

On September 18 last year, one of the four bearing pads fell from pier no-430, disrupting metro rail services on the Agargaon-Motijheel section for around 11 hours. However, no casualties were reported.

Yesterday, the bearing pad fell from pier no-433 - just two piers away from the previous incident and adjacent to Farmgate Metro Station.

Champa Akhter, a nearby shopkeeper and eyewitness, said she first heard a loud noise. "I then saw the object [bearing pad] bounced onto the street and struck the man [Azad] on the neck from behind," she told this correspondent at the scene.

"He immediately collapsed on the footpath, and blood started coming



A battery-powered van crammed with schoolchildren makes its way down a rural road. Too far to walk and too remote for formal transport options, students, parents and teachers rely on these unregistered vehicles for both the morning commute and the journey home. The photo was taken in the Kakonhat area of Godagari upazila in Rajshahi recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN



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