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# Deadline, drive lessen textbook crisis little

KAILASH SARKAR and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Despite a 24-hour deadline given by a taskforce to textbook publishers to ensure smooth supply of books, most of the students failed to buy them yesterday as the supply was scarce and the prices remain higher in the market.

Hundreds of students and their guardians thronged Banglabazar, the main publishing zone in the capital, and most of them returned empty-handed as the taskforce deadline expired yesterday evening.

To prevent irregularities in book supply and book sale, the taskforce, led by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in cooperation with personnel from Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police, conducted a daylong drive in Banglabazar area. The drive could not stop the irregularities.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid visited Banglabazar several times yesterday

and on Sunday night and requested publishers and sellers to sell the textbooks at their actual prices and supply them to vendors. His effort went in vein.

A large number of buyers who got the books had to buy them at higher prices and in some cases at twice their actual price.

Most of the publishers did not sell textbooks at all yesterday as they could not sell them at higher prices in presence of the taskforce. Some smuggled out books to other places from Bangla Bazar so that they can sell them at higher prices later.

Scooter driver Abdus Salam, of Fajira in Shariatpur, yesterday said, "I failed to purchase textbooks for my daughter Reepa Akhter, a student of class-VII in Kalidas High School, so I came to Bangla Bazar today."

"In the morning, I was offered a set of textbooks for Tk 450 when the actual price is Tk 208. I decided to wait to buy the

books at a lower price and it was a mistake as now I cannot buy them for Tk 500 even," he said.

Mizanur Rahman, an administrative officer of Dhaka Education Board, said he has been looking for books for his daughter Nowshin Akhter Tamanna, a class-VI student of Imperial Ideal School, but he could not manage them.

Student of class-IX Joy Mitra of Dhaka Collegiate School said he bought a book for Tk 95 although its actual price is Tk 74.10.

Hasan Book Depot owner Abul Kalam refuting allegations of irregularities said they were selling the books following all the rules and directives of the government.

Chief of the taskforce Col Reza-nur-Rahman Khan, also the additional director-general of Rab, told The Daily Star, "We worked to prevent irregularities in supply and sale."



Retail book sellers queue up in front of a textbook publishing house at Banglabazar in the capital yesterday in presence of law enforcers who conducted drives to ensure supply of books.

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## SC HEARING 5th amendment petition sent to full bench

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chamber judge of the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday sent to the full bench of the apex court for hearing the petition praying for its (SC) permission to contest the High Court (HC) verdict declaring the fifth amendment to the Constitution illegal.

The fifth amendment of the Constitution approved late President Ziaur Rahman's takeover and previous acts from August 15, 1975.

Justice Md Tafazzal Islam also fixed February 16 for hearing of the petition filed by three SC lawyers.

Munshi Ahsan Kabir, Tajul

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Unknown persons recently hung this banner renaming Begum Khaleida Zia Medical College at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, to "Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital." The hospital authorities are aware of this but have not removed the banner.

PHOTO: STAR

## 75pc complaints see no results

Reveals CAB survey on Wasa clients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventy-five percent clients of Wasa in four divisional cities say that they did not get results after lodging complaints with the authorities concerned.

This was revealed in a Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) survey on 400 Wasa clients in Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, and Chittagong divisional cities.

Eighty percent of them complained that they do not get supply water round the clock and in many cases supply water is unavailable 12 to 15 hours a day.

A staggering 37 percent said they do not get supply water before leaving home for work in morning.

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## Polytech students stick to vandalism

Destruction in Mymensingh, road barricade in Ctg against new exam rules

STAR REPORT

Students of Chittagong and Mymensingh polytechnic institutes staged demonstrations yesterday demanding cancellation of the new rules for unsuccessful students to take fresh examinations.

The protesters at Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute vandalised windowpanes of several rooms including the rooms of the principal and vice principal while the students of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute put up barricade on the city's Bayezid Bostami road.

Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), however, in a statement yesterday said discontent among students arose due to the rumour about their referred examination system.

The BTEB said: "Students who fail in any of their final semester examination three times will be allowed to appear at the exams as 'irregular examinee' but students took it for cancella

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## 26 Rohingyas pushed back to Myanmar

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

BDR men arrested 26 Rohingyas of Myanmar when they were infiltrating into Bangladesh through Shah Parir Dwpip border in Sabrang area in Teknaf upazila Sunday night.

They were later pushed back to Myanmar.

BDR sources said, their patrol team led by Company Commander Sirajul Islam from Shah Parir Dwpip outpost chased a group of Rohingyas at 11pm Sunday while they were entering into the Bangladesh territory crossing the Naf river.

The arrested Rohingyas include Rashid Ahmed, Nurul

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## 'Arsonists' behind Australian wildfire

Death toll stands at 135

AP, WHITTLESEA, Australia

Police declared incinerated towns crime scenes Monday, and Australia's prime minister spoke of mass murder after investigators said arsonists may have set some of the country's worst wildfires in history. The death toll rose to 135.

The scale of the carnage, growing daily, has shocked a nation that endures deadly firestorms every few years. There were no quick answers, but officials said panic and the freight-train speed of the firefront probably accounted for the unusually high toll.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, visibly upset during a television interview, reflected the country's disgust at the idea that arsonists may have set some of the 400 fires that devastated Victoria state, or helped them jump containment lines.

"What do you say about anyone like that?" Rudd said.

"There's no words to describe it, other than it's mass murder."

The country's top law officer, Attorney General Robert McClelland, said that people found to have deliberately set fires could face murder charges. Murder can carry a life sentence.

More than one dozen fires still burned uncontrollably across the state, though conditions were much cooler than on Saturday, which saw record-high heat and winds of up to 60 mph (100 kph).

At least 750 homes were destroyed on Saturday, the Victoria Country Fire Service said. Some 850 square miles (2,200 kilometres) of land were burned out.

Officials said both the tolls of human life and property would

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## 28 die as Tiger bomber blows off herself in SL

AP, APP, Colombo

A suspected rebel suicide bomber killed 20 soldiers and eight civilians when she blew herself up yesterday at a facility where government forces were processing Sri Lankans fleeing the northern war zone, the military said.

The bombing was the first major suicide attack in Sri Lanka in more than a month and led to fears the Tamil Tiger separatists boxed in by the military and on the verge of defeat will increasingly turn to guerrilla warfare in their battle against government forces.

Following a string of victories, the military backed the rebels into a small strip of land on the northeastern coast, where the Red Cross estimates 250,000 civilians are also trapped.

The military has accused the rebels of holding the civilians as human shields and called for noncombatants to flee to government-controlled areas. The rebels have accused the government of indiscriminately shelling the war zone, leading to increasing civilian casualties.

On Monday morning, more than 800 civilians had crossed the front lines and were being searched by soldiers before being sent to camps farther south, military spokesman Brig. Udaya

Nanayakkara said.

When the attacker was frisked, she set off the bomb she was wearing, killing 28 people, he said. The blast also wounded 24 troops and 40 civilians, he said.

Footage run on state television showed a child in a purple checked dress lying lifeless on the ground. Other civilians lay dead nearby. Plastic chairs they were apparently sitting in as they waited to be processed were overturned, and blood stained the ground.

"The LTTE is now desperate because they don't have any control over the civilians now," Nanayakkara said, calling the rebels by the initials of their formal name, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. "They wanted to stop these people coming in."

Confirmation of the attack was not available because independent journalists were barred from the war zone.

The United Nations condemned the bombing.

"We deplore the loss of civilian life in this targeted killing. It's a blow for people who have suffered so much," UN resident coordinator Neil Buhne said.

The attack appeared aimed at one of the

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Unable to afford books or CDs, street urchins stare at posters of audiovisual books at Amar Ekushey Bio Mela yesterday.

PHOTO: SHAFIQUIL ALAM

## Presence of writers makes fair livelier

RAKIB AHAMMED

Large crowds have been enjoying the company of their favourite writers at Ekushey Boi Mela as it completed its ninth day yesterday.

The presence of popular writers has always been an added attraction of the fair.

Popular writer Imdadul Haq Milon was seen happily mingling with his fans crowding the stall of Anonnya where the writer was sitting.

Booklovers were swarming

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Prayer Timing		
February 10		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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