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Triumph over adversities

Textbooks reach students in time despite hartal, blockade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Children who went to school yesterday morning returned home with new textbooks, gifts that awaited them at schools across the country.

The government started distributing nearly 30 crore copies of textbooks to more than 3.73 crore students of class-I to class-IX despite the back-to-back shutdowns.

With due festivities, yesterday was observed as the first day of the new academic session, the Textbook Festival Day.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the festival by releasing balloons at the capital's Government Laboratory School at 11:00am. He handed books to students from four schools and one madrasa.

The students were happy to get the books from a minister. Some were skipping around in joy, while others were flipping through the books. Many parents and teachers also joined the fun.

The smell of new books hung in the air, with many of the students holding balloons and cheering. More than a thousand students from BCSIR High School, Dhanmondi Government Girls High School, Kamrunnesa Government Girls High School and Hafez Abdur Razzak Dakhil Madrasa attended the festival.

"I am very happy to get new books. I will start reading them as soon as I get back home," said Sumaiya, a student from Kamrunnesa Government Girls High School.

"We want to get books on time every year," said another from the same school.

A parent observed, "The quality of the textbooks has improved significantly. Getting books on the first day of the session will encourage them to learn more."

The government has printed about 29,96,75,938 copies

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Celebrating the distribution of textbooks for the new academic year, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid shows the books along with students of Govt Laboratory High School in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Miladunnabi on Jan 14

UNB, Dhaka

Eid-e-Miladunnabi, the day of the birth and demise of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), will be observed on January 14 (Tuesday), as the Rabiul Awal moon was sighted in Bangladesh sky yesterday.

The National Moon Sighting Committee took the decision at a meeting yesterday evening after reviewing information on the sighting of the Rabiul Awal moon.

The meeting was held at Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram conference

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BNP lawmakers move to 'free' Khaleda

Seek Speaker's help, meet president today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders would meet President Abdul Hamid this afternoon and ask the chief of state to intervene and "free their party chief from being confined to her home".

The press secretary to the president said the BNP leaders have an appointment with the president in Bangabhaban at 4:00pm.

Party insiders told The Daily Star that failing to wage a movement to "free" Khaleda, BNP was seeking the Speaker and the president's help.

A delegation of BNP lawmakers yesterday met Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury at the parlia-

ment building asking for her cooperation in getting BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia "freed from her Gulshan residence".

The Speaker assured the BNP parliamentary party delegation of talking to relevant authorities about the matter.

Later in the day, she enquired State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku about the matter over the telephone. Tuku told her that Khaleda was not confined to her home, parliament secretariat sources quoted him as saying.

He claimed that Khaleda's security was their first priority.

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BLOCKADE GOES ON Hartal in 4 dists till polls day

STAR REPORT

Vehicular movement on the capital's thoroughfares was almost normal yesterday, the second day of the non-stop blockade sponsored by the BNP-led 18-party combine, though long-distance buses did not leave from the city or come to it.

Stray incidents, however, marked the indefinite blockade elsewhere over the demand for the cancellation of the January 5 polls. The blockaders went on the rampage at least in three districts, injuring no fewer than 40 persons.

The 18-party called a 48-hour hartal starting tomorrow morning in Chittagong, Sylhet, Jhenidah and Bogra, protesting the

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ARMY DEPLOYMENT Extension, if necessary

Tells CEC after meeting president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army personnel deployed for the 10th parliamentary elections may continue to discharge their duties even after January 9 to maintain post-polls law and order, says Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad.

"We may extend the duration of army deployment in some places if felt necessary to control post-election law and order situation," he told reporters after a meeting with President Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban yesterday.

As per the Election Commission's decision, army personnel have been deployed as a striking force from December 26 and they will continue to discharge their election duties

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Diplomats discuss Bangladesh situation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid apprehension of serious political crisis before and after the January 5 election, foreign diplomats of some influential countries stationed in Dhaka yesterday had several meetings to discuss the latest situation.

Diplomatic sources said envoys of some countries were displeased that the major political parties could not reach a

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Clarification on Shujan report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Speaker of parliament Shawkat Ali in a clarification of a news item titled "Juniors beat seniors" published in The Daily Star on December 28 said the report was based on Shujan's wrong assumptions.

Ali said the report was prepared following a press conference of

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PRAYER TIMING		January 3
Azan	5:30	6:05
Fajr	5:30	6:05
Juma	12:30	1:15
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:30	5:35
Esha	7:00	7:30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Two more burnt after a break

Another hurt in cocktail blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They groan as they breathe and it looks as if their energy is diminishing bit by bit at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Mohammad Alamgir Hossain and Mohammad Lokman, two vegetable traders, fell prey to a petrol bomb attack on the pick-up they were travelling by on Wednesday around 10:30pm.

Neither of them suffered burns on more than 10 percent of their bodies, but what pushed them into danger was their breathing tracks getting badly injured, doctors said. Their faces and necks were also burnt.

Alamgir had stayed at home for days

in fear of such attacks by blockaders, his wife Saleha Begum said. But since last week did not see much violence, he thought it was now safe to move.

Alamgir, though with difficulty, tried to narrate how the attack took place.

They were sitting in the rear of the vehicle carrying vegetables that they wanted to sell at markets. As they reached Mouchak in Gazipur, a bomb struck Lokman's face and exploded, setting the two men alight.

That was evident from the wounds in Lokman's face. The top layer of his skin peeled off, revealing the soft pinkish layer underneath.

He was wheezing. Every word

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Wife Saleha tries to comfort vegetables trader Alamgir, whose entire face got burnt when criminals hurled a petrol bomb at a pickup he was travelling on in Gazipur on Wednesday night. More on page 2.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



A customer spreads a variety of hot sauce on Chital/Chitro pitha at a roadside stall on Green Road in the capital yesterday. Pitha shops spring up across the city during winter to cater to people's desire for the mouth-watering treats. See City in Frame on page 16.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The Daily Star



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ONLINE POLL

Do you think that the recent diplomatic move by the USA and the UK could bring the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP to the negotiating table?

Yes

No

(24%)

(76%)

TOTAL VOTES: 309

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that people will cast their votes in a festive mood as they did in 5,803 local government and by-elections?

Yes

No

(24%)

(76%)

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