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After delaying polls, Thai parliament moves to bar ex-PM from politics

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School textbooks right on time

65pc copies of free books of primary, secondary levels already sent to upazilas

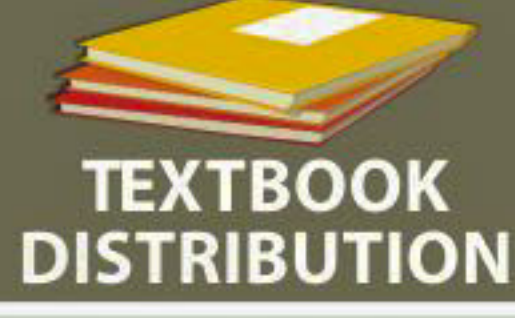
WASIM BIN HABIB

Primary and secondary students are expected to get new textbooks on the very first day of 2015, as around 70 percent of the over 32 crore copies have already reached upazilas, 32 days ahead of distribution date.

The government believes it would be able to deliver the textbooks on time like the previous five years.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) as well as the printers are working round-the-clock to meet the target of dispatching 32.63 crore copies of new textbooks for around four crore students from class I to class X. It is costing the government around Tk 700 crore to give the children free books.

"We hope to send all the books to all



TEXTBOOK DISTRIBUTION

2015	32.63Cr
2014	29.96Cr
2013	26.17Cr
2012	22.13Cr
2011	23.31Cr
2010	19Cr

upazilas before the deadline if there are no hartals or blockades in the coming days," said Mustak Ahmed Bhuiyan, distribution controller of NCTB.

The NCTB has fixed December 25 as the deadline for sending the books to the upazilas.

Around 95 percent of more than 14.82 crore secondary level and 3.09 crore Dakhil (secondary level of madrasa) and Dakhil vocational textbooks have so far been sent to the upazilas, said NCTB sources.

Similarly, around 70 percent of some 1.79 crore ebtadai (primary level of madrasa) textbooks have reached the upazilas, they added.

They said they were a little behind in

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Textbooks for school children being prepared at Bangla Bazar of Old Dhaka for shipment. The government is on schedule to get the books to the children on time this year.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



US for talks to end disputes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National consensus among political parties is a must to strengthen democratic processes and sustainable economic development.

Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State

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26 feared dead

Fishing vessel sinks in Bay after collision with ship; one body recovered, 2 rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person died and 26 more went missing after a fishing vessel capsized in the Bay of Bengal early yesterday.

Two Navy ships and a helicopter scoured the area throughout the day but failed to find any of the missing till 10:00 last night.

The FV Bandhan with 29 crewmen onboard turned turtle about 30 nautical miles northwest off the Saint Martin's Island around 3:10am, after being hit by Singapore-bound merchant vessel Bashundhara-8, said officials of Bengal Fisheries Limited, the owner of the capsized vessel.

Three crew including junior officer Sajib Hossain, 25; and sailors Nasir, 40, and Lavlu, 30, were rescued by the crew of a fishing trawler but Nasir died later, said Kazi Kamrul Amin, assistant manager (operations) of the joint venture of AK Khan Group and Japan's Maruha Nichiro Corporation. Nasir hailed from Pirojpur.

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US businesses demand return of GSP benefit

Companies say they lose \$2m a day for GSP suspension

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Hundreds of small and big business enterprises in the US urged the Obama administration to restore the GSP (generalised system of preferences) status in the American market by 2014 to keep their businesses afloat.

The US companies have been losing \$2 million a day -- over \$850 million so far -- due to the suspension of the scheme since July 31 last year.

The current GSP expiration, now in its

16th month, is the longest in GSP's 40-year history.

Business units have not only been losing money, many faced closure as they failed to remain competitive, according to a letter sent to John Boehner, speaker of the US House of Representative, last week.

First enacted in 1974, GSP eliminates import duties for American firms on certain products from nearly 130 developing countries.

The current GSP expiration, now in its

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War crimes accused sent to jail

UNB, Kishoreganj

A court here yesterday sent Shamsuddin Ahmed to jail in a case for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

He was arrested on Thursday for his alleged crimes of killing, arson attack and looting in 1971.

Senior Judicial Magistrate SM Rajibul Hasan passed the order when police produced the arrestee before the court at noon.

The court also ordered

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Mushfiqur Rahim flicks one on his way to a 78-ball 77 during the fourth ODI against Zimbabwe in Mirpur yesterday. Mushfiqur's knock helped the Tigers set up 256 before they restricted the visitors to 235, thereby taking a 4-0 lead in the five-match series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BGB men open fire after crash kills 2 jawans

3 villagers injured; shops, houses vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Aggrieved by two fellow jawans getting killed in a road accident, armed BGB men went wild in Phulbari of Dinajpur yesterday leading to a clash with locals that left 13 people injured, including three with bullet wounds.

The incident left Dhaka-Dinajpur highway blocked.

Police and locals said Border Guard Bangladesh jawans Al Amin, 19, and Rubel, 20, were returning to the 29 Battalion headquarters in Phulbari on a motorbike when they had a head-on collision with a truck in Rangamati area metres away from the headquarters around 1:20pm.

The accident left them dead on the spot. Hearing the news, BGB jawans of the battalion rushed to the spot and started vandalising roadside shops and charging truncheons on locals accusing the locals of "letting the truck driver and his assistant flee", sources said.

Around 10 locals were injured.

Following the incident, senior officers of the BGB went to the spot and took the jawans back to the barracks.

However, locals protesting the attack on them blocked Dinajpur-Dhaka highway in front of battalion headquarters after the soldiers had left the scene, sources said.

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Locals burn furniture and wood on Dhaka-Dinajpur highway to block it at Phulbari. Inset, the motorbike of the BGB jawans crushed under the truck.

PHOTO: STAR

India woos neighbours to counter Chinese clout

AFP, Kathmandu

India pledged a slew of regional investments at a South Asian summit this week, seeking to counter China's growing economic inroads into its backyard as it remains embroiled in bitter rivalry with Pakistan.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said South Asia's largest economy would fund regional infrastructure, health facilities and even a communications satellite, and promised to free up its markets to exporters in smaller countries in the region.

Modi, who won a landslide election victory in May, has made clear that boosting India's influence in its immediate neighbourhood is a key strategic priority for his Hindu nationalist



At Saarc Summit, India pledged a slew of regional investments

government.

Critics say the previous Congress party government began to take relationships for granted, allowing economic giant China -- which shares a border with four of India's neighbours -- to step into the breach.

But the failure of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) to make any significant prog-

ress during a two-day meeting underscored the scale of the challenge New Delhi faces.

Cross-border trade among the eight Saarc nations -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- still accounts for less than five percent of total commerce in the region.

"Indians want to keep South Asia as their exclusive sphere of influence," said Sreeram Chaulia, dean of the Jindal School of International Affairs in Delhi.

"To do that... we need to play the economic game and we need to play the connectivity game better. We have been protectionist, and that is not good," he told AFP, welcoming Modi's

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TIB welcomes Saarc pledge to ensure good governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday welcomed Saarc leaders' pledge to ensure good governance for sustainable development by promoting accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

The TIB in a statement called upon the Bangladesh government to take specific steps to genuinely promote accountable and transparent governance. It hoped the other Saarc governments will also follow up on this commitment.

The pledge forms part of the Kathmandu

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