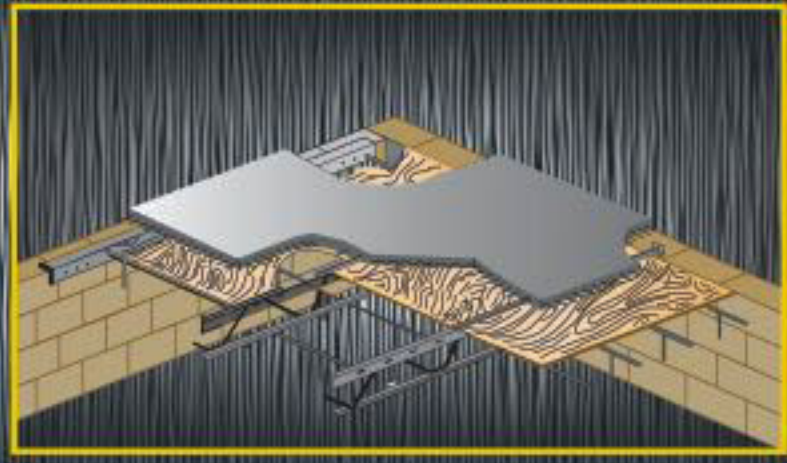


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PRIMARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

Half of books not ready yet

Distribution of secondary-level books almost complete

WASIM BIN HABIB

With just about 20 days before the new academic year, only half of the total primary school textbooks have been printed and dispatched to different upazilas for distribution. The task is almost complete for the secondary-level books.

Failure to commence the printing task in time along with a move by some dishonest paper suppliers to make a fast buck is to blame for the apparent delay, say officials concerned.

Only half of more than 10.87 crore copies of the primary textbooks have been printed and sent to different upazilas till yesterday, according to the data of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the body looking after the government's book distribution scheme.

On the contrary, around 97 percent of some 16.30 crore copies of textbooks for secondary schools students are already in the upazilas.

However, both the government and printers believe that they would be able to deliver the free textbooks to the children in time like they did in the last five years.

The printers as well as the NCTB are working round-the-clock to meet the target of dispatching 33.37 crore copies of new textbooks to around 4.4 crore students from class I to X across the country. The project is costing the government around Tk 733 crore.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A man sorts textbooks, stored at Chittagong City Municipality Model High School, for dispatch to schools ahead of the new academic year. Inset, workers unload a truck full of textbooks at Rajapur Pilot High School in Jhalakathi.

PHOTO: STAR



No quitting polls this time

BNP standing committee decides

RASHIDUL HASAN

The BNP this time would stand ground and not boycott the polls "no matter what", the party's national standing committee decided last night.

The BNP policymakers in a meeting with party chief Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office said they would "rather die" than quit the municipality polls scheduled for December 30, meeting sources said.

However, after the around two-hour-long meeting, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told the press that the standing committee members believe there was no possibility of the municipality polls being free and fair.

"The BNP is taking part only for the sake of democracy," he said.

He said the BNP would form a central monitoring

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5



HIT-AND-RUN CASE

Salman Khan acquitted of all charges

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian court yesterday cleared Bollywood superstar Salman Khan of killing a homeless man in a hit-and-run crash 13 years ago, acquitting him of all charges after he appealed his conviction.

The Bombay High Court said a lower court had erred in finding the 49-year-old guilty of culpable homicide and other charges after a closely watched trial in May when he was sentenced to five years in prison.

"The appeal is allowed and the decision of the trial court is quashed and set aside. Salman Khan is acquitted of all charges,"

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Most AL rebels defy party ultimatum

Rebel-backing MPs under scanner

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY



Despite a strict ultimatum from the party high-command, a number of Awami League rebel candidates in the municipal polls refuse to give up their mayoral bids.

Though some of the dissenters are withdrawing their nominations fearing expulsion from the party, some remain determined to continue the run.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to 14 AL rebel candidates and only five of them either withdrew themselves from the elections or were planning to do so.

However, at a press conference at the party chief's Dhanmondi office yesterday, AL Organising Secretary Ahmod Hossain claimed that half of the rebel candidates had already applied for withdrawal of nominations.

The ruling party, meanwhile, has prepared a list of its lawmakers who are rallying around the rebels. The activities of the MPs are being monitored, AL sources said.

On the other hand, six of the 27 rebel mayor candidates of the BNP have promised to the party's central leadership to pull out from the race by Sunday, the deadline for withdrawing nominations.

The party, which sees this election as a scope for restoring its lost glory as an effective political player, will roll out "massive" campaigns for their mayor candidates from December 16, party sources said.

The BNP boycotted last year's general elections and ended up having no representation in parliament for the first time in the history of the country's parliamentary democracy.

Its effectiveness as a major political party came under question after two bouts of its anti-government movement -- first, surrounding the January 2014 polls and second, centring the first anniversary of the elections -- failed miserably.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

HC against media parade of accused

Commutes death sentence of JMB man

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked the inspector general of police to take measures so that the law enforcement agencies desist from parading any accused in front of the media before he or she is produced in a court.

The court made the observation while delivering a verdict on an appeal filed by a Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leader challenging death sentence handed down to him for detonating a bomb at Gazipur police superintendent's office in February 2009.

The HC commuted the death sentence of JMB leader Mamunur Rashid alias Zahid to life imprisonment, as it found the investigation officer's negligence in probing into the case and collecting evidence, court sources said.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Amir Hossain expressed dissatisfaction at the then SP of Gazipur (Abdul Baten) for parading the JMB leader before a press conference, and also suggested the IGP to take departmental action against the IO for his negligence.

"We are constrained to express our note

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Time running out for climate deal

French president mentions 'difficulties' in talks, especially on financing

AFP, Le Bourget

Weary ministers were locked yesterday in marathon UN talks aimed at braking the juggernaut of climate change, facing decisions on deal-breaking rows as a deadline loomed just over 24 hours away.

After 11 days' wrangling, delegations grappled for a 195-nation pact to crimp climate-altering emissions from coal, oil and gas, sparing future generations from worsening drought, floods and storms, and island-engulfing seas.

As all-night talks returned to disputes that have festered for more than two decades, French President Francois Hollande said yesterday there were "still difficulties" in the climate talks in Paris, especially on financing.

"There are still difficulties, we are aware of them, on financing... There is also some resistance, particularly in relation to compensation for (climate-inflicted) loss and damage," Hollande said.

"We also need to ensure the commitments are not too far into the future," he said, referring to pledges that would address climate change in the near-term.

"It is important in this last phase that we remind the negotiators why they are here," Hollande said.

"They are not there simply in the name of their countries... they are there to sort out the issue of the future of the planet."

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Mexico gets world's first dengue vaccine

BBC ONLINE

Mexico has approved the use of the world's first vaccine against dengue fever, the health ministry announced.

The deadliest form of the mosquito-borne disease kills 22,000 people per year, according to the World Health Organisation.

French pharmaceutical company Sanofi said

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



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PRAYER TIMING

DECEMBER 11

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-15 12-30 3-45 5-19 7-00

JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Facebook gets unblocked to users' cheers

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

General users and e-commerce site owners heaved a sigh of relief as the government yesterday unblocked Facebook.



After keeping it blocked for 22 days on "security grounds", the country's telecom regulator opened the site at 2:00pm. Within six hours, data consumption jumped around 25 percent.

"Users are now coming back to the popular platform. In every minute, bandwidth consumption is increasing," said Suman Ahmed Sabir, chief strategy officer of Fibre@Home, an international internet gateway.

At noon yesterday, total data consumption of Fibre@Home was around 12-13 gigabit per second

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Citrine wagtail

PHOTO: ENAM UL HAQUE



Nature lovers' campus

ENAM UL HAQUE

Nature lovers living in Dhaka City have very few places to go. A few green patches like Ramna Garden or Gulshan Park are always packed with people. These aren't the places one would want to go for a quiet stroll and a bit of nature watching. The campus of Jahangirnagar University at Savar, however, is one rare place near the city where nature lovers can find small patches of forest and a few wild creatures too. It is good for an early morning walk on any weekday, but it's perfect for daylong

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

'Shrinking space' worries people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People are now living in a tense environment and they do not feel safe to speak their minds, speakers said yesterday on the occasion of Human Right Day, 2015.

At a seminar organised by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) at Bangla Academy in the capital, they talked about concerns raised over freedom of expression and human rights in Bangladesh.

"Nowadays we need to think a lot before we say something... We are always concerned whether we are hurting anyone's religious sentiment," said eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal in reference to the recent killings of free thinkers.

The state is not only silent about the killings but also blames the victims for not being careful enough in expressing their views, she added.

Rokeya Chowdhury, lecturer at the law department of Dhaka University, presented a paper covering issues from right to freedom of expression as enshrined in the constitution to the Information and Communication Technology Act, killing of freethinkers, rights of indigenous people, policies for online and news media and banning of social media.

UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Robert Watkins greeted everyone on Human Rights Day observed in commemoration of the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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