



New books on New Year's Day

Free school textbook distribution almost complete before year ends; students to get books from tomorrow

WASIM BIN HABIB

More than four crore students of primary and secondary schools are going to get new textbooks on the first morning of 2017, as the government has made all preparations for distributing over 36 crore copies of textbooks free of cost.

With only a day to go, almost 100 percent of 17.68 crore textbooks for secondary students and 95 percent of 10.52 crore textbooks for primary students have reached all upazilas.

Upazila education officers have been sending the books to schools and madrasas across the country over the last few weeks, say officials of the education ministry and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

"All textbooks have been printed and dispatched to the educational institutions. The children, who will go to school on the first day of the year, will return home with a set of new textbooks," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

This year, the government has printed around 36.21 crore copies of textbooks against 33.37 crore last year.

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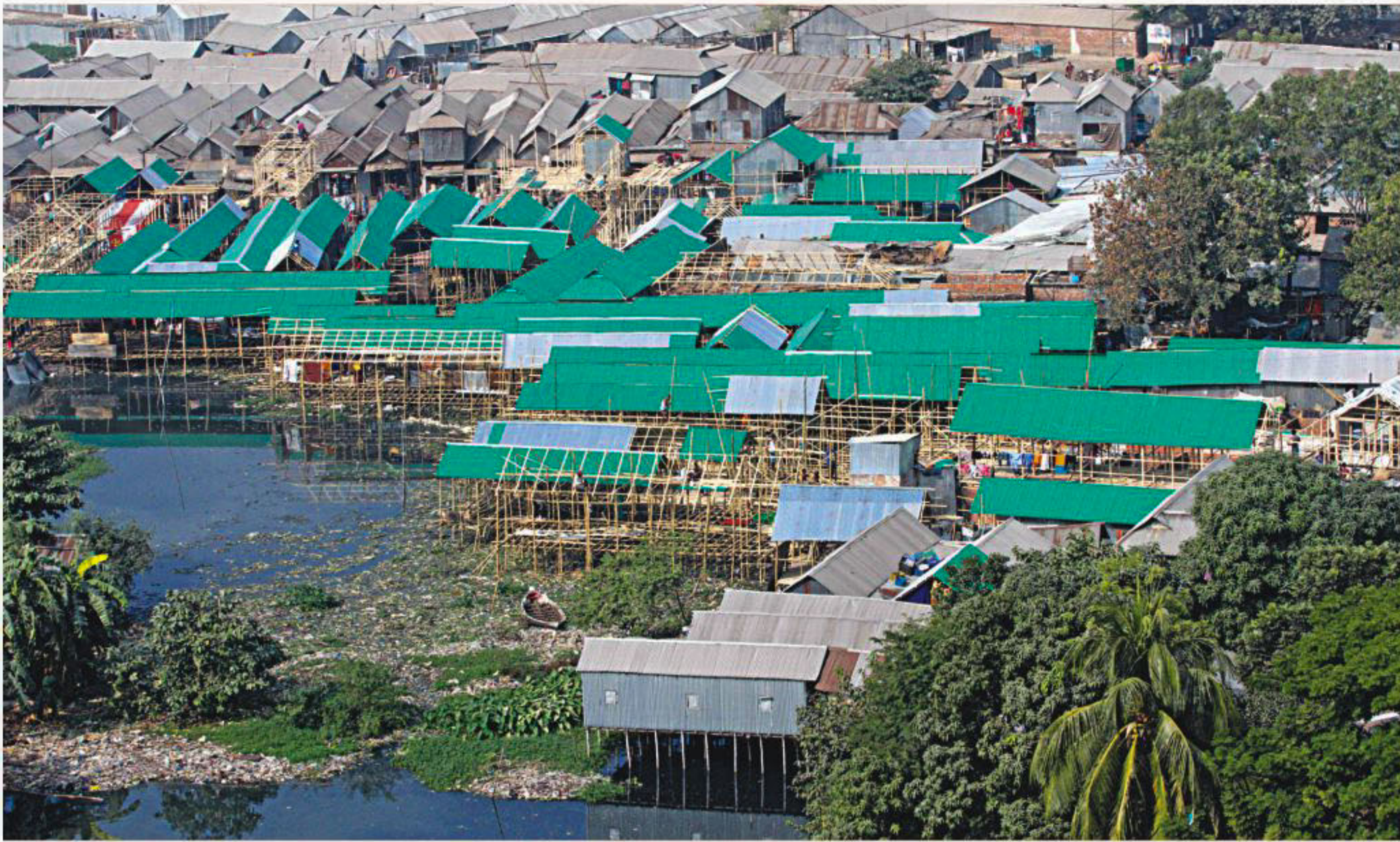


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Fire-ravaged Korail slum gets new look

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Less than a month into a devastating fire that ripped through the Korail slum in the capital, the homeless people there are going to have a roof over their heads soon.

For the last couple of days, the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) in association with Brac has been helping the slum dwellers build new houses.

The DNCC and Brac are providing bamboo, wood and colourful corrugated tin roofs to 80 affected house owners whose shanties were burnt on December 4.

The house owners are either working themselves or

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Green-roofed shanties built with the help of the Dhaka North City Corporation and some non-government organisations at Korail slum in the capital. The city corporation and the NGOs are helping reconstruct all the 526 shanties that were gutted by a devastating fire on December 4. The photos were taken on Wednesday.

PM's FLIGHT GLITCH Seven Biman officials on fresh remand

UNB, Dhaka

A court here yesterday placed seven Biman officials on eight-day fresh remand each in a case filed over the glitch in a VIP flight carrying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate M Wajkuruni Khan Chowdhury passed the order after Inspector M Mahbubul Alam of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) produced them before it, seeking 10-day remand each.

The seven are Chief Engineer Debesh Chowdhury, Chief Engineer (quality assurance) SS Siddique, Principal Engineer (system and maintenance) Billal Hossain, engineers Shamiul Haque,

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Fight far from over

2016 gave a wake-up call on terrorism; experts say radicalisation cannot be tackled only by force, comprehensive anti-terror approach needed

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A wake-up call to the nation, the Gulshan café siege made the government and law enforcement agencies take militancy issue seriously and declare an all-out war against terrorism.

After the attack, law enforcers conducted pre-emptive strikes at a number of militant dens, recovered arms, ammunition and explosives and thus prevented further terror incidents.

However, the menace is far from over as, analysts say, militants might devise new strategies and launch further terror attacks, posing threat to development and social stability.

Stockpiling of suicide vests, grenades and bombs at a militant den in Ashkona suggests they are not sitting idle. Detonation of a suicide vest by a woman with a kid during

the December 24 police operation there shows how desperate they can be.

With Islamic State (IS) expected to be driven out of Iraq and Syria soon, those who went to join the group may return home and try to engage in terror activities. What is

more worrying is some of those fighters have dual citizenship and local law enforcers have little information about them.

With targeted killings of freethinkers and people of religious minorities going on, Bangladesh in

2016 experienced a significant rise in terror attacks -- some were claimed by pro-al Qaeda outfit Ansar al Islam while the others by so-called IS.

The authorities, however, all along said those were the acts of homegrown militants.

Some experts say militancy rose to such

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Four die as boat sinks in Gazipur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people, including a woman, drowned and a teenage boy went missing after a boat sank in the Shitalakkhya river near Kapasia of Gazipur yesterday.

Three of the dead are Atique, 24, Tajim Khan, 25, and Kohinur, 25. All of them were from Shibpur of Narsingdi, said police. The other deceased, aged around 50, could not be identified immediately.

Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Kapasia Police Station, told The Daily Star that the boat, which was carrying some 14 to 15 passengers, had come from Shibpur. It sank near Taraganj ghat (terminal) of Kapasia around 6:30pm.

It could not be

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NEWS ANALYSIS

2 local govt polls, 2 varying pictures

Hope for good elections dashed within a week

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Two local government bodies' elections held within seven days offered starkly distinctive features. One raised high hopes for good elections and the other frustrated with electoral irregularities.

A week ago Narayanganj City Corporation polls set a stellar example of good election. The run up to the election was peaceful. Mayor candidates nominated by the Awami League and the BNP set an example of clean electioneering by abiding by the electoral code of conduct. They also refrained from mudslinging, a common phenomenon in the country's politics.

The overall peaceful atmosphere raised people's expectation for good elections. The NCC polls were also portrayed as a model election against the backdrop of severe damage to the electoral system done in the last three years by unbridled electoral irregularities. Political analysts and politicians hoped that the mode of NCC polls would have an impact on other elections, particularly the next parliamentary polls.

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"We evaluate the new unfriendly steps by the outgoing US administration as a provocation aimed at further undermining Russian-American relations."

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT
VLADIMIR PUTIN
ABOUT US DECISION TO EXPEL
35 RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS

A torchbearer for helpless women

Sabita gifts literacy, solvency to disadvantaged women in Magura

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Divorced from her husband after two years, at her instigation, and living again at her father's home, Sabita Rani Das, 22, of Magura sadar upazila's remote Laxmipur village has not had the easiest of lives. Yet where many a person would understandably focus upon their own plight and how to survive financially when her family also struggles, Sabita thinks of others. In whatever spare time she finds, she's teaching the most disadvantaged women to read, and helping them achieve economic self-reliance.

"I will never marry again," she says. "I'm determined in my own life to be self-reliant and I want to stand by other distressed women. My mission is to make them literate and solvent."

Sabita's childhood home is a meagre plot, congested and unhygienic. She studied to class nine, after which due to poverty

she couldn't continue. Her father, now elderly, once maintained the family by collecting the hides of dead cattle; nowadays such hides are less available. More recently the family has taken to handicraft manufacture as a means to an income but it's barely profitable.

Despite Sabita's personal hardship, local women from Laxmipur, especially the disadvantaged Harijan community, arrive at her home every day in batches of up to 25 at a time, ready for study. Sabita takes no tuition fee.

"I will alleviate illiteracy from lower caste families," Sabita says. "I hope within five months all may have basic literacy and knowledge of sanitation."

Her ambitions don't end there. Along with reading, Sabita is introducing the women to handicraft and vermicompost

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Sabita Rani Das teaching women to read and make handicrafts at her home in Magura's Laxmipur village. Determined to become self-reliant, Sabita is also trying hard to make other local distressed women literate and solvent. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

CHANGE
MAKER

