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Shutdown for six months

Many secondary school students left to grapple with incomplete syllabus, private lessons

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR
 Annual holidays and other closures eat up more than half the academic year at many secondary schools and madrasas, one of the reasons why students have to turn to private tutors.
 This also leaves the teachers struggling to complete the syllabus. So they rush through the curriculum to prepare the students for examinations, eventually affecting the quality of education, teachers and experts said.
 Secondary schools and madrasas have at least 137 holidays - 85 public holidays and 52 Fridays. Many of these institutions are used as centres for public examinations. Students of these institutions lose another month or so of classroom learning as a result.
 There are 30,000 secondary schools and madrasas in the country now. Last year, 3,412 of them were used as centres for SSC and equivalent exams, 2,541 for HSC and equivalent exams and 2,903 for JSC exams.
 Officials at the Dhaka Education Board said around 1,000 institutions host at least two public exams. Another 400 schools and madrasas host all the three exams, meaning there are no classes in these institutions for around 230 days, or about eight months.

"We need to rush through the syllabus, especially in the later part of the year," said a teacher at Teigaon Govt High School in the capital.
 This is a key reason for students to go to coaching centres or private tutors, he added.
 Abdul Mannan, director of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), acknowledged that public examinations seriously hamper academic activities.
 "It is a common complaint that teachers of these schools cannot complete the syllabus," he added.
 Educationists say students are deprived of classroom learning because of too many holidays and public exams.
 "Students have to depend on private tuition as they do not get proper education at schools," said Prof Siddiqur Rahman, who was the chief consultant of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board when it developed the existing curriculum for secondary education in 2012.
 To improve learning at schools, educationists suggest cutting the summer and winter vacations. They also want a shorter vacation for festivals.
 Prof Siddiqur said they had proposed bringing down the annual holidays to 118 days, including weekends. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Vehicles are stuck in long tailbacks on both lanes of the road in the city's Science Laboratory intersection area around 1:00pm yesterday. Rush of Eid shoppers in nearby markets caused the tailbacks which stretched from near Kalabagan bus stop to Nilkhet. The roads remained gridlocked throughout the day, leaving commuters to suffer long delays.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Modi begins talks for new cabinet

Indian president accepts resignation of PM, ministers; major changes in cabinet expected

BJP + 352 | CONGRESS + 91 | OTHERS 99

AGENCIES
 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set to hold talks yesterday to form a new cabinet to tackle a stuttering economy and other challenges facing his second term after winning a big majority.
 According to a statement from office of president of India, President Ram Nath Kovind has accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Council of Ministers yesterday. They will continue in office till the new government is formed.
 "Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on President Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the president of India tweeted from the official handle, along with a photo of the PM and the president.
 Earlier, the union cabinet recommended the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. President Ram Nath Kovind is now expected to dissolve the present 16th Lok Sabha, the term of which is ending on June 3.
 The 17th Lok Sabha has to be constituted before June 3 and the process to form a new House will be initiated when the three election commissioners meet the president in the next few days to hand over the list of newly-elected members.
 The cabinet met a day after the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections in which the BJP-led alliance National Democratic Alliance (NDA) retained power with a massive mandate.
 Official data from the Election Commission of India showed Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party had won 303 of the 542 seats up for grab, up from the 282 it won in 2014, reported NDTV. The BJP would have the first back-to-back majority in the lower house of parliament for a single party since 1984.
 NDA has won 352 seats while the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) has won 91. The Congress once again fell short of numbers

Quader hopes for progress on Teesta issue

STAR REPORT
 Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader hopes that there will be progress on sharing Teesta water and other unresolved bilateral issues with India during the upcoming tenure of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
 Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a landslide victory in India's Lok Sabha election.
 Quader said, "During Modi's last tenure, we were able to resolve many issues between the two countries. We hope that he would continue to work towards solving the unsettled issues, including the Teesta water sharing," BSS reports.
 Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, made the remarks while talking to reporters at the party president's Dhanmondi office yesterday.
 He said, "Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already extended her heartiest congratulations to Narendra Modi on his victory in the election for the second consecutive term."

Tearful May resigns after Brexit failure

No-deal exit fears grow as EU rules out renegotiation of deal with UK; Johnson frontrunner to succeed her

AFP, London



Her voice breaking, Prime Minister Theresa May announced her resignation yesterday after three years of Brexit turmoil, dramatically increasing the likelihood of Britain crashing out of the EU within months.
 May, who took over in the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum, was forced to make way following a Conservative mutiny over her ill-fated strategy to end Britain's near five-decade membership of the European Union.
 "It is and will always remain a matter of deep regret to me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit," May said outside her Downing Street office, holding back tears.
 "It will be for my successor to seek a way forward that honours the result of the referendum."
 May, 62, who will be among the country's shortest-serving post-WWII prime ministers remembered for presiding over one of the most chaotic periods in its modern political history, said she would step down as head of the Conservative Party on June 7.
 She will remain in Downing Street in a caretaker role until a replacement is elected by the party

before July 20.
 Any new leader of the party, which won the most votes in the last election, automatically becomes prime minister.
 Gaffe-prone Brexit cheerleader Boris Johnson, who resigned as foreign secretary last summer over May's withdrawal strategy, is the immediate front-runner to succeed her.
 He yesterday said that under his leadership Britain would leave the EU with or without a deal on October 31 -- the latest deadline agreed with Brussels after Brexit was twice delayed.
 "The way to get a good deal is to prepare for a no-deal situation," he told an economic conference in Switzerland, according to Bloomberg. "To get things done you need to be prepared to walk away."
 Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, said the new prime minister must hold an election to "let the people decide our country's future."
 The pound wobbled as analysts said her imminent departure amplified the chances of leaving the EU without a deal.
 Most of the leading contenders to succeed May want a tougher divorce deal, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PM to open 2nd Meghna, Gumti bridges today

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today inaugurates the much-awaited second Meghna and Gumti bridges on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway.
 She will open the bridges through video conferencing from the Gono Bhaban, Prime Minister's Office sources said.
 The PM will also open Konabari and Chandra flyovers, Kaliakair, Deohata, Mirzapur and Gharinda underpasses and Kadda-1 and Bimail bridges on the Joydebpur-Chandra-Tangail-Elenga highway under the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Project.
 Apart from this, she will launch the new intercity train -- Panchagarh Express --- on the Dhaka-Panchagarh route.
 Talking to the BSS, Abu Saleh Md Nuruzzaman, project director of the



The construction of Konabari flyover on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Gazipur is complete. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will open the flyover to traffic today. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PM's VISIT TO JAPAN \$1.2b loan deal likely for four dev projects

REJAUJ KARIM BYRON and PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh will sign a deal of over \$1.2 billion with Japan for four projects, including the second metro rail connecting the capital's airport and Kamalapur, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to the East Asian country on May 28-31.
 At that time, Dhaka would also seek technical and financial assistance of nearly \$10 billion for 10 future projects on water, land, irrigation, and char development, finance ministry officials told The Daily Star.
 This will be Hasina's first visit to Japan, the single biggest bilateral development partner of Bangladesh, since she became prime minister for the third straight term in January. The PM had earlier gone there in 2010 and 2014.
 Bangladesh, the second largest recipient of Japan's official development assistance (ODA), and Japan expect the visit to further consolidate the bilateral relations of the two friendly countries.
 Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, Japan has provided financial support of more than \$18.6 billion to Bangladesh in forms of grants, loans and technical assistance, according to finance ministry data.
 During a meeting with the premier at the Gono Bhaban on May 20, Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Hiroyasu Izumi said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was eagerly waiting to receive her in Japan.
 "When we turn to the relation between Japan and Bangladesh, these coming three years will be of significant

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2