

No bar to hold Jan 1 textbook festival: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will hold the “textbook festival” by distributing new textbooks among students, after the Election Commission approved the initiative, terming it routine work for the government.

In reply to a letter of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, the EC gave permission to the Ministry of Education to celebrate the book distribution programme on January 1, 2024.

As it is routine work for the government to distribute new textbooks across the country on the first day of the academic year on January 1, 2024, as in other years, the EC has given its consent to celebrate the programme, stated a letter signed by Md Atiar Rahman, deputy secretary of the EC.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the festival on December 31, said Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board member Prof Md Moshuazzaman said the government is going to distribute 30,70,83,517 textbooks, free of cost, among 3,81,28,354 pre-primary, primary and secondary students.

A total of 30,80,205 pre-primary students will get 61,93,878 books, while 2,14,37,614 primary students will get 11,47,97,504 books. Meanwhile, 1,36,10,535 secondary students will also get 18,60,92,135 new textbooks.

10 crude bombs recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Detectives recovered 10 crude bombs from Kaunia Char area in Roumari upazila of Kurigram on Sunday night.

No one was arrested in this connection, said Officer-in-Charge Abdullah Hil Jaman of Roumari Police Station.

A general diary was filed with the police station yesterday.

Several locals told The Daily Star that Kauniar Char is a bordering area. Smugglers use this route to smuggle various products including cattle. They often explode crude bombs at night.



With dew drops gathering on a spider's web, it may seem as if the webs have turned into jeweled wonders, every thread a string of gems as smooth as pearls and as sparkling as diamonds. Each of these “jewels” is a drop of water the web has collected from the misty air. The photo was taken on a foggy morning in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

FROZEN IN TIME

Iconic clock of Rajuk Tower not working for 6 years

DIPAN NANDY

Time seems to have stood still for nearly six years in Dhaka's Motijheel as the iconic Rajuk Tower clock, once a special attraction of the capital's commercial hub, remains inoperative due to mechanical woes. Even the two hands of the clock have disappeared.

Much like Big Ben is inseparable from the essence of London, Rajuk's Tower Clock is a nostalgic symbol of Dhaka's identity, having marked the passage of time for nearly seven decades.

Today, its silent presence evokes a sense of longing and nostalgia.

Hazi Mohamad Azim, who runs a money exchange company in Dilkusha area, said, “When I was six, I would visit the stadium area with my father, only to see the big tower clock on the top of Rajuk building. It was an exciting thing to watch in my childhood – a symbol of the right time.”

Sadly, in recent years, the clock has completely stopped, he said.

Despite the formation of a committee in 2018, the authorities concerned are still undecided on whether to repair it or invest in a new one. The latest plan involves transforming the current mechanical system clock into a digital one.

The architectural landmark was

installed in the former DIT building (Dhaka Improvement Trust) in 1956.

As per Rajuk's engineering department, many parts of the aging clock are no

longer procurable. Continuous repairs have proven futile, especially due to the deterioration of its crucial parts such as the clock's main mechanical timing wheel.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

In 2018, a committee, comprising the chief engineer (project & design), director

ASM Raihanul Ferdous, the convener of the committee and chief engineer (project and design) of Rajuk, said, “We are planning to transform the current mechanical system clock into a digital one while retaining the original design.”

Campaigning

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Inquiry Committee, issued the notices and asked them to appear before the committee today.

According to the notices, supporters of Enamur and Saiful engaged in a clash at the Thana Stand area in Savar. Besides, Saiful and his followers were found donating cash in mosques and graveyards breaching the polls code of conduct.

Meanwhile, a mobile court fined two supporters of Jamal Hossain Mia, an independent candidate from Faridpur-2 constituency.

Shahadat Hossain, executive magistrate and assistant commissioner (land) in Saltha upazila, fined Md Akkash Matubbar and Badal Matubbar Tk 2,000 each for campaigning with loudspeakers after 8:00pm on Sunday.

POLICE IN LOOKOUT FOR BCL LEADER

In Narayanganj-1, police are looking for Sheikh Farid Bhuiyan alias Masum, a leader of Ruppaganj upazila unit of Chhatra League, who during a campaign

allegedly said there will be no water, electricity or gas connection if people do not vote for AL candidate Golam Dastagir Gazi.

Golam Mostofa Russel, superintendent of police of Narayanganj, said, “He (Farid) will be arrested soon.”

No case has been filed against him so far.

‘SUSPENDED FOR UNCLE’S ACTION’

In Faridpur, Kazi Rifat, a former joint general secretary of BCL, has been suspended by the organisation for “breaking its discipline”.

Rifat has been suspended for breaching the organisation's discipline, said Pranto Sikdar, general secretary of BCL's Boalmari upazila unit, citing a notification issued in this regard.

Claiming that he did not breach any discipline, Rifat, however, said he was suspended as his uncle is campaigning for Arifur Rahman, an independent aspirant from Faridpur-1.

[Our local correspondents contributed to the report]

CHATTOGRAM-16

EC to sue AL candidate for assaulting journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Election Commission has decided to file a case against an Awami League candidate in Chattogram for assaulting a journalist.

The instruction came on Sunday, said EC officials.

Enamul Haque, senior election officer at Chattogram District Election office, said they will file the case against Mustafizur Rahman, an AL candidate of Chattogram-16 constituency (Banshkhali), with a court today.

On November 30, Mustafizur staged a showdown before he submitted his nomination papers.

At that time, Independent TV journalist Rakib Uddin asked him if he violated the polls code through the showdown.

Following the question, Mustafizur became angry and beat him up. His associates also attacked other journalists when they protested.

Contacted over the phone, Mustafizur, the incumbent lawmaker of the constituency, asked this correspondent to come to his office to talk about the issue in details.

Jubo Dal

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Police and district administration officials said they recovered two gas cylinders that were used to power a blowtorch to sever the section of the rail.

Former vice-president of Chhatra Dal Ikhtiar Rahman Kabir, 45, was the mastermind of the sabotage and at least nine people took part in it, claimed Md Asaduzzaman, chief of police's Couter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, unit after arresting two people including Kabir, now a Jubo Dal leader.

Another arrestee, Emon Hossain, 19, is the president of Chhatra Dal's Ward 24 unit in Dhaka's Lalbagh area, he said.

Earlier, Gazipur police arrested seven BNP men, including a ward councillor of Gazipur City Corporation, Hasan Ajmal Bhuiyan, in connection with the incident. Tuku could not be reached for comments.

RMG workers protest

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unemployment of at least 800 workers.

Md Farid, a factory worker, said, “Upon arriving at the factory today [Monday], we discovered the gate locked with a notice announcing a lay-off.”

Shahadat Hossain Sento, president of the Narayanganj unit of the United Federation of Garment Workers, led a gathering of workers at Aliganj High School ground after the procession.

They urged the withdrawal of the announcement.

“Government officials and BKMEA leaders said

they will address our concerns within three days. However, if our demands are not met, we will stage a protest on Friday,” said Sento.

Contacted, Selim Badsha, officer-in-charge (intelligence) of Industrial Police-4, said, “After the factory announced the lay-offs, workers protested it. The authorities are trying to find a solution. Meanwhile, police are working to control the overall situation.”

This newspaper could not reach AH Aslam Sunny, managing director of Crony Group, for comments, despite repeated attempts.

When protectors turn

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The next day, four helmeted persons arrived in his house in Kuril area, knocked at the door and hurled abusive words.

“As I saw CID cards and walkie-talkie with them through the peephole, I opened the door. They took me out of the building and the man who identified him as OC Rabiul slapped me,” the victim said, adding SI Rezaul was that “OC Rabiul”.

Handcuffed, the abductors, led by Rezaul, later took him on a motorcycle to the Purbachal area and threatened to kill him, brandishing a firearm. They tortured him and demanded Tk 10 lakh for his release.

“I agreed to pay them Tk 3 lakh. Then one of them asked about the money I have in my bank account. I

told them that I had Tk 6.25 lakh in my account for my father's operation. Then, the accused took me to a private bank in the Nikunja area and tried to withdraw money from the ATM booth.”

“Failing to do so, two persons including constable Saied took me inside the bank and withdrew Tk 5.2 lakh through a POS machine,” Mostafizur told The Daily Star.

The abductors later took him to his house and forced him to sign on two blank cheques and asked him not to tell anyone about the incident. “They threatened me with life,” he added.

Mostafizur said he initially thought they are fake CID members but now it is clear that some CID men are involved in the crime.

“They were arrested. I hope I will get justice now,” he said.

Issue sanctions on those obstructing polls: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has called on the United States to issue visa restrictions on those creating obstacles during the election process.



He also drew the attention of the five US representatives over the matter, including members of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), who are now in Bangladesh.

Quader was addressing a press conference at the political office of the Awami League president at Dhanmondi yesterday.

If an AL or independent candidate gets involved in a conflict, action will be taken on behalf of the party, he said.

“There is always a risk of conflict. The law enforcement agencies will take appropriate action against those who pollute the election environment and get involved in clashes. The Awami League president's ‘zero tolerance policy’ will continue,” he said.

Referring to the claim of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) that Tk 92,000 crore has been looted from the banking sector in the last 15 years, Quader said, “Since the CPD has brought allegations of irregularities, they have to say where the money is. If they provide detailed information, we will bring the money back to the country.”

1 killed, 3 hurt as car falls into ditch

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A man was killed and three others were injured as a training car fell into a roadside ditch in Munshiganj yesterday.

The accident took place in Taleshwar area of Sadar upazila.

The deceased – Kaiser Ahmed, 25 – was from Katlapara in the district.

Dr Kalam, duty doctor of the emergency department at Munshiganj General Hospital, said, “Four people were taken to the hospital after the accident. But Kauser was brought dead. The injured three were referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.”



President Mohammed Shahabuddin and his wife Rebecca Sultana greet Christian community leaders at a programme on the occasion of Christmas at Bangabhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS



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