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Pry students get books on first day of yr Quarter of secondary textbooks yet to reach schools

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Primary schoolchildren across the country received full sets of new textbooks yesterday, but about a quarter of secondary-level textbooks did not reach the schools, leaving millions of students without complete sets on the first day of the academic year.

Shortages were most acute for students of classes 7 and 8, Dakhil students from classes 6 to 9, and class 9 humanities students, according to reports of our district correspondents.

Primary and Mass Education Adviser Prof Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder described the primary-level distribution as a "major success" for the government.

Speaking at the inauguration at Abul Bashar Government Primary School in Agargaon yesterday, he

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Biman chooses Boeing for 14 aircraft deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided in principle to purchase 14 aircraft from Boeing -- to expand its fleet and modernise the national flag carrier.

The decision was taken at Biman's annual general meeting held on Tuesday, Boshra Islam, general manager (public relations) of Biman, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Aviation and Tourism Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin, who is also chairman of Biman's board of directors, chaired the meeting.

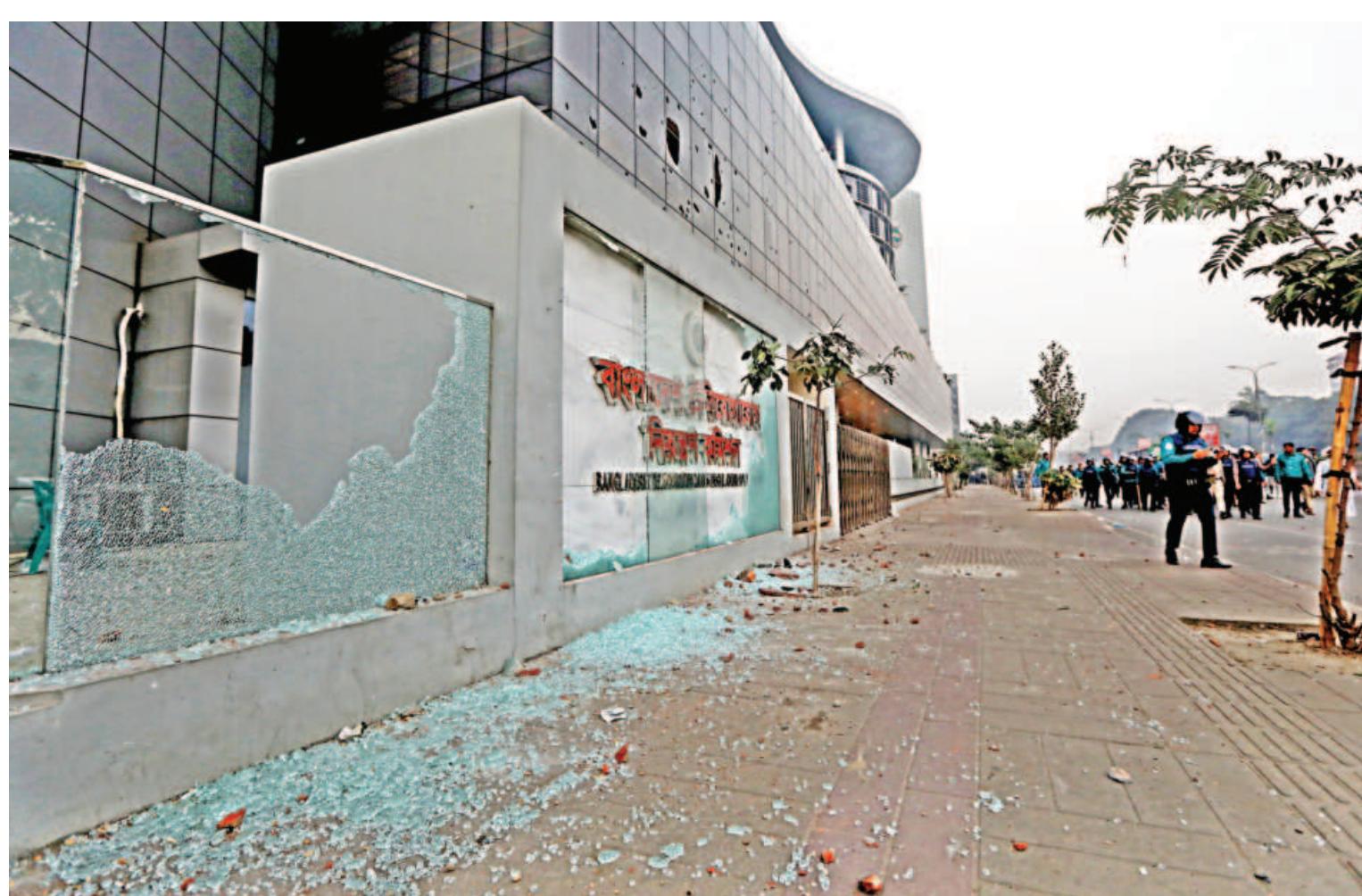
Biman's decision ruled out Boeing's rival Airbus's proposal to sell aircraft to the national airline. During the meeting, the board of directors principally approved the purchase of 14 Boeing aircraft, subject to price negotiations and other terms in line with recommendations of Biman's techno-finance committee, Boshra Islam said.

Biman will buy eight Boeing 787-10 Dreamliners, two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners and four Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft.

The interim government had earlier pledged to purchase 25 aircraft from Boeing as part of efforts to reduce the trade deficit with the United States. Following further evaluation and scrutiny, Biman finalised the decision.

Board members said the move was taken considering the need to enhance the country's aviation capacity, strengthen international connectivity, and meet future passenger and cargo demand. Once the aircraft are

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The glass wall at the front of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission office in Agargaon is shattered during a protest against the launch of the National Equipment Identification Register (NEIR). Several mobile phone traders are alleged to have been involved in the incident. Story on page 6.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Dozens killed in fire at Swiss ski resort bar

100 injured; officials say victims include several nationalities

REUTERS, LENS

Dozens of people were killed and around 100 injured, most of them seriously, after fire tore through a crowded bar during a New Year's Eve party in the upscale Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana, officials said yesterday.

Fire broke out at 1:30 am (0030 GMT) in a bar called "Le Constellation" in the resort in southwestern Switzerland. The cause of the blaze, which was initially reported as an explosion, remains unclear but authorities said it appeared to be an accident rather than an attack.

Swiss police said "tens" of people were presumed dead with around 100 injured, and the Italian foreign ministry said information from Swiss police indicated about 40 deaths. Swiss officials declined to give a specific figure.

Video footage showed lines of ambulances queuing and helicopters landing to take victims of the blast to nearby hospitals and specialist burns units in other Swiss cities.

Two young French women who said they were in the bar told France's BFM TV that they saw the fire start in the basement section of the club after a bottle containing "birthday candles" was held up too close to the wooden ceiling.

"The fire spread across the ceiling super quickly," one of the two women, who identified themselves as Emma and Albane, told BFM TV. The pair said they were able to climb a narrow staircase to the ground floor as panic broke and escape the building. Minutes later, the fire had reached the ground floor too, they said.

BFM showed video of a waitress carrying a champagne bottle with a lit 'fountain candle' through the bar, in line with the account, but the video did not show the fire taking hold.

Video footage verified by Reuters showed fire spreading from the building, with people outside the club, some of them running and screaming.

Italy's ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, told Sky TG24 local authorities had told him the blaze was started by someone letting off a firework inside the bar which set fire to the ceiling. He was in Crans-Montana, where he said a number of Italians had gathered seeking information about missing relatives or friends. He declined to say if there were any Italian victims.

Yesterday morning, hours after the explosion, footage from the street outside showed the area cordoned off, with forensic tents behind white screens set up in front of the bar in

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Saarc must be revived: Yunus Regional leaders meet CA after Khaleda's funeral

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has reiterated the need to revive the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, saying the Saarc spirit is "alive and well" following the presence of several regional leaders at the funeral of former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Yunus made the remarks as several regional leaders met him after attending Khaleda's funeral procession on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam disclosed the matter at a briefing at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday afternoon.

Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Foreign Minister of Bhutan DN Dhungyel, External Affairs Minister of India Dr S Jaishankar, Foreign Minister of Nepal Bala Nanda Sharma, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka Vijitha Herath, and Minister of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development of the Republic of Maldives Dr Ali Haider Ahmed were present at Khaleda's funeral.

Of them, Ayaz Sadiq and Nanda Sharma met the chief adviser on Wednesday, Shafiqul said. Ali Haider and Vijitha Herath met Yunus yesterday, he added.

During these interactions, the press secretary said

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With his hand on the Holy Quran, Zohran Mamdani is sworn in as mayor of New York City. He is flanked by his wife Rama Duwaji and New York Attorney General Letitia James, at Old City Hall Station, New York, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Lawyer beaten to death in Bashundhara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 35-year-old lawyer was beaten to death in the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area on Wednesday night following an altercation over a motorcycle-car collision, police and family members said.

The victim, Naeem Kibria, was a trainee lawyer at the Pabna District Judge's Court. He was from Chakjuyenpur village of Pabna Sadar upazila.

The incident took place around 10:00pm.

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MADRASA EXPLOSION
Fresh blast at site while clearing debris

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three women arrested in connection with the explosion at Ummal Qura International Madrasa in Keraniganj were sent to jail yesterday after the completion of their remand.

Dhaka Senior Judicial Magistrate Tajul Islam Sohag passed the order.

The women -- Asiya Begum, 28, wife of prime accused Sheikh Al Amin; Yasmin Akter, 30, wife of his elder brother Harun Or Rashid; and Asmani Khatun, 34 -- were each on a three-day remand.

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METRO MISHAP Flaws in bearing pads, design to blame

Says probe committee, urges regular monitoring, safety measures



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-powered probe committee has found defects in the metro rail's bearing pads and design flaws at the point where a pad fell in Dhaka's Farmgate in October last year, killing one person and injuring two others.

The committee, led by Bridges Division Secretary Mohammad Abdur Rouf, made several recommendations, including urgent technical measures at the curved alignment sections to ensure that the bearing pads cannot shift.

It also said metro rail operations could continue with regular monitoring of the bearing pads. Metro rail authorities have already started taking measures at the curved alignment sections to prevent the pads from shifting.

The committee chief handed over the probe report to Road Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan yesterday. The adviser later revealed some findings of the investigation to journalists at his secretariat office.

A pedestrian was killed and two others injured on October 26 last year when a bearing pad from a metro rail pillar fell and struck them in the capital's Farmgate area.

The incident occurred just 13 months after another bearing pad fell from the metro line near the same location, raising concerns about the safety of this highly technical mode of transport.

The Road Transport and Bridges Ministry formed

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We Deeply Mourn



Mr. Mazharul Haque
(1956-2026)

We express our heartfelt condolence on the passing of our visionary leader and sponsor director of Phoenix Insurance PLC **Mr. Mazharul Haque** ("Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un"). He breathed his last on 1st January 2026 early morning in Malaysia. The Board of Directors, the Management, and the Employees of Phoenix Family express their deep shock and profound sorrow at the sad demise of Mr. Haque. We pray to the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed soul and convey our deepest sympathy to his bereaved family members to get strength for bearing the irreparable loss.

We respectfully acknowledge his remarkable contribution to Phoenix Insurance PLC.

