

Question leak taints

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candidates at different dormitories, particularly those of the DU, Rajshahi University, Khulna University, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University, had rushed and phoned since the early hours yesterday to get hold of a copy of the leaked questions.

The copies had been on sale at as high as Tk 5,000 at Shahidullah Hall, Fazlur Rahman Hall, SM Hall, Surya Sen Hall, Mohsin Hall, Jasimuddin Hall, Zahurul Haque Hall, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall and Ziaur Rahman Hall of the DU from the early hours yesterday.

The leaked questions further spread out in the DU campus and to the rest of the country over cellphones.

Although questions of BCS exams have repeatedly been leaked out for the last few years, the government and the PSC have failed so far to identify and bring the culprits to book, letting the crime to turn into a profitable concern.

Despite widespread evidence, PSC Controller SKM Alauddin denied the question leakage, saying, "It's not true. It's propaganda. We didn't receive any such allegation before the exam."

The examination would not be cancelled, as no question was leaked, he added.

Some JCD leaders admitted the leakage but denied any link of their Dal with it. "We don't select the questions or get them before the exams. How can we engage in such an illegal act," JCD President Azizul Bari Helal told The Daily Star over cellphone last night, adding he did hear of the leakage.

Many innocent candidates expressed agony at the incident. They demanded immediate cancellation of what they termed a 'mock test' and proper investigation into it.

"We haven't filed any general diary with the police or placed any complaint to the PSC, as we didn't get any result from doing that in the previous years," said Farhana, a student of Dhaka Medical College who sat the test.

At 2:00am yesterday, a group of JCD leaders of DU Shahidullah Hall first started to sell copies of the leaked questions in the capital, sources said. The news then spread out like wildfire to the other DU dormitories. The price went down with time and one copy was sold at Tk 150 at 8 in the morning just before the examination.

Despite repeated attempts, Education Minister Osman Farruk and State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon could not be contacted for their comments on the issue.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of the main opposition Awami League, in a press release last night condemned and protested the repeated leakage of BCS test questions. The president and general secretary of the organisation demanded immediate cancellation of the exam and holding a fresh one.

A number of other student organisations brought out protest processions yesterday while some others said they would stage protest programmes including rallies and processions at the educational institutions.

SCENES IN RAJSHAH
Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: The questions had been out in the city and the Rajshahi University (RU) campus since Thursday night. Some JCD and ICS leaders who had come here from Dhaka on the occasion were seen busy with their local comrades collecting the questions from unknown sources over cellphones.

Thus they collected some 50 to 100 questions and distributed those among the BCS candidates loyal to them until the early hours yesterday.

Some of the visiting student leaders had brought a set of questions with them that was later found to be same as the BCS Question Set 2, sources said.

Migratory birds

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Animal Health reported that the avian influenza virus has already affected Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, and Japan in Asia.

Leaders of the Citizens' Committee on Bird Flu Prevention in Bangladesh through a news conference claimed that a low level of pathogenic bird flu virus had been detected in the poultry industry of India. The committee urged the government to continue its ban on poultry import from India.

Prof Mustafa Feeroz, chairman of the zoology department of JU however said, "There is hardly any possibility of bird flu being transmitted from the migratory birds as most of them are local and direct physical contact is required for the flu to be transmitted."

Though the number of migratory birds this year seems smaller than the previous year's, a considerable number of them have already taken shelter on the campus. This year the birds arrived a month later than expected due to excessive rainfall at the end of the monsoon that had delayed the coming of winter. As conditions of most of the lakes have become unfriendly to the birds due to unplanned and uncontrolled fishing, they can be seen floating only on two lakes. The lakes in front of the administrative building and behind Pritilota Hall are the most preferred resting grounds of the guest birds. The birds use the lakes during daytime and wander into the paddy fields near the river at night in search of food.

Many photocopying and fax-phone stalls in the city remained open until 3:00am yesterday, witnesses said.

A large number of BCS candidates went to the local press clubs and also phoned to journalists to complain against or inform about the leakage. Some of them said they obtained the questions and some others that they had seen them.

Several examinees even alleged that JCD and ICS leaders at every RU hall distributed questions door to door.

CTG DRAWS A BLANK
Our Chittagong correspondent, on the other hand, says no specific allegation of question leakage of 27th BCS preliminary test was reported there yesterday. But, though most of the candidates who had sat the exam yesterday expressed ignorance about the leakage, a few of them apprehended that some examinees might have collected the leaked questions from Dhaka over cellphone.

"Most of us who sat the examination fairly are likely to score 60+ while those who collected the questions ahead of the examination would score 80+," they said.

Some candidates also alleged a local BCS coaching centre was involved in distributing the questions leaked. However, the allegation could not be verified.

JU AS BUSY AS DU
Our Jahangirnagar University correspondent adds: A large number of BCS candidates of the JU received the leaked questions early morning yesterday.

The JU students got hold of copies of the question paper containing 100 to 110 questions, reportedly distributed by some JCD leaders.

The top JU JCD leaders sold the copies through their lieutenants and even gave them to JCD activists for free, JCD sources and BCS examinees said.

JMB cadres

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attack killing two lower court judges, were in disguises too.

The Islamist militants, mostly from the northern districts, move with ease in their target areas posing as hawkers of books, mosquito-nets, clothes, honey etc, while some of them work as rickshaw-pullers and live in rented houses for short periods, sources said.

Abdus Sattar Mollah, nabbed for his suspected involvement in the August 17 bomb blasts on the city's Port Connecting Road, used to go for a mosquito-net vendor. Ahmad Mia, accused of the same, used to move from place to place as a book vendor and was arrested at a Bangla Bazar bookstall in Dhaka.

Mohammad Shahadat and Laltu held in connection with the October 3 attacks on Chittagong courts used to pull rickshaws while staying in Chakoria and Cox's Bazar before they came to Chittagong.

They admitted that along with two others they stayed at a rented ground-floor apartment of a two-storey building at Feroz Shah Colony in the city's Khulshi area in August and September and then shifted to Mohammad Ali's Mess at Uttar Kattoli on October 1.

On the eve of October 3, Mizan, an explosives expert, came from Cox's Bazar and made six bombs at the mess. Sources said a man named Mohammad cod-ordinated the attack while Laltu, Shahadat and Mehedi were tasked with blasting the bombs in the courts. Laltu and Shahadat, who were in Cox's Bazar in August, also had an active role in the August 17 blasts there, they added.

The police have asked the mess and garage owners in the city to exercise caution in renting out rooms and rickshaws to suspicious or unknown persons, particularly those coming from the JMB-infested regions.

Mahinda wins

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The race pitted hardline Rajapakse against dovish opposition leader Wickremesinghe, whose softer line on peace talks with the rebels won him wide support among Tamils, a largely Hindu minority.

The new president "will have to sort out the country's main ethnic problem," said D. Maulana, 35, who sells auto parts in Colombo. "As all of us know without that, nothing can go forward until it is over."

No polling stations were set up in Tiger strongholds because of security concerns, but the government set up special voting booths on the edge of insurgent territory to accommodate the more than 200,000 voters who live behind rebel lines.

But officials said roadblocks and intimidation kept most from making it out of rebel territory to vote.

Turnout was less than 1 percent in and around the northern Tamil city of Jaffna the lowest ever in any of the Indian Ocean country's 22 districts.

Grenade blasts forced European Union observers to pull out of the eastern city of Batticaloa, the scene of frequent clashes between the Tigers and breakaway rebel factions. At least two people were killed in the attacks.

In the Batticaloa district, split between the rebels and government, turnout was 43 percent, down from around 70 percent in the last presidential vote a drop officials attributed to the fact that few Tamils from rebel areas voted.

Perinban, a 57-year-old Tamil farmer from a rebel area near the eastern village of Vavunathivu, wanted to vote.

But on his way to the polling station he saw a roadblock of burning tires and palm fronds and said he knew exactly what it meant: "Burning tires are a signal that we should not go beyond this."

The Tigers took up arms in 1983 over discrimination against Tamils by the predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Nearly 65,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

A 2002 cease-fire ended major fighting, but peace talks stalled in disagreement over the rebels' demands for broad autonomy, and clashes especially between the Tigers and a breakaway faction have intensified.

Election Commissioner Danyananda Dissanayake said the overall vote was "largely peaceful and incident-free" compared with past balloting.

Rajapakse, who turns 60 on Friday, has pledged to review the stalled peace process and not share political power or tsunami aid with the Tigers. His tough stand has won him wide support among Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority.

"I am not a candidate for war... but it has to be an honourable peace," he said after voting in southern Sri Lanka.

Wickremesinghe, 56, who signed a cease-fire with the rebels in 2002 when he was prime minister, promised to strike a peace deal by granting Tamils a degree of autonomy. He also favoured further liberalising the economy.

Bangla Bhai

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Suman, his elder brother Nazmul Hasan Ripon, also a Jamaat activist, Humayun Kabir alias Shawkat, Rafiqul Islam and Abdul Mannan.

Of the accused, Nazmul Hasan is now in Sherpur District Jail while the remaining six are still at large.

Inspector of DB, Sherpur, Ashraf Hossain submitted the charge-sheet to the magistrate court here on Thursday night.

Earlier, detectives and police had detained eight people, including Bazlur Rahman, Moslem Uddin, Azizullah, Abdul Khaleq, Ansar Ali, Ayub Ali, Zakaria and Sohel, from different parts of the district suspecting their involvement in the blasts. But later, they were released.

Crime suspect

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a possible criminal act to be carried out by Maznu and his accomplices at Nalkhola village under Mogra union in Tangail. A team of police led by SI Abdur Rashid rushed to the area at about 1:00am. The armed group hiding in a bamboo plantation opened fire on the law enforcers. A gunfight ensued as the law enforcers retaliated. Maznu tried to escape and died in 'crossfire' during the shoot-out, police said.

A revolver with two rounds of real bullets and eight rounds of rubber bullets were recovered from the spot.

Maznu was an accused in fifteen criminal cases including three murder cases.

Khaleda

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chairperson, sought support and cooperation of the newly elected Sri Lankan President in implementing the decisions of the regional body.

She wished his success during his tenure as the president of Sri Lanka.

Seoul eager

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Asean members.

The diplomatic sources said Seoul is expected to send a formal letter to the Saarc Council of Ministers comprising the foreign ministers who will meet in Dhaka in July next year. The meeting will finalise the summit decision on granting full membership to Afghanistan and the observer status to China and Japan.

Mirza Fakhrul given

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Road, Mir Nasir however showed indisposition as the ground for his resignation, claiming that the recent controversy over hajj flight fare had nothing to do with this. He also categorically denied allegations of taking any 'commissions' from any airline.

"He was shown the way unceremoniously amidst media reports about his secret deal with at least one foreign airline for inflating hajj flight fares.

Nasir expressed his desire to engage in law profession along with his son Barrister Mir Mohammad Helal Uddin, in addition to his involvement in BNP politics.

Nasir's claim of no foul play in hajj flight fare fiasco came at a time when the prime minister had to delegate the responsibility of resolving the deadlock to another minister, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, amidst agitation on the issue by Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab). It represents 363 agencies responsible for sending over 50,000 Hajj pilgrims in January next year.

Haab argued repeatedly that different airlines were flying Hajj pilgrims from Pakistan, India and Indonesia at as low fares as \$563, \$ 600 and \$820 per passenger.

But Nasir once again said yesterday that he found the Cabinet's August 15 decision of fixing Biman's hajj flight fare at \$950 too low and unrealistic.

He hoped that there would be no crisis over hajj flights as Biman and some foreign airlines would operate hajj flights at \$1150 for the non-ballotee pilgrims. Nasir's son was also present at the briefing.

Nasir's Recent Track Records
With the Biman's small fleet losing some more aircraft in mishaps, Nasir failed to procure or lease aircraft to keep the national flag carrier operational.

Even after the damage of two aircraft in accidents in recent months, he failed to convince the finance ministry to agree to provide funds for procuring more aircraft. The finance ministry rather raised questions about poor management of Biman.

Seminar on Bangladesh

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number of legislatures, will also be launched, said a statement issued on November 17 by Lord Avebury, vice-chairman, the Parliamentary Human Rights Group and chairman, the International Bangladesh Foundation.

At the seminar, a statement will be made by those principally concerned, including representatives of the religious minorities, the opposition, and victims of terrorist attacks.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary of the Awami League president, will represent the opposition.

High Commissioner of Bangladesh in the UK Sabi Uddin Ahmed and Khondaker Mabubuddin Ahmed, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, will be present.

They will make a statement on behalf of the Bangladesh government on the measures being taken to protect the minorities and to bring the terrorist to justice.

Extremists showed their muscle again in August, when nearly 500 bombs exploded simultaneously across Bangladesh, and again in October when there were attempts on

the life of judges.

In a latest incident two judges were assassinated in the hand of extremists. The police have still not arrested the ringleaders of the assassination attempts against the leader of the opposition and the British high commissioner in Bangladesh last year.

Besides, the murder of former finance minister and lawmaker Shah AMS Kibria is still unsolved, the statement continued.

The extremist Khatme Nabuwat organisation has again threatened violence against an Ahmadiyya mosque, and called on the government to declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims. The religious minorities are under threat all the time.

"The continuing threats to the stability of Bangladesh demand firm action, if democracy and the rule of law is to survive," the statement added.

"The international community must do everything possible to shore up human rights and democracy in Bangladesh, since the cancer of extremism will not stop at the borders."

Some HAAB leaders told The Daily Star last night that the revised fare for the non-ballotee pilgrims is still discriminatory as it is higher by \$200 than that of the ballotee Hajis.

"We have an executive committee meeting at 12 noon tomorrow [Saturday] and there we will decide our next move in the context of Biman's latest fare," HAAB General Secretary Jinnur Ahmed Chowdhury told this correspondent last night.

With its dwindling fleet-size, Biman is not able to fly more than 18,000 pilgrims--2,600 ballotee and 15,400 non-ballotee--to Saudi Arabia although the religious affairs ministry had signed an agreement with the Saudi government in April for 60,000 intending pilgrims for the Hajj in January next year.

Nasir managed to incorporate in the agenda of the November 2 cabinet meeting his proposal for re-fixing the hajj flight fare at \$1250 but the cabinet disapproved it.

Charge sheets

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are certain to be among the charge-sheeted accused.

Since the judge killing, at least 20 people including Mamun and Sultan have been held in different areas under Jhalakathi, Bhola, Barguna and Barisal districts.

Superintendent of Jhalakathi Police Mahfuzur Rahman said supplementary charge sheets would be ordered in case of need for more facts and evidence.

Hajj Airfare

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Thursday at his residence, Mujahid assured them of lowering the Hajj flight fare for the non-ballotee pilgrims.

Although he has not been given the charge officially yet, Mujahid chaired an impromptu board meeting of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday evening--second in the last four days--and slashed down the fare by another \$100.

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JMB chief's

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the five most wanted extremists, and his four accomplices, witnesses said.

Later, Superintendent of Police (SP) Khandakar Golam Faruk started interrogating them, sources said.

Journalists were not allowed in the SP office while Thakurgaon police too declined to reveal anything, not even whether the JMB chief's son-in-law Awal is among the arrested.

Police arrested another extremist from Ranishankoil area.

Earlier, the government announced a bounty of Tk 50 lakh each for arrests of JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh chief Bangla Bhai.

At least

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authorities and promises by the Iraqi government to investigate the matter.

United Nations human rights chief Louise Arbour on Friday called for an international probe of detention conditions in Iraq.

"In light of the apparently systemic nature and magnitude of that problem, and the importance of public confidence in any inquiry, I urge the authorities to consider calling for an international inquiry," said the UN high commissioner for human rights.

The Baghdad morning car bombs brought down the facade of a three-storey residential building, and sent slabs of concrete flying, wounding many people as they slept in on their day off.

Two Turks and one Sudanese were reported to be among those hurt, hospital officials said.

Firemen and soldiers, assisted by local people, scrambled through the rubble, searching for survivors. A crater in the street quickly filled with water from ruptured pipes.

Witnesses said a first van, which drove down a side street behind the interior ministry prison, exploded against a concrete barrier protecting the Hamra hotel.

A second car then attempted to penetrate further, but blew up at around the same place.

On October 24, in a similar attack, triple car bombs rocked the Palestine and Sheraton hotels, used by foreign journalists and contractors in the centre of the capital, killing 17.

Elsewhere, the US military said Friday it had killed 32 rebels after more than 50 of them had launched a series of concerted attacks Thursday against military outposts in Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

An Iraqi soldier and a US marine were lightly wounded, it said in a statement.

"The attacks were planned to coincide simultaneously; however, once initiated the attacks lacked coordination," the military said.

The attacks took place along the main road traversing the city, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the capital, with much of the fighting concentrated around the Abdullah al-Karber mosque, from where rebels opened fire at Iraqi and US troops, according to the US military.

US forces also reported the death on Thursday of a US soldier in a road crash near the northwestern town of Tal Afar, the 13th American serviceman to die in the country over a three-day period.

At least 2,083 US military personnel have been killed in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, according to an AFP tally based on the independent Iraq Coalition Casualty Count.

BNP MP

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carrying out subversive activities aiming at establishing an Islamic state -- a rule of Allah as opposed to man-made laws. "The association [between militants and coalition component] is likely, since some people of such a mindset are in the coalition," he said, in the first-ever criticism of the government by a ruling party MP.

As the BBC asked him how Bangla Bhai could rise in his area without their knowing about it, Hena said, "The government is there. The law enforcement agencies are there. I don't think it's possible for [him] to rise without our knowledge."

Later, when the BBC contacted some top BNP leaders for their comments about Hena's statement that some part of the ruling coalition is behind the rise in militancy, they brushed it aside.

Annan appeals again

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most of which has been reduced to rubble.

"I hope governments and individuals and private organisations, those with capacity, will give and give willingly and generously to help our fellow human beings in need," he said.

"When so many people are affected none of us should be indifferent."

The sum the recovery effort is expected to require was reached after an assessment by UN and Pakistani agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The Asian Development Bank Friday said 1.7 billion dollars was urgently needed to bring immediate relief to the quake survivors before the harsh Himalayan winter sets in.

Pakistan has received pledges of 2.46 billion dollars for short-term relief and rehabilitation, of which only 211.2 million has been handed over, according to government officials.

Annan, accompanied by his wife Nane, met survivors of the quake, telling some that the reconstruction effort should provide better housing than that lost in the quake. "We will do whatever we can," he said.

Musharraf praised Annan's efforts to mobilise world assistance for Pakistan, with donor fatigue after last year's tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in the United States blamed for the

relatively low-level response to the quake.

The president will unveil at Saturday's conference plans to handle the mammoth task of rehabilitating victims and rebuilding infrastructure.

He said he would also spell out measures to ensure the money coming to the government for the quake was used correctly, including through the use of foreign auditors. There have been concerns about corruption.

Total "transparency and accountability will be ensured of every penny that we get," Musharraf said.

Annan said his visit had made him both impressed and depressed. "Depressed by the number of houses that have been destroyed and will need to be rebuilt, but impressed by the level of cooperation and determination that I have seen this morning," he said.

"When you look at the terrain here and the logistical challenges that had to be overcome in order to get aid to the people, it is a really gigantic task we have ahead of us."

The leaders later returned to Islamabad where Annan was to meet Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz.

He is scheduled to leave Pakistan on Saturday after addressing the donors' conference.

Barisal intelligence

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active in six districts of Barisal division.

The Rapid Action Battalion-8 (Rab), meanwhile, has made a list of 25 JMB men to be members of the suicide squad. The elite crime-busters have prepared the list on the basis of reports given by their own intelligence wing.

They [Rab] have gathered details about them, but said all of them had left the region shortly after the August 17 countrywide blasts.

Rab-8 Commander Major Mamun said a list of 25 JMB activists has been made but declined to elaborate on the issue.

According to sources, most of those listed hail from Barguna.

The district has long been a stronghold of religious zealots. The fact that it is located far from the capital and near the Bay of Bengal has been instrumental in attracting the terrorists.

In 2003 and 2004, 46 youths were arrested while they were taking fire-arms training in a mosque in sadar upazila and a madrasa in Patharghata upazila of Barguna.

Of them, 13 had claimed to be the members of JMB. But police released them without producing before the court. An attempted murder case was filed against the rest of the arrestees, later released for absence of follow-up actions.

KHULNA
Some lawyers while examining the documents of a case at the Court of Additional District Magistrate, Bagerhat on Thursday noon found out that Bangla Bhai and his cadres were released from the prison on a bond that no lawyer had signed though required by the law.

Earlier, the home ministry had ordered a reinvestigation into the case, reports our Khulna correspondent.

The case was filed with Mollahat Police Station on August 16, 2002 for attacking the house of Awami League leader Tarapada Podder. Tarapada and his son were injured in the attack led by Bangla Bhai.

Sub Inspector Humayun Kabir of Bagerhat Detective Branch of police submitted the 'final report' (failure to prove the charge) in the case, resulting in the release of Bangla Bhai and four others. The five were accused in the First Information Report.

The specific date of their release could not be learnt as of last night.

CHUADANGA
Our Kushtia correspondent reports: Acting on information provided by an unidentified caller, a team of Chuadanga police raided a house in Chuadanga town and recovered the bombs. They also arrested two people in this connection. The bombs were

later defused.

The arrestees--Khabir Uddin and his tenant Shahjahan Mollah-- were being quizzed at Chuadanga Sadar Police Station till filling this report last night.

JHENIDAH
Shaikupa police yesterday arrested a JMB activist in the upazila headquarters area yesterday afternoon. Abul Kalam Azad alias Bulbul,