

42pc SSC-level students drop out this year

Over 10 lakh to appear as exams start tomorrow

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Over 42 percent registered candidates for SSC and equivalent certificates dropped out this year even before the examinations begin tomorrow, due to a plethora of social and financial obstacles.

About 5.34 lakh of a total 12.67 lakh high school students who had registered in 2007 while they had been in class IX under the country's 10 education boards, as regular candidates for this year's secondary school certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations, ended up failing to fill the examination forms, according to the data of Combined Education Board Computer Centre.

The data also show that about 7.33 lakh regular students will take the exams this year under the eight general education boards, one madrasa board, and one technical education board while the number of irregular examinees

is 3.3 lakh.

The Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board of Dhaka identified some social and financial reasons for such a high rate of dropout which include parents' financial inability to pay the examination fees, registered students' failure to get promoted to class X from class IX on time, inability of many students to pass the qualifying tests in their schools, getting married in cases of many female dropouts, false registrations, switching to technical professional courses by many students, departure from the county by many, many being forced to take up earning jobs due to financial problems in families, some getting too involved in politics giving up school altogether, and general carelessness of some others.

Around 47 percent of the total female students and 37 percent of male students dropped out.

Blaming early marriage as the reason for

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BANGLABAZAR RAIDED Over 57,000 textbooks seized: 1 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The taskforce on textbook seized over 57,000 secondary school textbooks from two publishing houses at Bangla Bazar on Thursday night and detained one of the owners.

Officials from National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), along with members of Rab and Police seized the books, most of which were not approved by the NCTB, from the warehouses of Pustak Bhaban and New Bishwa Bichitra on Pari Dasroad.

Sources said the taskforce raided three warehouses of Pustak Bhaban and four of New Bishwa Bichitra and seized 57,300 books of class VI to X.

The books were stored there despite directives from the authorities concerned to sell all textbooks to ease the prevailing textbook crisis.

Earlier, a NCTB monitoring team on Wednesday seized illegal textbooks worth around

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Controversial 'Banani BNP Palli' yet to be scrapped

PINAKI ROY and HELEMUL ALAM

The ongoing construction at the "Banani BNP Palli" stands as a glaring example of nepotism during the four-party rule, as the then government allotted the Rajuk plots to party men and intellectuals loyal to it.

Former ministers, state ministers and lawmakers of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government, son of the immediate past president and pro-BNP intellectuals controversially got the plots abusing power and violating the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) rules.

Although the caretaker government initially withheld the registration process of the plots, it later allowed the allottees to go ahead with construction at the housing project popularly known as "Banani BNP Palli".

During the interim rule, only three of the 50 allottees declined the plots, say sources in Rajuk. But others have got their plots regis-

tered, while many of them have already erected six-storey houses there.

"We have already given clearance to the registered plots, for which the allottees have deposited all instalments as per the government decision," says an official of Rajuk.

Forty-five plot owners have so far completed the registration process and two more have also got the clearance after paying the instalments.

Four more plot owners who shifted their possession of plot from an Uttara project to Banani also got clearance after registration.

Earlier, Rajuk suspended the process of registration on February 26, 2007 after the military-backed caretaker government assumed power. But the authorities lifted the suspension on January 29 last year and approved construction on the plots without any public announcement.

According to rules, people having land

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Probe graft under all govts since '71: Anwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Vice Chairman MK Anwar yesterday demanded a high-powered commission to probe corruption during the tenure of all governments since independence.

He hoped that the anti-corruption drive would not be targeted against particular individuals or parties.

The BNP lawmaker was apparently responding to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's announcement in parliament on Wednesday that White Papers should be published on corruption

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Two held for '71 killing in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Mohanpur Police yesterday arrested two people in a case filed in connection with killing of 15 people during the Liberation War in 1971.

Police arrested Daud Hossain, 70, and Nur-e-Anwar, 65, at their homes in Bamundighi Berabari of Mohanpur upazila around dawn. Daud is a Jamaat-e-Islami activist while Anwar belongs to BNP, said Aminul Islam, Mougachchi union BNP organising secretary.

"We are interrogating the arrestees as we had a number of complaints against them. We are also looking for the absconding suspects of the war crime case," said Asaduzzaman Milon, officer-in-charge of

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Colours and festivities dominate the daylong cultural programme at the Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University yesterday. Jatiya Bashanta Utsab Parishad organised the programme welcoming spring. Story on page 9.

Fresh DMP drive as top terrors slip out

KAILASH SARKAR

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) launches another five-day drive in the capital early today apparently to make up for the poor showing in its previous crackdown.

Despite participation of several hundred policemen in the drive between February 3 and 7, the DMP teams failed to hunt down any of the top terrors who pull the strings behind the city's organised crime.

They only managed to round up 'drug addicts or small-time peddlers or muggers', said sources involved in the anti-crime efforts. DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed however claimed it is the success of the last drive that has spurred them on to take fresh measures.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said the crackdown, which starts at 12:00am, would focus on professional killers, robbers, extortionists and other hardened criminals.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday expressed concern over rise in

muggings.

Speaking as the chief guest at a function marking the 34th anniversary of DMP, she asked the police and Rab personnel to beef up their presence.

Of 524 people rounded up in the drive that ended last week, 271 were detained on charges of dealing in or possessing narcotics and 163 mugging.

Nineteen were held for links to ogyan and malam parties (gangs who drug their preys and make off with their belongings), nine for extortion, 18 for possessing illegal firearms, 13 for carjacking, 24 for robbery and seven on murder charges.

During the swoops, the met police recovered Tk 45,052 in cash, six tolas of gold, two tolas of silver, a wallet, a handbag, 14 mobile phone sets, 10 SIM cards, a welding machine, six knives, 31 motorcycles, 10 cans of balm, 1,710 pieces of tablets, three firearms, 1,402 bottles of Phensidyles, five gram heroin, 20 kg

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Criminals kill ntv man, take away bike

Bodies of 2 youths recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot dead Atiqul Islam Atiq, a video editor of private television channel ntv, and snatched his motorbike from the city's Moghbazar area last night.

Hospital sources said Atiq, 32, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at about 10:15pm.

Witnesses said a gang of four criminals intercepted him near railway crossing at Tongi Diversion Road about 8:00pm while he was returning to his Nayatola residence

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PHOTO: STAR

Residential buildings have already been constructed on the plots in the controversial 'BNP Palli' at Banani in the capital.

Fertigation to cut water, fertiliser cost by half

PORIMOL PALMA

Irrigation water and fertiliser cost of farmers can be halved using their combined application known as fertigation, its successful trial on tomato and aubergine cultivation in the country shows.

Alongside other crops, this method can also be applied in rice cultivation that requires a large amount of both the inputs, said irrigation experts.

This revelation is important as the government sells urea at Tk 12 a kg with nearly 50 percent subsidy. It gave Tk 2,700 crore in subsidy for non-urea fertilisers during the current Boro season.

Annual demand for urea is 28 lakh tonnes and non-urea 10 lakh tonnes.

The irrigation cost for rice cultivation is Tk 5,000 an acre with diesel-run water pumps and Tk 2,000 an acre with electric pumps.

Agriculturists say that over 50 percent water and fertiliser gets wasted with the traditional method.

According to Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), a kg of paddy requires 2,000 litres of water during production but in Bangladesh farmers apply over 4,000 litres during the Boro season.

Rice cultivation on a hectare of land requires 220 to 250 kgs of urea but over 60 percent fertiliser is wasted due to excessive irrigation.

"This is because when excessive water is used dissolved fertiliser goes

beyond the reach of roots of plants," said Engineer Eftekarul Alam, head of Minor Irrigation Information System Unit at Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC).

As a result, paddy plants fail to get nutrients contributing to decreased yield, he said. Average paddy yield in Bangladesh is around three tonnes a hectare when it could be 5.5 tonnes.

"Fertigation has shown to enhance overall plant-root activity, improve the mobility of nutritive substances, their consumption as well as reducing the contamination of surface and ground water," says a report of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Bangladesh Agriculture Research

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