

Rural students rule

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division. Last year's rate was 88.84 percent.

A total of 17,91,651 students -- 8,29,531 boys (92.75 percent) and 9,62,120 girls (91.98 percent) -- passed the examinations this year.

Schools in Dhaka, however, dominated the top-10-schools list, which is prepared considering overall performance of schools.

As in the previous year, girls dominate the merit list with 32 of them on the list. Boys, however, are ahead of girls in terms of average success rate. The number of girls who sat for the exams was also higher than boys.

Some 4,56,694 girls achieved first division against 4,024,60 boys.

As many as 8,59,154 students obtained first division, 7,25,790 second division and 2,06,707 third division while 1,48,680 failed. A total of 21,56,721 students from 85,891 schools of different categories had registered for the exams but 19,40,331 showed up in the exam halls.

AlYasa, a student of Kodalia Government Primary School in Tangail, secured the first spot in the country obtaining 598 out of 600.

Sadiya Hassan of Rajoir Model Government Primary School, Madaripur, and Naimur Rahman Nayeem of Shrishti Academic School of Tangail jointly secured the second position scoring 596.

Saptarshi Chanda of Chandranath Government Primary School in Srimangal of Moulvibazar and Tanvir Anjum Saadh of Monohardi Model Government Primary School in Monohardi, Narsingdi also jointly stood third securing 595.

The number of schools with cent percent pass rate this year is 51,576 while the number of institutions with zero success is 2,787. Schools attached with Primary Training Institute (PTI) and those run by Brac, a non-government organisation, did well while Ananda schools, run under another government project, did the worst.

The examinations began on November 23 and ended on November 29.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afzarul Ameen briefed newsmen around 12:15pm at his secretary office about the results. Prior to that, the results were formally handed over to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina around 10:00am.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Ministry Motaahar Hossain said the government did not give any grace this year like the previous year when it gave 20 grace marks.

He said the students would be provided mark sheets within three days and they can get admitted to class-VI showing the mark sheets. No money would be needed to take the mark sheets, he said.

The scholarships would be announced within a month, he added.

Asked about schools with zero passes, Ameen said the number of government schools with zero pass has come down to 43 from last year's 117 as they took extra care to bring the number

down.

Of the 43, seven schools had failed in the previous year. "Punitive actions will be taken against those," he said.

Motaahar said the result showed a significant improvement in the quality of primary education.

"Learning from past we have given our best to make the teachers more active by training them and giving other facilities in the last one year," he told The Daily Star.

He said the students and their guardians became aware about the competition as there is a scholarship based on the results.

Free distribution of cent percent textbooks, increased stipends to boys and girls, continuing mid-day meals, and involving upazila administration in the monitoring and evaluation activities helped lift the education level up to this, he observed.

Rashed K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), told The Daily Star, "The students of our country can do well if they get proper opportunities to study. Since the dependency on coaching centres does not start at the primary level, the students from outside the country are also doing well."

Regarding the performance of girls, she said, "The demand for girls' education has increased among guardians as they would not get stipend if they don't do well in the examination. Another thing is that the girls are more studious than boys."

Sahida Khatun, head teacher of Kodalia Government Primary School, said guardians are now more aware of their children's education and that is why they are looking after their children's education more.

"We take a lot of tests round the year so the students have good preparation for their examinations. The teachers of our school teach after preparing a lesson plan at the beginning of the year," she told The Daily Star.

Husne Ara Begum, principal of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College, said it is the combined efforts of all behind such feat.

"Everyone has merit and the result proved that if students are nurtured well they can do well," she said.

Like the previous year, Vigarunnisa Noon School and College headed the top-10-schools' list while Monipur High School and Ideal School and College, Motijheel secured second and third.

Students of Barisal division did the best among the seven divisions with 97.14 percent passed while Sylhet was at the bottom with 86.35 percent passed. Dhaka was fifth with 91.86 percent passed.

At district level, Munshiganj topped among 64 districts with 99.41 percent success rate.

At upazila level, Mehendiganj upazila of Barisal; Dumki of Patuakhali; Shibchar of Madaripur; Tongibari of Munshiganj had 100 percent students passed while Chilmari upazila of Kurigram, had the lowest success rate with 48 percent.

India plans to launch 30 satellites

PTI, Bangalore

India is mulling to launch at least 30 earth observation satellites in the next one decade, a senior official at the Department of Space (DoS) said yesterday.

"We expect not less than 30 satellites," Director of the Hyderabad-based National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), under the DoS Dr V Jayaraman said.

NRSC is responsible for remote sensing, satellite data acquisition and processing, data dissemination, aerial remote sensing and decision support for disaster management.

In a plan already drawn up for the next ten years, Indian Space Research Organisation would launch a series of Resourcesat, Cartosat, ocean and atmospheric satellites. This would include Cartosat-3 with 30 cm resolution, he said.

Major wetland

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"If we go for Bhanga or Trishal, we have to relocate many people since there are human habitations there. But this location (Arial Beel) is suitable because it is just wetland, and only one crop (a year) is grown there," he added.

The move has triggered resentment among locals who apprehend their lands will be acquired at low prices. They staged demonstrations in the three upazilas in the last few days.

But there are also others who welcomed the move believing that building the airport will create jobs and develop the area.

"You will always find such protests whenever the government wants to do some development activities," the official said.

Arial Beel is a very old wetland stretching over 25,000 acres, home to many local bird species, which was also mentioned in documents of the British era. The name Arial Beel is found in the first Dhaka Gazetteer of James Taylor in early 19th century.

Asked about the importance of Arial Beel from environmental aspects, renowned bird expert Enam ul Haque said the wetland is home to many rare species.

"We have already destroyed all habitats of our local duck. Arial Beel is the only known breeding ground for spotted-billed duck," he said.

Besides, it is the lone breeding ground for common moorhen, purple swamp hen, water cock (Kora) and a small number of surviving Rufous-rumped grass bird in Dhaka Division, Enam mentioned.

An inhabitant of Alampur in Sreenagar, Mohsin Alam, said over three lakh people are directly or indirectly dependent on the beel for their livelihood.

Ruhul Amin of Nagorik Uddyog Sreenagar upazila unit said over 40,000 tonnes of rice are produced annually from the lands in Arial Beel, and people of the area catch fish worth Tk 50-60 crore and collect oyster worth over Tk 20 crore a year from the beel.

Land Acquisition Office of Munshiganj Abdul Latif Khan had earlier told The Daily Star that the process of acquiring land for the airport was going on in full swing. Notices in this regard would be issued in three phases, and proper compensation given to those affected.

The civil aviation and tourism ministry approved the land acquisition on December 20.

When asked, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said he is not in a position to talk on this now.

"I shall give details on the airport at an appropriate time," he added.

While visiting a number of villages in Sreenagar, Nawbabganj and Dohar, this correspondent was told by locals that they would launch a tougher agitation demanding that the proposed airport be shifted elsewhere.

"We shall do everything to protect our land, and to stop building the airport here," said Mujibur Rahman, an elderly farmer from Munshinagar in Nawbabganj.

This has become a much-talked-about issue everywhere in the areas -- houses, shops, markets, educational institutions and even in mosques. And announcements about agitation programmes were being made over microphones.

Shahjahan Badal, convener of Arial Beel Rakkha Committee, said, "We have no alternative but to protect our land. Our survival depends on Arial Beel."

"On Monday, we gave an ultimatum to the authorities to change the decision (about the proposed airport site) within seven days. We will go for tougher programmes if it is not done," he added.

SC asks

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Dr Iftekharuzaman, TIB executive director, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Badrul Alam Bhuiyan, deputy registrar at the SC, signed the letter yesterday. An SC official handed it over to TIB officials at their Banani office later in the afternoon.

No deadline has been mentioned in the letter for submitting the documents, SC sources say.

The letter also asked for submitting the full survey report, which was revealed at a programme in the capital on December 23, the sources add.

Speaking anonymously, an SC high official told The Daily Star the apex court would take action if the TIB provides names of the people in the judiciary who are involved in corruption.

On his reaction to receiving the letter, Dr Iftekharuzaman said, "Maybe they did not receive the full report. It would be better had we sent it to them earlier."

On The Daily Star query whether the TIB is going to submit any document or information on corruption by any individual in the judiciary, he said: "It's not our duty to investigate any individual's corruption. Besides, the respondents are also shy of disclosing names. They just said, for example, that they had to pay bribe to court employees, clerks, lawyers or brokers."

He added those involved in carrying out the survey did not insist for names.

TIB SURVEY FINDS
The TIB survey titled "Service sector corruption: National Households survey 2010" was conducted on 6,000 households. The households shared their experience of 13 service

sectors from government and non-governmental agencies/organisations between June 2009 and May this year.

A staggering 88 percent of households that sought service at courts said they had experienced different types of corruption and harassment.

About 11 percent of the surveyed households that received services from the judiciary paid an average Tk 7,918 in bribe each.

Households that sought service from the High Court paid Tk 12,761 on average each for services. They paid on average Tk 6,598 and Tk 6,178 each at magistrate's and judge's courts respectively.

According to the report, usually lawyers, court employees, court clerks and brokers take the money to hasten or postpone hearing, withdraw or destroy case documents and influence the judgement.

BACKGROUND
Earlier on December 26, three defamation cases were filed in Chittagong and Comilla against TIB Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan, Executive Director Iftekharuzaman and Senior Fellow Wahid Alam for "demeaning the judiciary".

However, the case filed in Comilla was dismissed on technical grounds in the evening hours after the court issued arrest warrants against the three.

Meanwhile, two Chittagong courts summoned the three -- one on January 13 and the other on January 30 -- after two cases were filed there in connection with the recent TIB household survey report.

In Jhenidah, activists of Jubo League the same day warned local TIB officials not to publish reports that irked them.

Murder, robbery

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The judge, in her order, said she granted the government decision to withdraw the charges considering it politically motivated and harassing, even though two of the accused are absconding since filing of the case.

The trial of five others Ali Ashraf alias Dipu, Mohammad Firoy Miah, Niranjana Chandra Paul, Nawshar Rahman and Zakir Hossain would continue, added the judge.

As per law, no court can withdraw any charge filed against any fugitive until he or she surrenders before it and submits any petition.

Abdul Hamid, an engineer and a resident of Dakkhin Khan in the capital, was shot dead by the accused on January 29, 2005, according to the case filed with Uttara Police Station.

The judge also shot his daughter Farah Hamid, 14, and looted about Tk 25,000, around 15 tolas of gold ornaments and other valuables from the house.

Victim's wife Syeda Hamid filed a case accusing five persons, including gang leader Joyrul Abedin Mollah, the same day. Five others were included in the charge sheet by the investigation officer of the case.

The home ministry on August 26 decided to withdraw the charges and sent a letter asking the district magistrate of Dhaka to take step in this regard.

The district magistrate on September 26 sent the letter to Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (DMPP) for necessary action.

On October 28, DMPP Mohammad Abdullah Abu referred the matter to Syed Shamsul Haque, special public prosecutor of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-2 of Dhaka.

Shamsul Haque on October 31 submitted to the tribunal a petition, along with the copy of the home ministry's recommendation, seeking with-

Cop found

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employee of Padma Oil's Savar office.

Lokman Hakim, officer-in-charge (OC) of Dakkhin Khan Police Station, told The Daily Star they recovered the bodies around 6:00pm after breaking open the door of a room at Shubho Residential Hotel.

Rahman's body bore several injury marks while Shahid was found hanging from a ceiling fan, he added.

Lokman said Shahid might have hanged himself after killing Rahman, but he could not give any clue about the motive. Police recovered a knife and a hammer from the room.

Hotel staff said the two rented the room on the fifth floor at 9:00pm on Monday identifying themselves as traders. As they did not open their room till yesterday evening, the hotelier called the police.

LATEST LEAKS

UAE considered keeping Hamas hit quiet

AP, Dubai

Diplomatic cables recently released by WikiLeaks indicate authorities in the United Arab Emirates debated whether to keep quiet about the high-profile killing of a Hamas operative in Dubai in January.

The documents also show the UAE sought U.S. help in tracking down details of credit cards Dubai police believe were used by a foreign hit squad involved in the killing. The spy novel-like slaying, complete with faked passports and assassins in disguise, is widely believed to be the work of Israeli secret agents.

Dubai officials didn't discuss Mahmood al-Mabhouh's death publicly until Jan. 29 nine days after his body was discovered in a locked airport hotel room and only after Hamas itself announced the killing.

The delayed acknowledgment followed talks at the highest levels of the UAE government, where officials discussed whether "to say nothing at all, or to reveal more or less the full extent of the UAE's investigations," according to one of the cables.

Memories

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the night of deaths, as they visited the martyrs' graves and the spots of mass killings at Jagannath Hall, Shamsunahar Hall, Rokeya Hall, and Zaharul Haque Hall.

Prosecutor Zead-Al-Malum said they learned from the people, who had been on the campus on that dreadful night, that the Pakistani army asked the DU authorities to send the female students residing in Rokeya Hall to the Cantonment, but the university authorities flat out refused.

The resistance of the DU authorities also contributed to the war of liberation, said the prosecutor.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique demanded that the prosecutors ensure exemplary punishment to those who had killed teachers, students, and staff of the university during the war of liberation.

Chief Prosecutor Tipu said significant progress has been made in the investigation of war crimes. Collection of evidence against alleged war criminals at the domestic level is almost complete, and they are now trying to collect more evidence from abroad, he added.

Many DU officials gave depositions to the prosecutors about how brutally the Pakistani army and their local collaborators killed teachers, students, and staff of the university during the war.

After completing the visit to DU, the prosecutors went on to the Rayer Bazar Killing Field, where prominent intellectuals of the country were murdered and dumped by the Pakistani army and their collaborators just before the country's liberation.

Shayamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, wife of martyred intellectual Dr Alim Chowdhury, gave her deposition before the prosecutors there.

She said members of Albadr, an armed vigilante collaborator group of the Pakistani army, picked her husband from their Purana Paltan home on December 15, 1971, and they found his body at the killing field on December 18.

"We found the bullet ridden body covered with blood and dumped in a ditch near a brick field. I fainted soon after identifying his body, which also bore marks of bayonet charge. Later others told me that the brutal killers also had gouged his eyes out," she broke into tears, and then demanded punishment to the killers.

Chief Prosecutor Golam Arif Tipu said they will try their best to mete out appropriate punishment to the killers. He also put out a call to the government for finishing the unfinished construction of the Rayer Bazar Martyred Intellectuals' Monument.

11 killed

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Hospital and Chandina Health Complex where doctors said the condition of 10 was critical.

The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Chandina Police Station Md Nurul Afkar Bhuiyan said Dhaka-bound bus Bilas Paribahan from Chandpur collided with Laxmipur-bound Al Baraka Paribahan at about 3:45pm. Both the vehicles were twisted and fell on the roadside.

The accident took place when the drivers tried to save two motorcyclists, who were abruptly entering the highway from North Barakamta area, the OC added.

Locals and police rescued the bodies and injured persons.

London home to Hamas hub

Says Israel

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's defence ministry accused a London-based Palestinian centre yesterday of "terror-affiliated activities" and being the organisational arm of the militant Islamic Hamas movement in Europe.

Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip and advocates violent opposition to the Jewish state, is designated by the European Union as a terrorist organisation.

An Israeli defence ministry statement said that the Palestinian Return Centre organises conferences in Europe at which it plays taped speeches by Hamas leaders who are banned from entering the EU.

"The centre is involved in initiating and organising radical and violent activity against Israel in Europe, while delegitimising Israel's status as a nation among the European community," the statement said.

"Among other terror-affiliated activities, the centre organises many conferences in various European countries for Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood activists from all around the world," it added.

On its website, the centre describes itself as "an independent consultancy focusing on the historical, political and

legal aspects of the Palestinian Refugees."

Israel however, says it is "part of the broader Hamas activism and support network within Europe, which is especially strong in England."

BNP decides

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reporters about the decision after the meeting, which lasted for over an hour.

H a b i g a n j - 1 a n d Brahmanbaria-3 parliamentary seats fell vacant after death of ruling Awami League lawmakers Dewan Farid Gazi and Lutful Hai Sachchu on November 19 and 22.

At the meeting yesterday, BNP standing committee also discussed the municipality elections and alleged torture on Salauddin Quader Chowdhury in police custody.

Besides, it condemned the Anti-Corruption Commission's filing of cases against former speaker and BNP leader Jamiruddin Sircar, former deputy speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Later, Khaleda Zia talked about the local body polls with Jamaat-e-Islami's acting ameer Maqbul Hossain and acting secretary general ATM Azharul Islam.

Tales of the talent

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Drishiti obtained 596 out of 600 marks from Rajair Model Government Primary School in Gopalganj. She missed the first place by two marks.

Unlike other victorious students, the 11-year-old girl comes from a completely different background and has a painful experience. Miscreants killed her father, Qamrul Islam, when she was nine-month-old.

Defying the hardship, Drishiti's mother Shahida Begum continued her study, as she was excelling in school, reports our Madaripur correspondent.

"I am missing my father on this joyful day," she told The Daily Star, crying.

Thanking all her school-teachers for her success, she said she wants to be a doctor and treat the ill-fated villagers.

"Perseverance of my daughter made this possible. She studied hard and made me proud", said Drishiti's mother who could not take care of her study, as she had to leave for work early morning. Her income earns the family bread.

The first place holder AlYasa Iffat of Kodalia Government Primary School of Tangail Sadar upazila said he also wants to be a doctor. He obtained 598 out of 600 marks.

He said he studied at least seven hours every day, and took help from a coaching centre.

His father SM Zakaria Haider is an assistant education officer of Tangail Sadar upazila and mother Fahmida Chowdhury a homemaker.

"Teachers and students of Kodalia Government Primary School is proud of the Iffat's success", school headmistress Sahida Khatun said.

Naimur Rahman Nayeem, another joint second place winner, is also from Tangail, and a student of Srishti Academic School.

He aims to be a pilot. Nayeem said he studied minimum six hours regularly. In leisure, he reads books and watches television.

His businessman father Shahidul Islam regrets his inability to give him son ample time but is happy with his success. "He made us proud," he said.

Saptarshi Chanda of Chandranath Government Primary School in Srimongal of Moulvibazar obtained 595 marks to jointly secure the third place.

She is the only child of Subol Chanda, a medicine trader, and Dipali Rani Chanda, a homemaker.

Deepali Rani said they always encouraged Saptarshi despite financial hurdle. She wants her daughter to be a doctor.

Tanvir Anjum Saadh of Monohardi Model Government Primary School in Monohardi, Narsingdi obtained the third place together with Saptarshi.

"This result is an outcome of continuous inspiration of my parents and teachers," he told our Narsingdi correspondent.

Son of Amir Hossain of Khidirpur union in Narsingdi he intends to be a doctor as well.

Dropout fear mounts

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out of some 24.88 lakh registered did not turn up for this year's examinations and another 1.48 lakh did not succeed.

The number of absentees is 1.27 lakh higher compared to last year. However, the number of unsuccessful students is lesser than last year's 2.3 lakh.

Around 1.54 lakh students did not take the examinations last year when it was introduced for the first time.

Education officials feared drop out of a large number of this year's absentees and unsuccessful students, saying majority of these students belong to poor families. They (families) would not allow the students to sit for the examinations again due to financial constraints.

According to Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report, 2009, the repetition rates in primary level were found to be in the range of 2.5 to 2.7 at all grades, except for grade I.

"The students who did not take the examination or failed are mostly from rural areas. It is found in most cases that these students feel disinterested to come back to schools as they get involved in different jobs to support their families," said an official of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE).

The DPE, however, does not have any data of how

many students, who refrained from taking exams or failed last year, appeared in this year's examinations.

No student from 2,787 schools passed this year. Of the total, the number is high in Ananda schools run by Reaching Out of School project of the government.

These schools have become a major concern for the government as a large number of students from these schools failed last year.

Education experts said the guardians of the unsuccessful and absent students should be motivated for the continuation of their children's education.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), told The Daily Star that it should be studied where the unsuccessful students go. "Do they repeat their enrolment with schools or simply desert studying," she questioned.

"School managing committee needs to play an important role to check dropout. The committee would get information about the failed students and encourage them and their families to continue studying."

"The main thing we need to find out is the cause behind the failure of the students," she added.