

Rural students

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In Dhaka board, only eight schools of the top 20 are outside of the capital. However, all of them are either in metropolitan or municipality area.
Of the top 160 institutions in the country, 79 are public schools in districts. They have quality teachers and most of their students are from well-off families.
Most of the remaining institutions are either cadet colleges or run by a specific defence force such as the army.
In Jessore board, 13 of the top 20 institutions are public schools, while the rest are either cadet colleges or specialised schools. The pattern is almost similar in the other education boards.
More than one-third of the total GPA-5 achievers are from Dhaka board. A total of 17,595 students obtained the highest grade in this board. Of them, 10,231 are from Dhaka metropolitan area.
Under this board, pass percentage in the capital is 94.80, while it is 69.23 in Shariatpur, 74.48 in Netrokona, 74.32 in Manikganj, 76.11 in Faridpur, and 76.75 in Madaripur districts.
Talking about the trend, educationist Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said as rural Bangladesh is the main focus area for the country's development, the standard of education must be improved at rural levels.
"We need to intensify our training programmes for rural teachers and modernise those schools, as has been done by Sri Lanka. Besides, we need to update our training systems as well," he observed.
The parents also have to be reminded of their responsibility, mentioned the Dhaka University teacher. "If parents take the responsibility of rural schools and lend due support, the scenario might change."
He stressed the need for allocating more from the GDP for education to improve the situation.
"We should focus more on enhancing quality education rather than the pass rate. For that, we have to build libraries in rural schools, encourage children to read and increase teachers' salary and status," added Prof Manzoorul.

Teesta Deal
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meeting of National Water Resources Council.
"Accordingly, sharing and management of water of international rivers should be finalised after giving due cognisance to the views of the states and this should be stated in the National Water Policy," the statement added.
Making its stand clear on the water policy, the West Bengal government said the Indian government should consider the views of state governments in the matters of conservation, development and management of water resources while finalising the national water policy.
The Teesta treaty could not be signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September last year following last-minute objections to the draft agreement by Mamata, who was concerned over its impact on the availability of Teesta water for irrigation, power generation and drinking in northern part of the state.
Mamata then set up a one-man commission headed by leading hydrologist Kalyan Rudra to assess availability of water in the Teesta round the year. Rudra last week said he had completed his studies and was ready to submit the report if asked to do so.
Indian leadership has repeatedly assured visiting Bangladeshi leaders that New Delhi had been trying to evolve a consensus on the Teesta water-sharing issue.
On the erosion issue, Mamata Banerjee's government said erosion caused by inter-state and international rivers were affecting millions of people and should be declared as a national problem.

Changes unlikely

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People Order, it must have elected committees.
But signs are there that today it will be a repetition of the last council, held in July 2009, which re-elected Sheikh Hasina president and empowered her to pick other office bearers. Syed Ashrafur Islam was unopposed elected general secretary.
Moreover, the council of Dhaka city unit on Thursday made it almost clear that Sheikh Hasina will have the power to decide on all the positions in the central body.
Arranged after a gap of 10 years, the city unit council has authorised Hasina to form the party's city committee. Even an election commission was not constituted as required by the party charter.
Party sources said Hasina might announce the city committee along with the new central committee after the national council.
It is also possible that the national council, which is around five months behind schedule, will allow the present central committee to continue until the next council in December 2015.
AL Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury, also agriculture minister, said the party is holding the council to honour the registration rules.
There would be no major changes in the party leadership, structure, charter and declaration paper through today's council though these are required by the electoral laws, she added.
But, Matia said, the councillors have been elected at the grassroots level and in this case party discipline and constitution have largely been followed.
The election of councillors is an interesting side of the national council. Councillors could not be elected in line with the party constitution as councils of its metropolitan, district and upazila units are long due.
Councils at only eight of the 72 organisational district units and not more than half of 460 upazila units were held in the last three and half years.
The post of either president or general secretary of so far 18 organisational districts remains vacant while both the posts remain vacant in four districts.
Councils have been due in at least 10 organisational districts over the last 15 years, party sources say.
Therefore, the councillors who were elected before the 2002 national council will join today's council like they joined in 2009.
AL Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury MP, however, claims the AL has never violated its constitution. "Awami League is the only party that follows the party constitution largely."

2 killed
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confirmed.
A witness of the accident said two buses -- one from the Mirpur end and other from the Novo Theatre -- crashed into each other at Biman Crossing of Bijoy Sarani road.
The two buses rolled over and dashed a vegetable-laden van parked along a footpath near Crescent Lake Road.
Passers-by rushed to the spot and found Kalam and the vegetable vendor injured. They were admitted to Pangu Hospital.
Kalam was purchasing vegetable at the time of the accident, the witness added.
Aklima and Salam were found lying dead on the spot. They were passengers of Shikor Paribahan, which was coming from Mirpur end of the road.
No one of the inter-district bus service Hanif Paribahan that was coming from Novo Theatre end was injured in the accident, said Abdul Momen, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.
Relatives of Aklima said she was going to Demra from Mirpur-11 to meet her husband there.
Selim's son Md Imran said his father was going to join his work at Jatrabari from Mirpur-11.

Fog disrupts

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10.7 degrees Celsius in the capital.
The authorities suspended ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route at 12:01 midnight due to a thick blanket of fog, said Ashraf Ullah Khan, manager (commerce) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).
Huge traffic congestion in ferry and launch terminals of the routes kept thousands of people stranded until service could be resumed at 9:00 am.
Masters of Ro-Ro ferries Keramat Ali and Bir Shreshtha Motiur Rahman were forced to anchor in the mid-river for hours after being unable to see through the thick fog, reports our Manikganj correspondent.
Our Madaripur correspondent reports, masters of four ferries plying the Maowa-Kawrakandi route were forced to cast anchor in the mid-river to wait for hours since 12:00 midnight.
Around 300 vehicles remained stranded on both ends of the waterway due to the suspension of ferry service till yesterday morning.
Biting cold and cold related diseases were taking a heavy toll on the homeless people of the Aila-affected areas in the coastal districts, reports our Satkhira correspondent.
General hospitals and private clinics in Lalmonirhat district were seen overcrowded due to the influx of patients suffering from cold related diseases.
Farmers and day labourers were the worst sufferers as they could not go out for work due to the cold snap sweeping across the district, reports our Lalmonirhat correspondent.
Our Barisal correspondent reports, the cold wave increased the sufferings of homeless and lower income group people in the district.
The NGO Foundation and its member organisations including ASA and Brac have started distributing warm clothes among the ultra-poor of the country's northern districts.

Myanmar
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Currently state-owned newspapers are the only dailies allowed, prompting many private companies to provide news via the Internet for a population hungry for information after years of restrictions.
The issuing of the new daily licences -- announced on the information ministry's website -- will come two years after the launch of a new reformist government, with private newspapers expected to hit the stands soon after.
Several weekly newspapers are hurriedly getting ready for the changes, which were floated in September, as Myanmar's reformist government widens its reform drive.
"We are ready to rock," said Nyein Nyein Naing, executive editor of weekly paper 7Days News.
"This is a milestone for our industry and for our country and people as well."
But he warned of a "really challenging" timetable for turning newsrooms from weekly to daily operations.
Kyaw Min Swe, chief editor of the Voice Weekly, said he has also been preparing journalists for the rigours of daily output.
"I think at least five weekly newspapers are ready to go daily," he said, adding that the biggest challenge was the distribution.
Since taking office last year, President Thein Sein has overseen a number of dramatic reforms such as the release of hundreds of political prisoners and the election of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament.
In August, Myanmar announced the end of pre-publication censorship which was previously applied to everything from newspapers to song lyrics and even fairy tales.
Reporters jailed under the junta have also been freed and a lighter touch from censors has already been seen private weekly journals publish an increasingly bold array of subjects, while state dailies now report the latest Hollywood gossip.

No alternative to Hasina

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had the opportunity to retain the party helm for so long.
When her attention was drawn to this fact, political scientist Prof Dilara Chowdhury said, "I am more than sure no other democratic country in the world has such a record."
Hasina's archival Khaleida Zia, chairperson of the main opposition BNP, is also in the race. She has been leading BNP for the last 28 years after its founding 35 years ago. It is certain that she will be made the party chief for another term when BNP holds its national council next year. Compared to her party's age, Khaleida's record is thus somewhat stronger than that of Hasina.
During her leadership, Hasina has faced very little opposition within the party or handled little intra-party conflicts, except for that during the last military-backed caretaker government when a good number of central leaders had moved to reform the party curbing her absolute power.
However, lesser challenges within the party helped Hasina emerge as the supreme leader of the party and her cabinet during the current tenure.
Bangabandhu, who was the supreme leader of the country, unlike his daughter did not enjoy such congenial ambience when he was leading the party. Sometimes, he had to take drastic measures, such as personal intervention or accommodation of factional leaders in powerful positions, to minimise internal conflicts in the party.
However, Hasina had resigned as the AL chief on March 3, 1991, after her party's defeat in the fifth parliamentary elections in February the same year to BNP. But she had to back-track from the decision a couple of days later, on March 5, under immense pressure from her party leaders and activists.
Hasina was made the AL president at a time when the party was facing a volatile situation following the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975. After the assassination, his government was overthrown and the country was put under martial law.
In early 1975, the AL was dissolved by forming Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, which was then the only political party of the country.
After the revival of the AL during the martial law regime, the party's first council was held in 1978 in which Abdul Malek Ukil and Abdur Razzak were elected as the party president and secretary respectively. But after the council, factional fights within the party continued to escalate.
And before the party's next council in 1981, the factional fights reached a more acrimonious level. Against such backdrop, Sheikh Hasina, who was then abroad, was elected as the party chief in an effort to reduce the internal conflicts.
Hasina returned to the country on May 17, 1981 and engaged herself in party activities. Since then she has been leading the AL. She was re-elected as the president of the party in successive councils in 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008.
It is certain that she will be re-elected for the post again in today's national council. Under her leadership, the AL won the parliamentary elections twice -- in 1996 and 2008 -- and she became the prime minister each time.
None of Hasina's predecessors was fortunate like her. In independent Bangladesh, the first AL council was held in 1972, in which Bangabandhu was elected as its president and Zillur Rahman, now the president of the country, as the secretary. In the next council of 1974, AHM Quamaruzzaman became the party president while Zillur Rahman its secretary.
Before the country's independence, the first council of Awami League was held in 1953. In that, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were elected as the president and general secretary of the party, respectively, while Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy was made the central party convener of entire (East and West) Pakistan.
In the next two councils held in 1955 and 1957, Bhashani and Mujib were re-elected for the same posts. But a few years after the 1957 council, Maulana Bhashani severed his relation with the AL and formed National Awami Party. The very year, a special council of the AL was held and Bhashani was replaced by Suhrawardy.
During the martial law regime of Gen Ayub Khan, the political parties faced difficulties in carrying out their activities. So the AL took seven years, up to 1964, to hold the next council. In that, Maulana Abdur Rashid Torkobagish was elected as the party president and Sheikh Mujib as general secretary.
Sheikh Mujib assumed as the party chief in 1966. In the 1967's council, he was re-elected as the party president and Tajuddin was made general secretary of the East Pakistan AL.
During the Pakistan period, the last council of AL was held in 1969 where Sheikh Mujib was elected as president of the central and East Pakistan chapter of the party.

Waste remains a concern
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gets mixed up with the household waste.
"This assorted waste, putrefied in the open, can trigger the spread of various harmful diseases such as hepatitis, HIV, dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria, scabies, skin ailments," he said.
The rubbish dumps also create a toxic liquid substance called leach, which may trigger underground water pollution, he added.
According to a city corporation official, some 2,200 tonnes of household garbage is being generated in the Dhaka North City Corporation areas while 2,006 tonnes at Dhaka South City Corporation areas daily.
But the city corporations only manage to collect daily around 1,350 tonnes of waste from Dhaka north and 1,200 tonnes from Dhaka south thanks to their poor logistics and sluggish workforce.
One of the pressing problems in the daily waste management is the undue influence of the trade unions of sweepers and drivers. Almost 30 percent of 8,000 street sweepers do not do their daily duties. But they are getting paid full salary every month, said the official preferring not to be named.
At least 30 drivers of the waste management wing have the liberty of not reporting to their workplaces on the ground that they are trade union leaders and members. But they are getting paid full salary every month.
Questioned why the authorities do not take administrative action against these drivers and sweepers, the official added that they are helpless because the sweeper and driver unions are very influential.
Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Latif, member secretary of Scavenger and Workers' Union of Dhaka City Corporation, denied the allegation saying "Around 3 to 4 percent sweepers might remain absent daily."
"As we cannot enjoy two days' weekly holiday like other employees of the city corporation, we perform our jobs maintaining a duty roster," he added.
The city corporations' waste management programmes are virtually non-existent in the capital's major kitchen markets along the rivers Turag and Buriganga.
During visits to Badamtali fruit market, Gabtali kitchen market near the Beribandh and Islampur wholesale market, this cor-

spondent found waste left on roads to rot in the open.
Bipon Kumar Saha, chief waste management officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, said they were trying to attract long term investments in the waste management sector to handle the garbage properly.
"We are expecting big companies to come forward," Sahasaid.
"The city's garbage is a huge resource in many countries. You can convert waste into environment friendly compost, bio-gas, bio-fuel and other by-products," he added.
Md Anamul Haque, chief waste management officer of Dhaka South City Corporation, said they were trying to bring different kitchen markets under a system for effective disposal of waste.
Sufi Iqbal Ahmed, managing director of Bangladesh Clean Technology Ltd, claimed that as long as the slum areas remain out of the purview of garbage collection system, waste management is unlikely to yield the expected result.
His firm has been handling waste in Uttara since 2004 after being awarded the work by the Dhaka City Corporation -- now split into north and south.

Hall-Mark

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along with Savar police and the Industrial police bulldozed eight illegal structures of Hall-Mark Group that housed at least 20 factories and storehouses in Nandakhal area of Hemayetpur, on the outskirts of the capital. Through the process the administration recovered 10 acres of government land. A Dhaka court had ordered the recovery in November.
Meanwhile, police said Razzak had claimed that the local administration had recovered more area than it was supposed to during the drive and that he was trying to demarcate Hall-Mark's own land, not that of the government.
He told police that when the government team went to the industrial area of Hall-Mark Group on Thursday, Razzak had contacted some "government high-ups". One of the high-ups had assured him that he would manage everything and let them take possession of their land once the government officials were done with their duty.
Police yesterday appeared on the scene acting on a tip off that some people had been trying to grab the government land again and constructing boundary walls, said Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Savar Police Station.
"We found Abdur Razzak along with some Hall-Mark officials trying to build concrete boundary walls on the recovered land," said the OC.
Sources said Hall-Mark Group in 2006, had primarily purchased only 2 acres of land in Hemayetpur for a dairy farm. However, within a short period of time, Tanvir Mahmud with the help of his hired goons and a section of unscrupulous government officials and law enforcers grabbed around 200 acres of land of the locals.
At least 65 general diaries and four cases were filed with Savar Police Station in this regard.

UK missing girl in Pakistan returns home
AFP, London
A six-year-old girl is on her way home to Britain more than three years after she was abducted by her father and taken to Pakistan, police said yesterday.
Atiya Anjum-Wilkinson disappeared in November 2009 after going to stay with her father, Razwan Ali Anjum.
The former insurance salesman told the girl's mother, Gemma Wilkinson, that he was taking Atiya to Southport in northwest England but instead took her to the Pakistani city of Lahore.
He told his former partner that she was "never going to see Atiya again".
Anjum is currently serving a prison sentence in Britain for refusing to reveal his daughter's whereabouts despite a court order.
Just last month her 32-year-old mother launched a fresh appeal for information about her daughter.
But sources told Britain's Press Association agency that Atiya had been found in Pakistan after new information had come to light.
Police said Atiya was due to arrive at Manchester Airport later Friday.
Anjum, who is in his late 20s, was given a fourth consecutive jail term by a High Court judge in April after he refused to reveal where his daughter was.
He indicated that Atiya was in Pakistan or Iran but said he did not know her exact whereabouts, a claim which the judge in the case said was "absurd".
Another judge has previously said the case was "as bad as a case of child abduction as I have encountered".
It is thought Atiya was found after police issued a computer-generated image of what Atiya would look like now -- a day before her sixth birthday in November.
Speaking then, her mother said: "It's been an absolute nightmare. As to her whereabouts we know nothing. We've had no contact."

Graft declines

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percent in the 2012 survey.
The rate in health sector jumped to 40.2 percent in this year's survey from 33.2 percent two years ago.
During the same period, bribe rate rose to Tk 6,100 from Tk 3,184 per household, according to the survey done between May 2011 and April 2012.
A household had to pay on an average Tk 13,084 in bribe for receiving service during the period.
Victim households paid Tk 21,955 crore in bribe in 2012 which constitutes 13.6 percent of the national budget and 2.4 percent of the GDP. The amount was 9,591 crore in 2010 which constituted 8.7 percent of the national budget and 1.4 percent of the GDP.
The number of households in the country is 3.18 crore, according to the report.
The TIB has been doing such survey since 1997.
This year's survey titled "Corruption in Service Sector: National Households Survey 2012" was conducted on 7,554 households selected by using a three-stage stratified systematic sampling from rural and urban areas of all the 64 districts.
The households shared their experience of 13 service sectors -- labour migration, law enforcement agencies, land administration, judiciary, health, education, local government, agriculture, power, tax, banking, insurance and non-government organisations.
Labour migration tops the list in corruption rate.
The survey found on average 77 percent service

seekers fell victim to bribery in labour migration, 75.8 percent by law enforcers, 59 percent in land administration, 57.1 percent in judiciary, 40.2 percent in health and 40.1 percent in education.
Due to bribery and irregularities, a household had to count Tk 1,99,676 for labour migration, Tk 7,080 for law enforcers, Tk 7,807 in land sector, Tk 11,711 in judiciary, Tk 258 in health and Tk 100 in education.
TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal said over 50 percent people seek help from middlemen instead of going for themselves to the service providing institutes. This proves that the institutions do not provide service in a proper way.
"A sense of frustration prevails among people in such a situation," she added.