

# Less cheers this time

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Nahid and chairmen of almost all education boards blamed frequent shutdowns and other destructive political programmes during the exam days.

The examinees underwent intense psychological pressure amid a sense of uncertainty due to the shutdowns during such an important examination in their life.

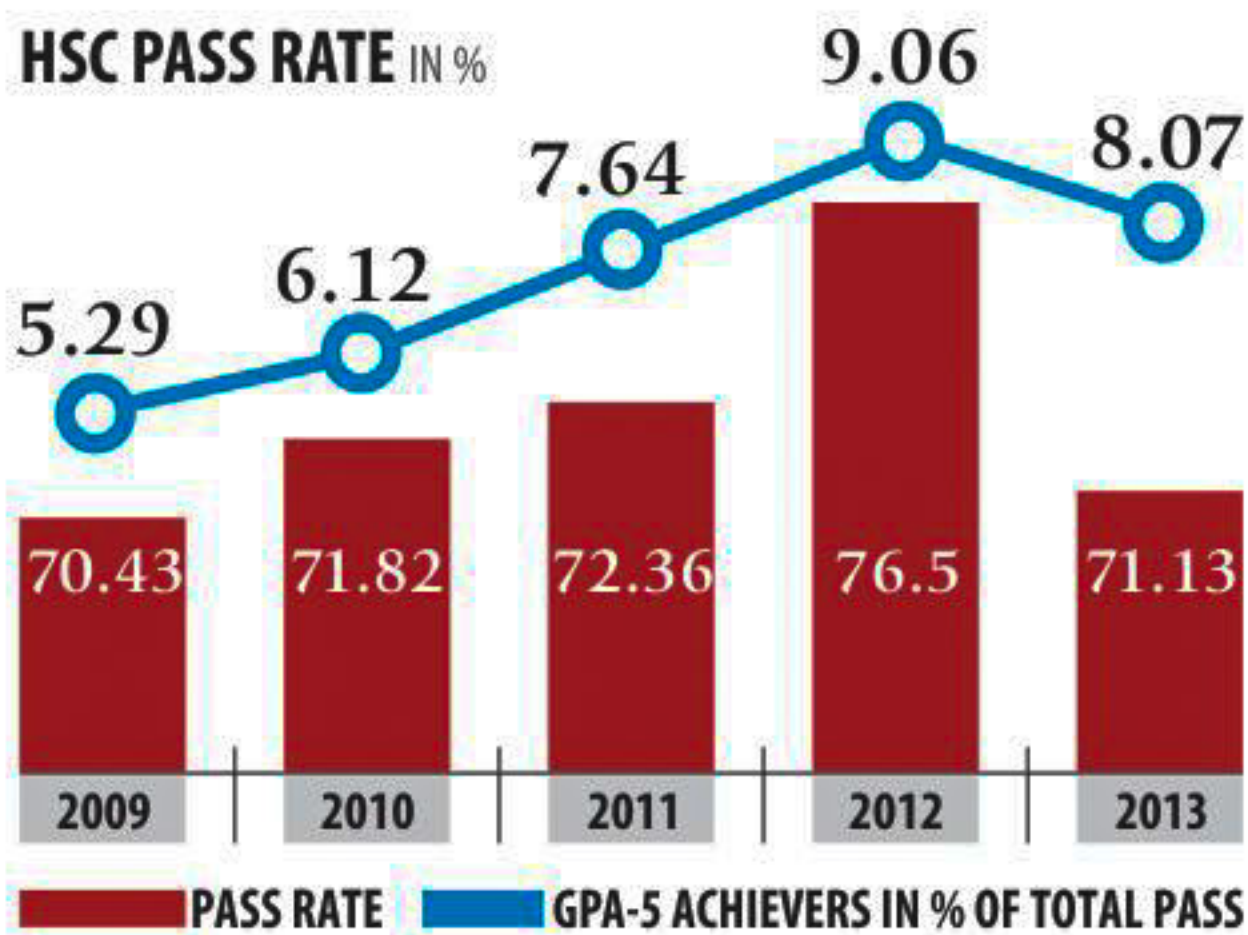
Frequent changes in exam routines baffled the examinees and hindered their preparations, they noted.

Shalahuddin Quasar Biplob, associate professor of psychiatry at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said whenever any unexpected incident crosses somebody's tolerance level, it creates a stress.

"Similarly, unexpected things during examinations could lead to stress, fear and lack of concentration, and their impact is manifested in the results," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The combined pass rate under 10 education boards, including madrasa and technical boards, came down to 74.30 percent, decreasing by 4.37 points.

As many as 148 out of 164 students, who sat for the exams in five centres



abroad under Dhaka board, came out successful.

A total of 58,197 students under 10 boards secured GPA-5 this year, falling by 2,965 from last year's number. Only 20 students got GPA-5 when the grading system was introduced in 2003.

Publishing the results officially, the education minister at a press briefing said, "Some inconsiderate, short-sighted and irresponsible political leaders, who only thought of their narrow purpose, were responsible for the result."

He said it was the first time the examinees could not take the exams tension-free.

"Nine countrywide hartals were enforced during the exams. Besides, there

were half-day hartals in some parts of the country during almost every exam," Nahid added.

"We had to reschedule examinations of 32 papers frequently due to the hartals. In Chittagong board, the schedule of English second paper test was changed four times."

He said the students were under severe pressure and felt utter uncertainty and lack of security on exam days. Therefore, many did not do well in the exams.

"An examinee made preparation for a certain subject but came to know that the exam had been postponed. They were also uncertain as to when the next exam would be held," added the minister.

Prof Abul Kashem Miah,

chairman of Comilla board, told The Daily Star that the students could not concentrate properly because of a chaotic situation during the exams.

Dhaka board Chairman Prof Taslima Begum said they would analyse the results to know if there was any other reason for such a drop.

She added the students could not do well in English and chemistry. The pass rate in English in eight education boards is over 75 percent against last year's 80pc while in chemistry it was around 77 percent against last year's 85pc.

SM Wahiduzzaman, exam controller of Dhaka board, said apart from the political turmoil, "creative question method" in four subjects, including chemistry, business entrepreneurship and civics, also contributed to this decline as students were not yet ready for this.

The method was introduced last year and applied only in Bangla.

The results were published at all the boards simultaneously yesterday afternoon, 60 days after the exams had concluded.

Earlier, the education minister handed over the copy of the results to Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban, where the P M attended a teleconference and sent results to four Jessore colleges via internet.

As many as 10,02,496 students from 7,657 institutions took the HSC and equivalent exams that began on April 1. Of them, 7,44,891 came out successful.

Boys did better than girls in terms of pass rate. The success rates of boys and girls are 74.32 and 70.29 percent.

Rajuk Uttara Model College topped the list of 20 most successful institutions in Dhaka board while Abdul Kadir Mollah City College in Narsingdi ranked second. Three more colleges outside the capital also secured position in the chart prepared on five academic categories.

Students from the business studies group did best in terms of pass rate followed by science and humanities groups.

Like other years, Alim examinees under Madrasa Education Board did exceptionally well compared to other nine boards with a pass rate of 91.46 percent.

Despite the fall in pass rate, there is concern over admission to public universities due to limited seats.

# Pledges not fulfilled

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As part of the initiative, the think tank yesterday presented its report on the progress made on the commitments 100 days after the tragedy, at CIRDAP auditorium in the city.

Subsequent to the incident that killed at least 1,132 workers and injured thousands, the government pledged to provide Tk 1 lakh to each of the deceased workers' families together with financial assistance of up to Tk 15 lakh in the form of savings certificate and life insurance benefit of Tk 1 lakh.

But KG Moazzem, additional research director of CPD, pointed out that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is lagging way behind on their delivery.

Only 30 families have received financial assistance of Tk 10 lakh on average. "Given the urgency of these families, the disbursement needs to be swifter."

As for the life insurance, 777 families have received this benefit so far, meaning at least another 355 remain.

"The distribution of the fund from the PMO is well-appreciated although a large number of the victims' families are yet to get the benefit.

Since all information on the dead workers are available, the government should immediately disburse the fund."

Meanwhile, the BGMEA has committed to raise Tk 25,000 from each of its 5,000-odd member factories and forward the proceeds to the Prime Minister's Funds. It is yet to be established whether this has taken place or not.

Moazzem said the Prime Minister's Fund has also received donations from non-government and private organisations and individuals. "The PMO should make it public the total funds it has received and how it plans to hand it out."

Around 700 of the dead or missing workers' families are yet to receive what they were promised by the prime minister and the BGMEA, he said. "The situation needs to change urgently."

For the injured workers, other than a financial package, the government has agreed to provide physiological treatment of two years and rehabilitate their family members.

The BGMEA, separately, committed to provide employment to the disabled workers' able-bodied family

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promises must match actions
- Regulatory agencies must be made accountable
- Compensation on the basis of loss of annual earnings
- Full trade union rights must be allowed
- Transparency about money donated to prime minister's fund
- Special projects to rehabilitate injured workers
- Professionals should be appointed to design buildings
- Rescuers should also get attention

fight for the rights of the victims such as Akhter and Sardar.

Commerce Minister GM Quader and a number of labour rights activists welcomed the initiative. "The government always pays higher value to the suggestions and recommendations made by the research and civil society organisations," Quader said.

Hamida Hossain, chairman of Ain O Shalish Kendra, recommended a framework such that the workers and trade unions can be involved in the monitoring of the promises.

Wazed Ali Khan of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies called for compensation based on the annual loss of earnings. "Tk 1-2 lakh is nothing. Besides, special programmes have to be taken to rehabilitate the injured workers."

Zillul Hye Razi, trade adviser to the European Union delegation to Bangladesh, said the country's garment sector would have to be careful about labour rights and working conditions as the EU would be closely watching them throughout 2014.

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, a former commerce minister, said the government agencies did not play its due role irrespective of the party in power.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shujan, said the political power and the business power have merged into a power that was least bothered about following laws.

Anis Ud Dowla, a former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the collapse of the building was an issue of bad governance. Quader, too, acknowledged the lack of good governance, which he deems to be a "major problem" for the country.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow of CPD, moderated the programme.

The Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, Ain of Salish Kendra, Ahsania Mission, ActionAid Bangladesh, Gono Shakkhorota Abhijan, Transparency International Bangladesh, Nari Paksha, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Shushashon Jonno Nagorik, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, are the initiative's partners.

# A triumph over odds

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Jahir's father Tajul Islam is one of the many pavement hawkers in front of Baitul Mukarram mosque whose makeshift stalls had been burnt down in the violence centring on Hefajat-e-Islam's May 5 long march.

"As my father's shop burnt up, I thought my

dream of becoming a chartered accountant someday was coming to an end," Jahir told this correspondent.

After passing SSC exams from Comilla Mahini High School, he had come to Dhaka with his father for higher education.

Hailing from a remote

Nangalkot area in Comilla, Jahir claims to be the first person from his thana to study in a prestigious institution like Notre Dame College.

He said he shared with his father a room at a mess in Kamrangirchar on the outskirts of the city and

never got the private coaching that many of his peers did since his father, ailing and unable to work most of the time, could not afford it.

In fact, after his father's stall was burnt down in the middle of his HSC exams, they had a hard time managing food, he added.

"The Tk 50,000 compensation that we received from the government pulled us through," said Jahir.

He now plans to seek admission to Dhaka University and wants to devote himself to educating children in his village in future.

## PM blames

FROM PAGE 16  
Kalam Azad, press secretary to the premier, told The Daily Star, quoting Hasina as saying.

The PM made the remark after receiving a copy of the results from Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at her official residence Gono Bhaban yesterday morning.

The students could not concentrate on their studies in that uncongenial atmosphere. So, they should not be blamed for the results. The opposition will have to shoulder the responsibility for the results, she said.

Meanwhile, in reply to the PM's claim, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said it was the prime minister's "habitual" speech where she always blamed the opposition for her government's every failure.

"If we are responsible for everything, why are you [Hasina] not handing over power to us?" he asked at an Iftar party in the capital.

# Limon wants to study law

FROM PAGE 16  
The Jhalakathi college student secured at least 70 percent marks in each subject after taking the exams from the Kathalia PGS Karigori Bahumukhi School and College in the commerce group.

It was March 23, 2011, when 16 year old Limon went out of his house in the

Saturia village in Jhalakathi to fetch the family cattle from a nearby field. Mistaking him for a notorious criminal, a Rab team shot him in the left leg and two cases were filed against him. He was falsely accused of carrying arms and obstructing the law enforcers.

The government decided

on July 9 to withdraw both the cases against him unconditionally.

Limon said he had lost all hope at one point, but his faith was restored with the government's ruling.

"Now I can see hope returning to my life," he said, and added, "I want to study law."