

Always tried

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for the last time, saying the electoral verdict should be respected by all.

"Each one of us should respect the judgement you have delivered", he said the brief address.

The 13th prime minister of India has helmed the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government through its two successive terms from 2004.

Often attacked by critics over corruption scams that hit his government and a downturn in Indian economy in the last few years, he said, "My life and tenure in public office are an open book. I have always tried to do my best in serving this great nation of ours."

Before submitting his resignation, Singh chaired his last cabinet meeting in the morning.

As a saffron wave swept most of India, Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi wrested the top job in the country on Friday.

Congress party has been reduced to a double-digit figure in parliament and is struggling to reach the number required for it to have a leader of opposition status.

"I wish the incoming government every success as it embarks on its task and pray for even greater successes for our nation," said the economist-PM, the architect of India's economic reforms in early 1990s.

He added India was a "far stronger country" than it was a decade ago.

Singh, the country's first Sikh PM who served in the top post for ten years since May 2004, thanked the people saying as an underprivileged child of India's partition, he owes his success to the country which gave him a chance to reach the highest office.

"I owe everything to this country, this great land of ours where I, an underprivileged child of Partition, was empowered enough to rise and occupy high office. It is a debt that I will never be able to repay."

He never helped us after Aug 15

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requests to arrange a press conference and condemn the activities of the then government," mentioned the PM.

She lamented that no minister of the Bangabandhu government was there to help them after August 15, 1975.

At that time, she said, then Bangladesh ambassador to West Germany Humayun Rashid Chowdhury had helped the family members of the Father of the Nation.

The AL chief added that she and her sister were not allowed to enter their house on road 32 in Dhanmondi after their return home. "Even a milad and doa mahfil could not be arranged there. We had to arrange a milad and doa mahfil on the road seeking the eternal peace of the departed souls as the then military ruler Zia did not allow us to enter the house," she noted.

Hasina remembered after the assassination of Bangabandhu, then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and president of Yugoslavia Marshal Tito offered political asylum to the family members of Bangabandhu in their countries.

On this day in 1981, Hasina had returned home after six years in exile following the brutal murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on August 15, 1975.

Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana had been in West Germany at that time.

Recalling the moments of her homecoming, the PM said she returned home on a stormy day when thousands of people accorded her a hearty welcome at the airport.

"I was overwhelmed by the love and affection of thousands, but those were not there whose affection I was looking for," she told her audience.

She sought all-out cooperation from all, including the leaders and workers of the the AL, in building a dignified nation through upholding the spirit of Liberation War.

"I've dedicated myself to the nation's welfare and materialising the



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wipes off tears while talking about her life after the August 15, 1975 murder of family members, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The photo was taken at the Gono Bhaban yesterday at a programme organised to mark her homecoming day. PHOTO: BSS

dream of Bangabandhu who wanted to bring smile to the faces of the distressed people," she mentioned.

The AL president said she saw the pro-liberation leaders were being killed one after another while the killers and the anti-liberation forces rewarded.

Ziaur Rahman, she added, had captured the state power illegally and

became the president through staging a "Yes-No vote". Besides, he rewarded the killers of Bangabandhu and anti-liberation forces by making them ministers and ambassadors, said the PM.

The AL had been the main enemy of the military dictators and their collaborators as the party struggled for establishing democracy and rule of law for

long 24 years, noted Hasina.

Senior AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Matia Chowdhury, Syed Ashraf Islam, Obaidul Quader and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim were present, among others.

Earlier, leaders of the AL and its associate bodies greeted the PM with bouquets on the occasion of her homecoming day.

Ex-Rab 11 chief

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men picked up Mohammad Ismail, 42, from Painadi area near the Dhaka-Chittagong highway under Siddhirganj Police Station on February 7 evening, said his wife Josna Begum.

A resident of Kanchpur, Ismail is a contractor and an activist of Kanchpur union unit AL under Sonargaon upazila.

A case was filed with the police station on February 10 in connection with the incident. However, there was no mention of the Rab's involvement in the incident.

About 15 days later, Josna received a letter from two men. It asked the family members to pay Tk 2 crore to Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, then commanding officer of Rab-11, if they wanted him back alive.

Josna identified the hand writing of the letter to be her husband's.

After receiving the letter, she along with some of her relatives went to Tareque and told him that they have managed Tk 1 crore.

But the Rab official refused to accept any amount below Tk 2 crore and threatened the victim's relatives that if the matter was disclosed to the media, Ismail would not be freed alive.

Josna said they were trying to collect the rest of the ransom money, but in the meantime Tareque was sent on retirement on May 6 over his alleged involvement in the seven-murder.

She claimed that she did not inform the law enforcers about the ransom as her family members were receiving threats from Rab men.

She said they formed the human chain to draw the prime minister's attention to the incident.

Contacted, Rab Director General Mokhlesur Rahman said he was not aware of the complaint made against Tareque by Ismail's family members.

If anybody lodges a written complaint with the Rab, the force will probe the incident, he added.

Interested only in state resources

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Rehman Sobhan emphasised the need for a stable, representative and democratic political system for utilisation of the country's potentials for development.

The CPD picked four parties -- the AL, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami -- for the comparative study.

Presenting the keynote paper, CPD Fellow Rounaq Jahan, who led the study, said all major political parties, including the AL, BNP and JP, are run by dynasties.

Though political parties played a key role in the nationalist and democratic movements of the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s, they have failed to foster democratic practices in the subsequent years, she said, terming it a paradox.

The study portrays a bleak picture of intra-party democratic practice and transparency in major political parties.

"Power is concentrated in the hands of party chief. There is no change or competition for party presidency/chairmanship for nearly 30 years in the AL and BNP," says the study.

"There is little policy/programme discussion at the party forums. There is little consultative process or collective decision-making. Key decisions are often taken by party chief, sometimes rejecting the views of senior party leaders."

The study also claims that new breeds of political musclemen are

- FINDINGS**
- Ruling party's monopoly control of state power
- Race to grab power & resources criminalise politics
- Absolute power of party chiefs
- AL, BNP, JP run by dynasty
- Absence of intra-party democracy
- Parties don't follow own rules
- Businessmen dominating decision-making bodies

evident in leadership positions at the grassroots level. These musclemen use violence to acquire huge wealth, which is used to establish their political clout.

Political parties generally depend on state resources and try to hang on to state power at all costs and engage in undemocratic and corrupt practices. There is also a lack of transparency in the parties' sources of funds and their expenditures. The parties are increasingly becoming dependent on people with money and muscle power, losing touch with common citizens.

"Democracy can be sustained only when parties make a credible commitment to promote democracy in the country and practise democracy within their own organisations," observes the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS
In a set of recommendations, the study says parties need to stop using state agencies and state resources to reward their supporters and punish opponents.

"Stop using violence to settle inter-party and intra-party conflicts," the study recommends adding that the opposition should shun the practice of boycotting parliament.

The study also suggested maintaining a distance between the ruling party and the government. Party officials -- president, general secretary and other office bearers -- should devote full-time to party work and should not be given government positions like cabinet ministers.

It also suggested that parties primarily follow their own constitutions as well as the RPO guidelines and promote democratic practices within the organisations.

"Parties should get funds from the state budget to run the organisations and election campaigns. The competitions to raise huge sums of money for party/campaign activities are making parties dependent on special interests and corrupt and criminal elements," the study observes.

Startling results

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percent whereas it was 78.19 percent in 2010.

Officials and teachers gave the credit to a concerted effort. Applying creative questioning method in 21 subjects, expanding teachers' training on creative questioning, special care on English and mathematics, better nurturing by teachers and guardians, and students' reliance on textbooks rather than guidebooks have contributed to the success, they observed.

Use of information and communication technology in classrooms of many schools also helped the students better understand lessons and answer questions better during exams, they said.

"The creative method opened up the scope for nurturing students' talents. They apply their creativity under this method," Prof Taslima Begum, chairman of Dhaka Board, told The Daily Star.

The students now have to read the textbooks thoroughly as it is not possible to answer questions without having a thorough knowledge of the textbooks, she said.

She said they had arranged extra classes on English, mathematics and subjects on science in around 8,000 schools which were lagging behind.

Under the eight education boards, 10,08,174 students -- 4,99,677 boys and 5,08,497 girls -- passed the SSC exams this year and 76,696 students failed.

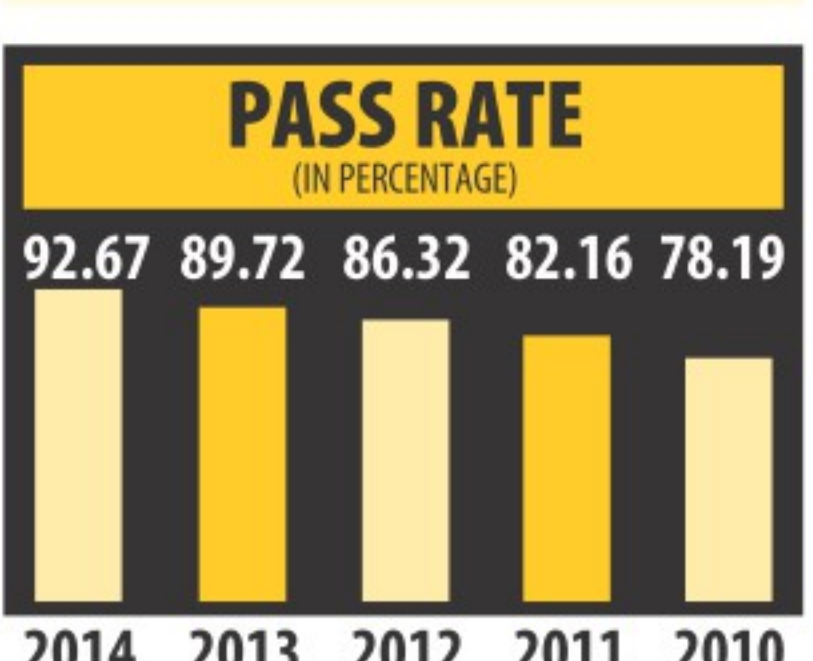
The number of total examinees, number of successful students, and the number of schools with cent percent pass rose remarkably.

This year 91.34 percent examinees were successful in the 10 education boards, including madrasa board and technical board. The pass rate of last year was 89.03 percent. The number of GPA-5 achievers in the 10 boards combined rose to 1,42,276 from last year's 91,226.

Only 76 examinees had secured GPA-5 in 2001 when the grading system was introduced.

Yesterday, the schools across the country had a festive look. Students and parents, who had been anxious about the results for some time, erupted in jubilation as soon as they

SSC RESULTS		
BOARD	GPA-5 2014	GPA-5 2013
Dhaka	46,795	26,390
Rajshahi	19,815	12,203
Comilla	10,945	7,855
Jessore	10,944	9,086
Chittagong	10,884	7,358
Barisal	4,762	3,514
Sylhet	3,341	2,789
Dinajpur	14,827	8,186
TOTAL	122,313	77,381



received the results.

The results were available in schools, on education boards' websites and on mobile phones via text messages since 2:00pm.

Disclosing the overall results at a press conference at his ministry, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "The results point to a sustained progress in our education system."

Earlier in the morning, he handed the results in to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Nahid said the standard of education has improved over the previous years as students in rural areas were doing better, which is visible in the overall results. He said they were still behind the desired level.

He said, "We have trained more than five lakh teachers of secondary level on creative questioning method. They developed skills on the system and in making lessons easier."

He said the students had done well in subjects like English and maths, which helped the overall

results. According to the stats provided by the boards, the average pass rate in English in the 10 boards is over 98 percent while the pass rate in mathematics in around 97 percent, which were around 93 percent last year.

Asked about the pass rate in English, Amirul Alam Khan, chairman of Jessore Board, said the questioning pattern has been changed because of the "communicative English" being taught in schools. This helps students get the marks they deserve, he said.

As many as 14,26,929 students from 27,435 institutions, including seven abroad, took the exams spread over one and a half months since February 9. Of them, 13,03,331 passed.

Boys did slightly better than the girls in terms of pass rate, which were 91.84 and 90.81 percent.

The number of institutions with cent percent pass rate rose to 6,210 from last year's 5,092.

However, no students passed from 24 institutions and 21 of them were madrasas.

Rajshahi board topped the charts and Sylhet board was at the bottom.

Asked how his board did so well, Abdur Rouf Mia, acting chairman of Rajshahi board, said apart from training teachers, they had warned the teachers of punitive action if their pupils failed.

In Dhaka board, Rajuk Uttara Model High School and College topped the list of 20 best institutions. Ideal School and College, Motijheel, and Viqarunnisa Noon School ranked second and third.

Like previous years, schools in urban areas, especially in metropolitan cities, dominated the top-20 list, GPA-5 category and 100 percent pass record.

Students of science group continued to outnumber and do better than those of other groups with 96 percent pass rate. The pass rate is 89.29 percent in humanities group and 94.06 in business studies group.

The success, however, leads to a concern for many students as they now would have to face stiff competition to get enrolled in good colleges.

'Phablet finger' goes on sale

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The gadget comes as makers are increasingly moving towards larger phones.

In September Apple is expected to release a new, bigger version of the iPhone, with two models - a 4.7inch screen and 5.5inch screen version rumoured.

The rumours come amid claims Apple suppliers around the world are gearing up to produce the larger screens.

Japan Display, Sharp, and South Korea's LG Display have all been tapped to make the panels, and its thought they have already begun mass production.

If the rumours are true, both iPhone 6 screens will be larger than the current 4-inch panels on Apple's iPhone 5S and 5C models.

Samsung also offers the Galaxy Mega phone - the biggest smartphone on the global market - which boasts a 6.3inch screen.

Samsung have described it as a hybrid that combines the portability of a smartphone with the immersive experience that a tablet offers for movies, books, music and games.

The thumb-stylus went through a lot of rigorous testing and changes to the shape, size, and positioning, until they came up with this beauty, according to Ratoken.

At one point they thought they almost had it, but it looked too much like a zombie finger - they'd been so concerned with how it worked, that they'd

forgotten to think about the colour! The finished product is now a more alive-looking natural skin colour (so long as you're not dark-skinned).

Then there's the stylus that runs through it, which is the part that you actually touch to the screen, and makes it look like you've hammered a nail through your flesh. It may not really be fooling anyone but hey, if it works, it works.

Extend your thumb by 15 millimeters! Why? So you can use your phone more easily! With its completely life-like design, no one will even notice! Rakuten is currently offering this stylish thumb made by Rare Mono for just 1,480 yen (US\$14.50). It could change your life.

With neighbours, more assertive?

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and India to a greater height.

Tarun Vijay, a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), who is associated with the BJP's foreign policy think-tank, went on record at a seminar two months ago that the BJP would have no problem in signing the Teesta water sharing deal with Bangladesh, which had been opposed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

He, however, acknowledged BJP's reservations about the land-boundary agreement with Bangladesh but made it

clear that the concerns could be addressed.

The outgoing Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government will leave behind a "note" on the foreign policy issues for the incoming BJP-led government with a suggestion to maintain the tempo of improving relations with Bangladesh, Pakistan and China.

The note will be forwarded by National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon who had a series of interactions

with leaders of Bangladesh over its political spectrum in the last few years. Menon had talks with Mamata on the Teesta issue as well.

The note is expected to point out that India's security and connectivity concerns should be uppermost in the minds of the new government in New Delhi in shaping its engagement with the Sheikh Hasina-led administration.

While it is not mandatory for the new Indian government to accept the previous government's view on the foreign

policy, sources said, the "note" might provide inputs to its agenda on dealing with the neighbouring countries.

They added that they felt Narendra Modi's tirade during the campaign against illegal migrants from Bangladesh might have been more of electoral rhetoric than a considered policy towards the India's south-eastern neighbour.

While outgoing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had dithered about signing the Teesta deal because he did not want to provoke Mamata and withdrawal

of support by her party's crucial 19 lawmakers to his coalition government, the BJP-led government will not face any such coalition compulsions.

Mamata-led Trinamool Congress was at that time a constituent of the UPA but it is not part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government.

Pushing the constitutional amendment bills in both Houses of new parliament should not be difficult for the NDA given its comfortable majority in Lok Sabha.

Rice mill blast

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They were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where Sultana, Hazrat and Alam died, said Jakiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Haluaghat Police Station.

One of the injured, Abdur Razzaq, has been undergoing treatment at the hospital in a critical condition. The other injured, Rahmat Ali, has been referred to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated, hospital sources said.

The reason behind the blast could not be known.