

HSC exams begin amid tension

Hartal on nationwide except for Dhaka, Ctg cities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 10,196 candidates were absent on the first day of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations across the country yesterday while 26 students and four invigilators were expelled for resorting to unfair means.

Eight education boards, one Madrasa education board and one Technical education board are conducting the two-month-long HSC and its equivalent Alim and Business Management examinations for 2015.

Candidates of HSC exams sat for their Bengali (compulsory) first paper at 10:00am while examinees under Madrasa Board faced Quran Mazid as their first paper.

More than 10.73 lakh students from 8,305 educational institutions across the country had registered for the examinations this year.

During a visit to different exam centres in the city, frustration was seen all over the faces of the guardians. They were worried about how their children were faring in the exam, but they were equally more concerned whether hartals will upset the exam schedule.

"We appeal all the political party to at least spare the students' examinations.

They do not do politics, so why should they be the victims of politics," said Rajib Ahmed, a father, outside Viharunna Noon School premises in the capital.

Our correspondents from Chittagong also found a sense of anxiety among the parents.

"We don't want to understand politics. We only want our children can sit for their exams without any additional stress and that the exams be completed on time," said Rafiqul Islam, a parent, outside Kapasgola City Corporation Mohila College Exam Centre.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "We have taken every measure to ensure safety of the students by forming committees comprising law enforcement agencies."

After visiting Viharunna Noon School centre in the capital, the minister told reporters that the HSC exams would be held no matter hartals and blockades - which are not effective anymore - are called.

Yesterday, the highest number of absentees was from the Dhaka Board with 1,911 examinees not turning up while Barisal Board had the lowest number with 393 absentees, according to data from Bangladesh Inter-Board Co-ordination Sub-Committee.



The wreckage of the Cessna-152 after it crashed near the runway of Rajshahi airport killing trainee pilot Tamanna Rahman. Injured instructor Lt Col (retd) Sayeed Kamal, inset, being put in a plane to Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR



Smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh must stop

Says Indian home minister

PTI, Angraal, West Bengal

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday asked the BSF personnel deployed along the Indo-Bangla border to put a complete halt to smuggling of cattle into Bangladesh so that people there give up eating beef.

He made the comment days after advocating a nationwide ban on cow slaughter.

"I am told prices of beef in Bangladesh have gone up by 30 percent recently due to heightened vigil by the BSF against cattle smuggling.

"You further intensify your vigil so that the cattle smuggling stops completely and price of beef in Bangladesh escalates 70 to 80 percent more so that people of Bangladesh give up eating beef," Rajnath said while addressing members of Indian Border Security Force at a border outpost in West Bengal.

According to official statistics, around 17 lakh cattle were smuggled into Bangladesh from India last year.

On Sunday, the minister said the NDA government would try its "level best" to bring in a countrywide ban on slaughter of cows by evolving a consensus.

"Cow slaughter cannot be accepted in this country. We will make all-out efforts to ban slaughter of cows and will also try hard to have a consensus for this purpose," Rajnath said.

He also stressed that India would like to further strengthen ties with Bangladesh.

"We have very cordial relations with Bangladesh, and we would like to further strengthen our relations with the neighbouring country," the minister said.

Dhaka seeks IOM help

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka on Monday declared its support to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition which launched air strikes against Shia Houthi rebels in Yemen on March 26 after the rebels took control of large parts of the Arab country.

Talking to newsmen after a press conference, Shahidul said Dhaka has also urged New Delhi to help repatriate Bangladeshis.

India in principle agreed to assist Bangladesh, but it depends on the availability of space in ships as the country is sending vessels to Yemen to rescue its citizens, he noted.

Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka in a statement on its official Twitter account yesterday said India would assist in the evacuation of Bangladeshis from Yemen.

As there is no visible rescue plan in sight, the stranded Bangladeshis are worried about their fate.

Aman Ullah, who works for a World Bank project in Sana, wrote on his Facebook wall, "We are now in a crucial situation here. We can't move from our residences due to fighting between

different groups. We need emergency rescue support."

The other countries are evacuating their nationals as the situation in Yemen is worsening by the day, he added.

Another Bangladeshi Jahurul Islam Bulbul wrote, "We can't sleep safely. Every night seems to be our last night. India, Pakistan and other embassies have already evacuated their people. But we are still suffering from insecurity."

Two Bangladeshi engineers have been stranded in two hotels in Saana for last one week as there is no flight from the Yemeni capital to Dhaka.

SM Mahabubul Alam, counsellor at the Bangladesh embassy in Kuwait, said they put them in touch with a crisis management cell set up to organise and assist expatriates.

Foreign Secretary Shahidul further informed newsmen that Bangladesh has sought support from Saudi Arabia to rescue its nationals.

On IOM's response, he said there is a positive indication from the organisation as it received similar requests from other countries too. "We are expecting a formal response from the IOM shortly."

The number of foreign nationals, including Bangladeshis, in Yemen is not so big because the foreigners usually work there in various projects of international bodies, he mentioned.

Yemen itself is a least developed country and its people usually go to

Middle-Eastern countries for jobs, said the secretary.

"It [repatriation] gets difficult as there is no Bangladesh Embassy in Yemen. Moreover, there is no commercial flight now and thus we are not being able to send any official from our nearby missions to Yemen.... Only the sea route is operative."

The ministry is in constant touch with the stranded Bangladeshis, he claimed. "Even many of them contacted me over the phone."

Meanwhile, the foreign ministry has opened helplines for the Bangladeshis in Yemen. The numbers are: 00965-50570754, 00965-24913201, 00965-94934363, 00967-733856998, 00967-735800247.

According to the Indian external affairs ministry, an Indian ship is already in the region. Its Navy is pressing into service two additional ships. Also, two passenger liners, one with a capacity of 700 and another 400, have left Indian waters on Monday to repatriate Indians.

Indian Naval Ship Sumitra yesterday reached Djibouti with 350 Indian nationals, the first batch of Indians evacuated from Yemen, said the ministry.

The Indians have been evacuated from Yemen's Aden city to Djibouti. They will be brought back to India by an Indian Air Force plane Wednesday night.

India has around 4,000 nationals in Yemen.

Tragic end of a dream

FROM PAGE 1

Services, said they wanted her to become a barrister, but she was determined to be a pilot.

After completing A-levels, Tamanna got in Bangladesh Flying Academy over a year ago.

"Whenever we talked about her higher education, Tamanna said she would become a pilot. She was on her track, but what happened now!" said Comilla Forest Officer Mahbubur Rahman, uncle of Tamanna.

Captain Shahab Uddin Ahmed, immediate past president of Bangladesh Flying Academy, said, "It's a huge achievement for a student to attend the feat [to get the permission to fly solo] in just 15 hours of flying. It takes between 20 and 30 hours for most students."

It requires a trainee to have 150 hours of flying experience and then go through different tests and exams to get a licence from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Tamanna's father claimed that the flying academy should be punished as it provided an unfit aircraft for training. Last week, there was a tyre puncture during a take-off, he told The Daily Star over the phone.

The engine of the Cessna-152 of Bangladesh Flying Academy and General Aviation Ltd caught fire and the plane crashed on the runway at Shah Makhddum Airport in Rajshahi at 1:58pm, three minutes after it took off, airport sources said.

"Sensing a technical fault, the pilot tried to land and it's then that the plane caught fire," said Setafur Rahman, manager of Shah Makhddum Airport.

Capt Shahab said it appeared the plan crashed due to an engine fire. Details of the incident would be unfolded through thorough investigation.

A four-member committee formed by the CAAB, led by Group Capt Nazmul Anam, director of flight safety of civil aviation, has started its investigation.

Capt Anam told The Daily Star that they would also look into whether there was any safety negligence.

The team reached Rajshahi yesterday afternoon and went to the crash site. They talked to locals and officials.

After the crash, Lutfar Rahman, Anwarul Islam, his brother-in-law Robiul Islam and Dablu from neighbouring Chalakipara village, rushed to the scene scaling the boundary walls of the airport. They managed to rescue Kamal through the window.

Two of them were interviewed by The Daily Star and they said they could

not save Tamanna as she was tightly fastened to seat and the fire engulfed her quickly.

The crash occurred while the aircraft was trying to make a turn near the end of the runway, they said.

The plane suddenly dropped to the runway and the right wing hit the ground. It skidded to a nearby field and the engine was on fire, they added.

Lutfar Rahman, an auto-rickshaw driver who lives in Chalakipara, said, "I would never forget her death, it was so disturbing. I feel sorry that we could not save her due to the fire. She was burning inside the cockpit and crying out for help. She was fastened to the seat... The man managed to break the window."

"We dragged him out and told him to roll over the ground to douse the fire," he said.

"We had no sand, water or anything to douse the fire. If there was no boundary wall, we could have gotten some water to put the fire out," added Anwarul.

The firefighters of the airport reached the scene some 25 minutes later and the woman was burned by then. The authorities rescued a charred body from the burnt plane, he added.

"We came to know about the accident hearing the crash siren, and then our fire vehicles, medical units rushed to the scene at 2:25pm," said Setaful Islam, manager of the airport. The airport is closed until further notice.

Tamanna's body was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for an autopsy, said Civil Surgeon Abdus Sobhan. The body was flown to Dhaka in the evening on a helicopter and handed over to the family.

Asked whether the accident occurred due to airworthiness issues especially since the production of the aircraft ceased three decades ago, Bangladesh Flying Academy President Capt Mafidul Islam Khan said they maintain their aircraft regularly and it is monitored by the CAAB. The plane is flown with CAAB's certification.

A top CAAB official wishing anonymity also made similar observations.

The flying academy took the aircraft on lease from another flying academy, the official added.

On September 27, 1998, a training plane of Parabat Airlines crashed at Postogola in Dhaka due to a technical fault, killing its pilot Faria Lara and co-pilot Rafiqul.

In October, 2010, pilot Kamrul Hasan was killed after his Cessna-152 of BFA crashed into the Jamuna river in Sirajganj. Co-pilot Shamsuddin was rescued.

Nasir gets bail in 22-yr-old case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Sufian Siddique was attacked during a rally in the city's Laldighi Maidan where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the then opposition leader, was also present.

Sufian later filed a case with Kotwali Police Station accusing 18 persons, including Nasir, while police submitted a charge sheet accusing the 18 on March 7 the same year, said court sources.

The court heard eight out of 12 witnesses while the High Court stayed the case in 1994 following a revision case filed by

one of the accused Faruk Ahmed. The proceedings of the case were stayed for a long time while an HC bench vacated the stay order on March 9, 2014, and ordered recalling the eight witnesses and conducting their cross examination again.

The HC order reached the Chittagong court on March 3 this year, courtsourcesaid.

After receiving the HC order, the court fixed April 6 for hearing but Nasir came to the court yesterday and sought bail, said the PP.

EC disqualifies Mintoo

FROM PAGE 1

"mistake" in the nomination paper of a heavyweight candidate like Mintoo.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia herself was "irritated and disappointed" over this, and had instructed Mintoo and her lawyers to work sincerely to make the appellate authority allow correcting the flaw, party insiders said.

This, however, comes as a boon for the ruling party-blessed mayor contender Annisul Huq, whose nomination was declared valid yesterday. With the lone heavyweight rival out of the race, he now has to battle it out against 18 others, all of whom are relatively low profile.

Mintoo will appeal with the divisional commissioner, the appellate authorities, today against the cancellation, said Abdullah Al Harun Sohel, personal secretary of the BNP leader.

Soon after the RO's announcement, a BNP delegation met Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad and requested him to allow Mintoo to correct the procedural anomaly.

If Mintoo cannot return to the electoral race, the BNP does not have much alternative as no other BNP leader filed mayoral nomination in the DNCC like they did in Dhaka South.

In that case, the party may extend support to Mintoo's son Tabith Awal,

whose DNCC mayoral nomination was accepted yesterday, said some BNP leaders.

Some others, however, are in favour of backing Mahi B Chowdhury, son of former president Badruddoza Chowdhury. Mahi has been declared eligible for the mayor polls.

The BNP policymakers are expected to sit with Khaleda to finalise the issue, party insiders said.

The nomination papers of former AL lawmaker Sarah Begum Kabori and Bobby Hajjaj also were approved.

FATE OF ABBAS STILL UNCERTAIN? Even though Mirza Abbas' mayoral nomination in Dhaka South was accepted yesterday, some BNP leaders cast doubt over the validity of his nomination paper as the BNP standing committee member has been declared fugitive by a court in a corruption case.

According to the electoral law, a fugitive cannot contest the city polls.

Interestingly, the police did not bring it to the retuning officer's notice during the scrutiny yesterday. The cops only mentioned the pending cases against Abbas.

"I gave my decision on the basis of the police report," RO Mihir Sarwar Morshed of the DSCC told reporters on accepting Abbas' nomination.

But the BNP leader may face fresh trouble if any rival candidate appeals

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

CITY	ACCEPTED	CANCELLED
DSCC	26	3
DNCC	21	2
CCC	13	1

against the approval.

The RO also accepted the nomination of mayor aspirant Asaduzzaman Ripon, international affairs secretary of the BNP.

However, the nomination paper of former BNP lawmaker Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, who was convicted in the BDR carnage case and is now behind bars, was rejected.

Though he has appealed against his conviction with the High Court, the court didn't stay the conviction. And the election law doesn't permit a convict to contest the city polls.

JP MEN OKAYED

Nomination papers of the main opposition Jatiya Party-backed mayoral aspirants -- Bahauddin Ahmed in the DNCC and Saifuddin Ahmed in the DSCC -- were declared valid yesterday.

CANDIDACIES IN CCC POLLS In Chittagong City Corporation, both AL-backed mayoral aspirant AJM Nasir Uddin and his main contender BNP-blessed M Manjur Alam were given the

green light, reports our Chittagong office.

JP-endorsed mayoral aspirant Solaiman Alam Seth's nomination was accepted as well.

Mayor hopeful Mohammad Forkan Chowdhury was disqualified as he had not provided the copy of his income tax return with his nomination papers, said RO Md Abdul Baten of the CCC.

The rejected aspirants can appeal to the divisional commissioner against the cancellation within three days of the cancellation.

The nomination papers of the councillor aspirants in the three city corporations that will go to polls on April 28 will be scrutinised today.

BNP FOR ARMY DEPLOYMENT A seven-member delegation led by BNP Standing Committee Member ASM Hannan Shah met CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday and placed a set of demands before him.

These include army deployment during the polls and the guarantee for the BNP-endorsed candidates, who are either behind bars in "false cases" or on the run fearing arrest, to carry out campaigns in a hassle-free environment.

On the demand of army deployment, the CEC told journalists that they would discuss the issue at a meeting with the law enforcement and the intelligence agencies on April 19.