



Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid hands over the HSC exam results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

HSC pass rate 8-year low

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The pass rate in this subject dropped significantly in six boards. In Dhaka board, the success rate in English slipped to 79.1 percent from last year's 93 percent, show the statistics of eight boards.

Students under Jessore Board performed poorly in the subject as only 50.91 percent of them were successful. Last year, the figure was above 65 percent.

Prof Madhab Chandra Rudro, exam controller of Jessore Board, told The Daily Star, "Most students told us that they found the English question papers extremely difficult to answer."

Abdul Mazid, chairman of the board, echoed Madhab's view. He said poor marks in English had a negative impact on the pass rate of this board.

Many students in the eight boards also performed badly in physics and Bangla. The pass rate in the two subjects fell 4.5 percent and 3.2 percent compared to last year's.

Board officials said the examinees also couldn't do well in the theory part of Information and Communication Technology, which was made a com-

ference, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid mentioned the BNP-led alliance's countrywide blockade and frequent shutdowns as one of the main reasons behind this year's poor result.

"The year started amid hartal and blockade. The colleges could not hold regular classes in the unusual situation. Many of those could not provide the students with last moment's lessons," he told reporters at his ministry.

"Students could not make proper preparations as they were uncertain about the exams."

The minister said some qualitative changes were made in the creative question papers, which the students found difficult to answer.

"We will conduct an analysis to find out the other causes," added Nahid.

Yesterday, colleges across the country wore a festive look. Getting the results, many students and parents erupted in jubilation while some others burst into tears.

The results came 59 days after the exams.

Around 10:00am, the education minister handed over a copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh

of female students was 70.23 against 69.04 percent of male students.

Boys, however, fared better in securing GPA-5 with 23,293 boys achieving the distinction against 19,601 girls.

Rajshahi Board outperformed others by securing the highest pass rate of 77.54 percent followed by 74.57 percent in Sylhet Board.

Jessore board has the lowest pass rate of 46.45 percent, which is significantly low compared to that of others.

The low pass rate in this board had a bearing on the overall pass rate, said officials.

As usual, students from the science group did better than others with a pass rate of 77.66 percent, followed by students of business studies group with 71.93 percent.

Students of humanities group couldn't match the performance of the science and business students, as they had a pass rate of only 57.99 percent.

As in the previous years, the successful students will have to face stiff competition to get enrolled in public universities this year, as the number of seats in those institutions is much lower than that of the students.

Blockade, hartal behind low pass rate: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the overall HSC results this time would have been much better had the BNP-Jamaat nexus not engaged in suicidal activities during the examinations.

"If the BNP-Jamaat had not carried out suicidal activities and engaged in arson attacks, the pass percentage [in HSC] would have been much better," she said.

The prime minister came up with the observation after Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid handed over the results of 10 education boards to her at Gono Bhaban.

The average pass percentage in this year's HSC examinations is 69.60 with 42,894 students achieving GPA-5.

Sheikh Hasina said, "There were constant blockade and hartal during the examinations ... students had to go to exam halls in panic."

She mentioned that BNP-Jamaat activists also engaged in arson attacks and killing people by hurling petrol bombs during the hartal and blockade. "This was very unfortunate, but our boys and girls appeared in the exams defying all the obstacles and came out successful, and this is the big thing," Hasina added.

BOARDS	PASS RATE 2015	PASS RATE 2014	GPA-5 2015	GPA-5 2014
DHAKA	68.16	84.54	18,893	31,902
RAJSHAHI	77.54	78.55	5,250	7,641
COMILLA	59.80	70.14	1,452	2,600
JESSORE	46.45	60.58	1,927	4,231
CHITTAGONG	63.49	70.06	2,129	2,646
BARISAL	70.06	71.75	1,319	2,225
SYLHET	74.57	79.16	1,356	2,070
DINAJPUR	70.43	74.14	2,395	4,474
%/TOTAL	65.84	75.74	34,721	57,789

pulsory subject this year for the first time. Most colleges didn't have expert teachers on the subject.

The officials said the introduction of a new method of preparing and choosing question papers this year also contributed to the poor results.

In the last couple of years, all the eight boards prepared four sets of question papers for each subject, and every board chose one set from the four by lottery.

This year, each board drafted four sets of question papers for every subject, but it had to pick one set out of 28 prepared by the other seven boards by lottery, they added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dhaka Board Chairman Abu Bakkar Siddique said, "In the past, students were able to understand the question patterns, seeing the question papers of previous years. But this time, they got a different question paper."

Seeking anonymity, an official of the same board said the new step was taken to check leak of question papers.

Announcing the results at a press

Hasina at the Gono Bhaban.

In an exception to a common practice in past years, the government didn't make any list of best colleges, saying it "created an unhealthy competition" among the institutions.

The combined pass rate in 10 education boards, including madrasa and technical boards, also came down to 69.6 percent from last year's 78.33 percent.

As many as 10.61 lakh students from 8,294 institutions took the HSC and equivalent exams that began on April 1. Of them, 7.38 lakh came out successful.

In the 10 boards, 42,894 students got GPA-5 this year, down from 70,602 last year. Only 20 students scored GPA-5 when the grading system was introduced in 2003.

The number of institutions with 100 percent pass rate dropped to 1,133 from 1,147. No students passed from 35 institutions.

In terms of pass rate, girls outshone boys though their number was lower than that of boys. The pass percentage

Tech, madrasa students

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Yesterday's comments of Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid also reflected the same.

"Despite the fall in overall results, the good news is that students under the Technical Education Board have continued to do well," the minister said while announcing the results of the HSC and equivalent examinations.

Nahid said the government had prioritised this board as it felt it was crucially for industrial growth and national development.

"We have established many technical institutions across the country and have trained the teachers. Even many of the teachers received training abroad, which has a positive impact on the results," he observed.

Only 62,654 students sat for the HSC equivalent exams under the

BTEB in 2011, but the number rose to 98,296 in 2015. Of them, 84,125 have passed with 6,430 scoring GPA-5.

Though the number of examinees and pass rate under this education board were 105,849 and 85.02 percent last year, this year 85.58 percent have passed.

Last year, the number of technical institutions was 1,570, which rose to 1,646 this year. As many as 183 institutions have achieved 100 percent success this year against last year's 178.

Like the previous year, no institution has zero pass rate this year.

MADRASA

The Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board has topped the list of 10 education boards for the 10th consecutive year with a pass rate of 90.19 percent in 2015.

However, the pass rate was 94.08 percent last year.

The numbers of examinees and GPA-5 achievers have also dropped this year. As many as 82,558 students -- 47,067 male and 35,491 female -- sat for the Alim exams and 74,461 of them have come out successful.

The number of examinees under the madrasa board was 105,849 last year and 99,581 of them passed.

Only 1,435 students -- 978 male and 457 female -- scored GPA-5 this year, while the number was 6,025 -- 4,212 male and 1,813 female -- last year.

Of the total 2,693 madrasas, 838 achieved 100 percent success rate and two had zero pass rate. Last year, 859 had 100 percent success rate and three had zero pass rate from 2,680 madrasas.

Bloggers must not cross the limit

Police chief urges them not to hurt anyone's religious sentiments; FBI team meets cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque has urged the country's bloggers not to "cross the limit" while writing on religious issues.

"Do not cross the limit. Do not hurt anyone's religious belief," he told at a press briefing at the police headquarters in the capital yesterday.

The "freethinkers" should keep in mind that hurting someone's religious sentiment is a criminal offence, he said, adding that one could get 14 years' imprisonment under the ICT law if found guilty of such crimes.

He said if one feels hurt by someone's comments on any religion, that person should go to court for justice.

On the killing of blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy, the IGP said police were investigating it "with top priority".

Niloy, 28, was hacked to death by four assailants, believed to be Islamist extremists, inside his flat in the capital's Goran area on Friday. He is the fourth blogger to have been killed this year. Hours after the gruesome attack, a group identifying itself as Ansar Al Islam sent emails to different media outlets claiming responsibility for the murder.

Meanwhile, a day after offering help in the murder case, a team of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the US met detectives in Dhaka yesterday.

The FBI team wanted to share their technical expertise with local detectives in the investigation, Deputy Commissioner (Detective Branch) Mahub Alam of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told reporters after the meeting.

They also talked about the progress of investigation into the murder of secular writer Avijit Roy, he added.

Police had primarily ascertained that the email claiming responsibility for Niloy's murder was sent from inside Bangladesh, Mahub said.

Replying to a query, Mahub said the bloodstained T-shirt found at the crime scene was left behind by the killers. "It is a vital piece of evidence."

'POLITICAL MOTIVE BEHIND MURDER'

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu yesterday said political motive was behind the blogger murders.

"Those who wanted to destabilise the country with violence are behind the killings," said Amu, also convener of the cabinet committee on law and order.

Emerging from an inter-ministerial

meeting, the veteran Awami League leader said they have given law enforcers strict instructions to arrest the culprits and "unveil their conspiracy".

FROM A QUIET BOY TO A STRONG VOICE

Niloy, an activist of Gonojagor Mancha, used to write on different issues with a science and logic-based approach, and along with some friends formed a society named Bangladesh Bigyan O Juktibadi Sangathan three years ago, said his friend Sazzad Sazu, also general secretary of the organisation.

The group, of around 30 members, has been active against bigotry and often holds workshop and study circles to make people aware of malpractices in the name of religion, he said.

"His [Niloy's] role in the organisation was integral," Sazu added.

As a child, Niloy used to be very quiet, said his mother Aparna Chattopadhyay.

"He was a quiet boy during his school days. He used to keep a very small number of friends."

His fondness for science and logic-based analysis of things developed perhaps while studying Philosophy at Dhaka University, she told this newspaper.

13 eminent citizens slam killing of bloggers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcers' failure to bring to book the murderers of four bloggers has encouraged the killing of Niladri Chattopadhyay, 13 eminent citizens said yesterday.

In a statement, they demanded that the government arrest the killers of all the online activists, including Niladri, and ensure speedy trial.

Before Niladri's murder on Friday, Ahmed Rajib Haider was killed in February 2013, Avijit Roy in February this year, Oyasiquir Rahman Babu in March and Ananta Bijoy Das in May.

The citizens said that after each murder, they along with the people of the country demanded justice but to no avail. As a result, the perpetrators had gained the audacity to kill Niladri in broad daylight entering his East Goran flat in the capital.

Niladri went to Shahjahanpur and Khilgaon police stations to file a general diary over the death threats he had received from anonymous callers before Ramadan this year. But the police allegedly refused to record the complaint and advised him instead to leave the country, noted the statement, signed by Saleh Ahmed, general secretary of social movement platform Sammilita Samajik Andolon.

Over the past couple of years, a group of religious extremists has been out killing free thinkers and online bloggers.

The signatories said they were against hurting any particular religious belief but resorting to murder should also not be a way to express grievances. Killing somebody in the name of protecting the religion is against the core values of Islam.

"The act of killing is medieval savagery."

The signatories are Prof Ajoy Roy, father of Avijit Roy; Prof Anisuzzaman, Sultana Kamal, Kazi Ebadul Hoque, Akbar Ali Khan, Kamal Lohani, Sarwar Ali, Abed Khan, Ramendu Majumdar, Prof MM Akash, Ziauddin Tareque Ali, Prof Noor Mohammad Talukdar and Ajoy Roy.

UN chief, EU delegation



EU STATEMENT

The European Union (EU) delegation has condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the vile aggression committed against Niloy and expressed sympathy to his widow and other family members.

This being the fourth such savage assassination in less than six months, the intention of the perpetrators is clear: to suppress the freedom of expression, the EU said in a statement yesterday.

"But we have learnt from history that the people of Bangladesh do not tolerate intimidation. Freedom of expression is, in the first place, an expression of freedom," the statement said.

"We urge all relevant official authorities to take immediate action against those responsible for these crimes, bring them to justice and prevent repetition of such barbaric acts," it added.

FROM PAGE 1 was killed in February, Oyasiquir Rahman in March and Ananta Bijoy Das in May.

All of the murders were committed by suspected Islamist extremists, police said.

Police role in question

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techniques they applied to the suspected militants to track down the other gang members involved in the killing. But no one was arrested, and in the meantime two more bloggers lost their lives.

So far, police could not produce any credible and visible progress in blogger murders investigation. A month ago, they claimed that Ansarullah Bangla Team men were behind the killing of Avijit and that they identified seven of them. A day after Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy's killing, a DB official claimed to have made adequate progress in blogger killing probe but he did not elaborate on his claim. The investigators' excuse is that nothing can be disclosed before the investigation is completed.

Now the question is how long the police would take to complete the investigation. And how many more lives would be lost until it is done?

Police said militant outfits were behind all the killings but could not give concrete proof.

As reasons for their not being able to arrest the blogger murderers and bust their gangs, detectives say the culprits

operate as sleeper cells where one cell is isolated from the others and the people involved use pseudo names and fake addresses.

Our intelligence and law enforcement agencies have been able to solve many crimes by arresting the perpetrators. They also gained quick success in arresting six murderers of blogger Rajib Haider in February 2013. In three weeks, they arrested six North South University students and had their jailed top leader Jasimuddin Rahmania as an accused in the case. Following up the information obtained from them, police arrested another NSU student in August that year and eventually all were indicted.

The sleeper-cell theory did not work here. If the same militant outfit is involved in the killing of Avijit, it is expected that police would be able to find clue from the previous killers. But this hasn't happened.

Two things can happen in the case of blogger murder investigation. Either police are not serious or willing to do it for lack of political will of the government or they are simply not capable.

We need to wait to see which one is true.



The tiger hides, left, police recovered from the scene of the "shootout" in the Sundarbans yesterday. The policemen, right, injured during the "gunfight".

6 'poachers' shot dead

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injured in the "gunfight". They took first aid.

Seeing the condition of the hides, it seemed that the animals had been killed recently. Zahir Uddin Ahmed, divisional forest officer of the Sundarbans (west division), told The Daily Star.

In another incident yesterday, the forest department captured two suspected tiger poachers -- Abdullah Sana and Nazrul Sana and handed over

them to police.

Poaching tigers and its prey in the Sundarbans, commercial boat traffic through different channels and development activities within and near the world's largest mangrove forest is threatening the Bengal tiger population.

Now only 106 of the big cats are left in Bangladesh, according to a recent census. In 2004, a pugmark survey estimated some 668 in both parts of the Sundarbans with 440 in Bangladesh part alone.

Bomb kills two policemen in Egypt's Sinai

AFP, Cairo

A roadside bomb killed an Egyptian police captain and a conscript yesterday in North Sinai, where security forces are fighting an Islamist insurgency, the interior ministry said.

North Sinai is a bastion of the Egyptian affiliate of the jihadist Islamic State group which is spearheading an insurgency that has swelled since the army's ouster of president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

Yesterday's attack occurred in North Sinai's provincial capital El-Arish, the ministry said in a statement.

The two policemen were killed when the blast struck their passing armoured vehicle. Three others were wounded in the explosion, which was activated by remote control, police said.