

Junior school exams

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subject for the first time without giving students proper time to get used to it, they said.

Teachers were also not given adequate training on the new system, causing a decline in the number of GPA-5 holders, they added.

"But this year [2015], we put more focus on this subject. We've given massive training to mathematics teachers on the new system, which we could not do last year [2014]," said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

"The teachers taught students maths in a better way and the students learned it well and thus fared better," he told reporters while formally announcing the results at a press conference at his ministry around 1:30am.

The statistics provided by the education boards tell the same thing.

The pass rate in mathematics in Dhaka Board rose to 96.24 percent from 89.40 in 2014. In Chittagong Board, the rate jumped up by 5.35 percent to 93.77 percent.

On an average, the success rate in this subject increased by 3 percent over 2014.

"Generally, it's either English or mathematics that makes the difference in the results. And the students have done well in mathematics, as we have been able to make them understand the new system well," said a teacher of a city

said Tamzid Hasan, a JSC examinee, who got GPA-5.

For the first time, there was no top chart of best schools, as the government stopped preparing the list of the best institutions saying that it created an "unhealthy competition" among schools.

Before the announcement of the results, the education minister handed over a copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban yesterday morning.

The results showed a significant improvement in all other indicators.

The number of total examinees and number of schools with cent percent pass rate rose from those in 2014, while the number of schools with zero pass rate remained static.

A total of 17,80,770 students -- 9,49,838 girls and 8,30,932 boys -- under eight general education boards came out successful in the JSC exam in 2015. Some 1,48,329 students flunked. Some 19.29 lakh class-VIII students took the test.

And 548 out of 558 JSC students, who sat for the test in eight overseas centres, came out successful. Of them, 111 obtained GPA-5.

The pass rate in Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations is 92.46 percent.

The combined pass rate of JSC and JDC in eight general boards and one

JSC RESULTS

BOARDS	PASS RATE		GPA-5	
	2015	2014	2015	2014
DHAKA	90.39	85.36	64,010	46,188
RAJSHAHI	97.47	95.32	35,083	23,606
COMILLA	92.51	93.75	20,747	17,264
JESSORE	95.44	91.96	17,831	10,685
CHITTAGONG	85.48	84.29	12,268	10,487
BARISAL	97.26	97.92	13,464	10,285
SYLHET	93.59	91.57	4,956	4,010
DINAJPUR	91.52	90.10	19,143	14,420
AVERAGE/TOTAL	92.31	89.85	1,87,502	1,36,945

school.

Apart from this factor, the education minister attributed the success to the combined effort of all.

He said better care by the teachers and guardians, competitiveness of students and their awareness contributed to this feat.

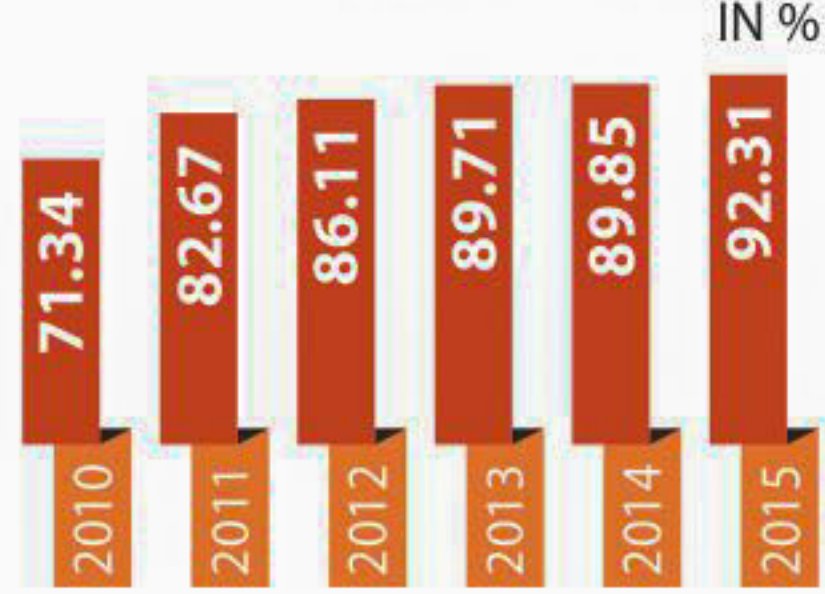
Free and on-time textbook distribution, showing videos of lectures of best teachers at schools, and use of technology in imparting lessons made it possible, he said while briefing journalists.

The results of all education boards, published simultaneously after the briefing, brought smiles to more than one million students who were living on their nerves for the last couple of days. The schools also wore a festive look following the publication of the results.

The students got their results from their respective schools, on website (www.educationboardresults.gov.bd) and through text messages.

"Finally, my dream came true. This result inspires me to do better in future,"

JSC PASS RATES



madrasa board beat previous records with 92.33 percent students coming out successful. In 2014, the pass rate was 90.41 percent.

The highest number of examinees, 97.47 percent, passed from Rajshahi Board. Chittagong Board is at the bottom among the eight boards with 85.48 percent pass rate. Dhaka Board secured seventh position with 90.39 percent pass rate.

Girls have beaten boys at the top level. Of the total GPA-5 scorers under nine boards, 1,11,303 are girls and 84,960 are boys. The pass rates of girls



Three of the convicts in blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider murder case are being escorted out by police from the Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 yesterday after the verdict. First of the five bloggers killed so far in the country, Rajib was killed on February 15, 2013.

PHOTO: STAR

2 get death; 6 others jailed

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them [accused] and gave punishment considering the gravity of their crimes," the judge said.

Seven of the convicts were present in the court while another is on the run.

Rajib's father Dr Nazim Uddin rejected the verdict. He alleged some of the "self-proclaimed killers" were not given fitting punishment.

Gonojagoron Mancha, of which Rajib was a key organiser, also rejected the judgment and called for protests.

Both the state and defence counsels were also "unhappy" with the verdict.

THE SENTENCES

Redwanul Azad Rana, 32, the main planner of the killing, and Faisal Bin Nayem alias Dweep, 24, who hacked Rajib to death, were given the capital punishment. They have also been fined Tk 10,000 each.

Maksudul Hasan alias Anik, 25, who accompanied Rana and Dweep during the killing, was given life in prison. He was also fined Tk 10,000, in default of which he will have to serve one more year in jail.

Ehsan Reza Rumman, 25, Nafis Intiaz, 24, and Nayem Sikdar Irad, 21, were each given 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. In addition, they will have to pay a fine of Tk 5,000 each. If they fail to pay the money, they must serve six more months in jail.

The court sentenced Sadman Yasir Mahmud, 22, to three years in prison. His fine amount is Tk 2,000, in default of which he will serve two more months in jail.

All the seven were students of North South University in 2013. Of them,

Redwanul Azad Rana, also the main suspect in the murder of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, is absconding.

Mufti Jasimuddin Rahmani, 45, chief of Ansarullah Bangla Team, was found guilty of provoking Rajib's murder through his sermons. The court sentenced him to five years and fined Tk 2,000. In default, he has to serve two more months in prison.

The court ordered the authorities to deduct the time they already served since their arrests.

RAJIB KILLING AND ITS AFTERMATH

Rajib was a key organiser of Shahbagh movement that began on February 5, 2013, hours after Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah was given life sentence for committing war crimes in 1971, a punishment that was deemed lenient.

He graduated in architecture from Asia Pacific University in 2004.

After the killing, online Jamaat-Shibir activists and some pro-Jamaat and BNP newspapers tried to justify the murder branding him as "an atheist".

Following his death, the country saw the rise of a radical force, Hefajat-e-Islam. The Chittagong-based Islamist group stood against the Shahbagh Movement and termed its organisers as "atheists".

The BNP threw its weight behind Hefajat, which held rallies and meetings, spread hatred against bloggers and demanded stern punishment for Shahbagh activists. The group even gave a list of bloggers to the government for its action against them.

Since then, the secular and pro-Liberation War bloggers started receiv-

ing death threats. Things turned bloody in 2015 -- four bloggers, two of whom were involved with Shahbagh movement and was reportedly on the Hefajat list, and a secular publisher were killed in a similar fashion.

Rights groups and freethinkers said the Awami League-led government failed to stop the killing spree. Instead, the government arrested some bloggers for allegedly defaming religious groups -- a strategy seen by many as pandering to headline elements.

DISSATISFACTION

"I am not satisfied with the verdict ... At least five of them [accused] confessed to the killing. And yet they were not given the death penalty. I cannot accept it," Rajib's father Nazim Uddin said.

Imran H Sarker, spokesperson of the Gonojagoron Mancha, said: "It was a farce in the name of trial."

Public Prosecutor Mahbubur Rahman said he was "not fully satisfied" with the judgment and that he would make a decision about challenging it after getting the full verdict.

Faruk Ahmed, a defence lawyer, said they were satisfied "partially" but would have been happy if their clients got acquitted. "We will file an appeal with the High Court."

CASE PROCEEDINGS

Nazim Uddin filed the case on February 16, 2013, and police pressed charges against the eight convicts on January 25, 2014. The Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court framed charges against the eight and the case was later transferred to the present court for quick disposal.

Seven accused gave statements

confessing their involvement before magistrates on different dates. Thirty-five prosecution witnesses, including three investigating officers, testified.

Yesterday, Judge Sayeed Ahmed took the seat around 12:30pm to deliver the verdict.

Citing the charge sheet, the judge said Jasim Uddin used to give sermons in different mosques to kill "atheist bloggers" and Rana, the main accused, and others regularly heard those.

Inspired and provoked by the sermons, they planned to kill Rajib, the judge added.

"On the basis of an idea or propaganda that Rajib alias Thaba Baba wrote derogatory write-ups about religion and Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) in blogs, the said accused became aggrieved towards Rajib alias Thaba Baba," reads the charge sheet.

As per the plan, the judge said, they divided themselves into two groups -- "Intel Group" for collecting information about Rajib and "Execution Group" for executing the plan. As planned, Dweep, Rana and Anik went to Pallabi and killed Rajib on the night of February 15.

Though there was no eyewitness, the accused gave confessional statements and the testimonies of 35 prosecution witnesses proved the case, the judge said.

There should be a limit to what a person can say in his sermons and there should also be a limit to what a blogger can write, but no one can take the law into his own hands because a blogger has written something on a blog, he added.

AL jubilant

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had no alternative to joining the polls.

The AL believes that the BNP's participation in the polls would contribute to the beginning of a new democratic trend and political tolerance in the country, sources said.

The leaders expressed satisfaction over the election results having secured 168 mayor posts. The BNP secured only 19.

In the last municipality polls, AL-backed candidates had secured 90 mayor posts while the pro-BNP ones got 95.

"The BNP rejects polls results and it was the old political culture. But the party stayed in the race and didn't announce any destructive programmes ... it's a beauty of democracy," said AL president member Nooh-Ul-Alam Lenin.

Talking to The Daily Star, he also claimed that after a long time the BNP had started positive politics.

Two more AL central leaders told The Daily Star that the BNP proved it wants to return to positive politics by not announcing any destructive programmes.

"The BNP needed an exit route to return to normal politics and through municipality polls, it got the chance," said an AL central leader, wishing anonymity.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at a programme at her Gono Bhaban residence, also appreciated the BNP for joining the municipality polls.

At a press conference held at the AL president's Dhanmondi office, Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif welcomed the BNP for taking part in the polls.

Termining the polls "most fair and impartial in history", he said the BNP finally accepted this government's legitimacy by taking part in the polls.

not be lenient towards AL rebel candidates even though the party did well in the elections. If the AL becomes lenient towards rebels, more would be encouraged to ignore party decisions in the upcoming union parishad polls.

In 19 municipalities, AL dissidents won the mayor posts.

The AL already suspended around 55 of its leaders for running for mayor ignoring party decision to back someone else. The fate of the suspended leaders would be decided at AL's central working committee meeting to be held on January 9, sources said.

Talking with The Daily Star, a number of party leaders admitted their mistakes in selecting candidates and blamed party lawmakers for defeats in some municipalities.

2 'criminals' shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two members of an alleged criminal gang were found dead near Thanchi-Alikadom road in the district's Alikadom upazila yesterday.

One of the dead is Singlok Mro, 21, of Thanchi's Aung Goging Para. The name of another victim, aged around 23, who belongs to Tripura community, could not be known immediately.

On information, army personnel went to Tero mile area around 6:00am and recovered the two bullet-hit bodies.

One pistol, one bullet, four cartridges, two knives and four mobile phone sets were also recovered from the deceased's possession, said Lt Col Sarwar, Alikadom zone commander of the army.

Goodbye, welcome

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unfolded in the year was discoveries of mass graves of trafficking victims from Bangladesh and Myanmar in bordering areas of Thailand and Malaysia.

A nine-part investigative series, Slave Trade Booms In Dark Triangle, of The Daily Star revealed how transnational traffickers lured some 2.5 lakh Bangladeshi fortune-seekers through sea route in the last eight years, held them in Thai jungles for ransom and used them as slaves.

That numbing disclosure prompted the government to capture some culprits and the world to hold many regional conferences. But trafficking masterminds eluded arrests, and the root cause -- the Rohingya crisis -- remained out of focus. We want the government to keep the focus on the issue.

A photo of a blood-smeared Rafida Ahmed Bonya, with her husband's (writer Avijit Roy) brutally-hacked body lying face-down in front for her, described well how bloody the year was for free-thinkers and campaigners for freedom of expression. She cried for help from a crowd that included policemen, but none of them came forward.

Religious radicals later hacked to death three more online activists and a secular publisher, and threatened to kill many more. Publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, who survived with severe injuries, became the latest of gypsies from Bangladesh in the West.

We want our policymakers and law enforcers to distinguish radicalism from religion and shake off whatever confusion they might have in fighting these modern-day killers of intellectuals. Let's not let someone else

repeat the heart-wrenching quote of Prof Abul Quasem Fazlul Huq, father of slain Jagriti Prokashani owner Faisal Arefin Dipan: "I don't want justice."

With the Islamic State making horrific headlines across the world, some unprecedented and unnerving incidents started to take place in Bangladesh later in the year 2015. What was attack on free-thinker, so-called atheist to be precise, suddenly became attack on everybody. Improvised grenades went off at an Ashura gathering, mosques of Shias and Ahmadiyyas, and Hindu temples.

Never before in this country of moderate Muslims were such attacks carried out on mosques, let alone on people in prayers. Two foreigners were killed in targeted attacks, a priest and a Baha'i leader were shot, and nearly three dozen Christian religious leaders, including a Bishop, received death threats.

Law enforcers left people to live on their nerves with ever-changing claims about terror suspects: once it was the IS, then Ansarullah Bangla Team, next Western intelligence conspiracy, then BNP-Jamaat clique, and now a regrouped JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh). This year, we demand only the facts from law enforcers, not confusion. We must prevent the country from becoming a Pakistan or Iraq, where terrors of this nature strike.

The year that went by was not always that gloomy. Our cricketers gave us an occasion to be over the moon with some scintillating wins in their first-ever qualification into the quarterfinals of World Cup. And the three one-day series victories, including a 3-0 whitewash of Pakistan, later

on are something we will look back on with pride.

After years in ignominy, Tigers forced the giants of world cricket to have a change of hearts through convincing drubbings of India and South Africa. We hope our sports ambassadors will continue the winning streak in the forthcoming Asia Cup at home and T20 World Cup in India.

The visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the subsequent exchange of enclaves with India highlighted the government's major successes in bilateral diplomacy. Acute power outage or load-shedding is now problem of the past, some of the credit for which should go to the government's regional energy diplomacy.

The government is now importing about 500MW from India at a competitive rate. Another 1,500MW should be added to the national power grid shortly. Besides, four-nation hydro-power projects with Nepal, Bhutan and India looks very promising. It is about time the government turned Teesta tears into cheers.

The dream of Padma Bridge is finally coming true. Big kudos goes to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her determination to build the bridge after years of controversy and delay. We want to see reflection of this strong will in ensuring that the bridge project is corruption-free.

The war crimes trial and execution of verdicts went on despite conspiracy at home and pressure from abroad. The simultaneous hanging of two top convicts -- Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed -- came as a huge relief for families of their victims and the nation. Three cheers for the

PM for her unfazed conviction to punish the war criminals.

The robust remittance and RMG earnings helped the economy maintain a steady growth of 6.51pc and record forex reserve of \$27b. But the investment indicator is blinking red, highlighting a dismal business climate. In 2016, we expect the government to take the alarm seriously and remove investment hurdles.

Tragic deaths on roads, especially during the two Eid vacations, dominated the headlines throughout the year 2015. What we don't want to do is bid a tearful farewell to a friend or a loved one killed in an accident caused by a reckless driver. So, let's rally to help ensure safe roads for all.

We saw little progress in the efforts to conserve the environment. We have always had laws to protect rivers, canals and water bodies from grabbers and polluters. Ironically though, the laws exist and so do the encroachers and polluters. In 2016, we expect the government to turn things around.

With the government developing a knee-jerk syndrome at any hint of criticism, people embrace the New Year with a lot of worries. Its growing intolerance against dissenting voices, be it from an individual, rights body or free media, threatens to jeopardise a basic human right -- the freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is the essence of any democracy. And an intelligent government always takes benefit from critical voices, views and free flow of information. Restriction on that freedom, in fact, weakens the government and empowers its enemies.

We hope this simple wisdom will