

SPOTLIGHT

MD Al Amin, an examinee of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) 2017 was baffled by an unusual offer from one of his friends. On February 3, 2017, his friend Shajal, also an SSC examinee, sent him a photo of the question paper of the Bengali second part exam which was supposed to be held on February 5th. “The photo showed only a part of the question paper and then Shajal said that we could get all the four sets of the question paper by paying 10,000 tk. Five of us classmates donated 2000 tk each and bought the question paper in the evening from a coaching centre, as we were sure that we were going to get one of those four sets on the day of the exam,” says Al Amin. However, Al Amin and his classmates regretted making the deal due to a quite unexpected incident. At around 11 pm on February 4th, on the night before the exam, one of the four sets of the question paper was published online claiming that particular set had been selected for the next day’s exam. The miscreants also posted the correct answers to the multiple choice questions with the leaked question papers. And, on the next day, the examinees found that claim a hundred percent accurate. A similar incident occurred before the mathematics exam as well.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN
PHOTOS: COURTESY

“For the mathematics exam, I didn’t buy all the four sets of the question paper; I just waited for the last night and got the selected set of question papers on Facebook. Everybody around me is getting the question papers beforehand, so if I don’t get it, I am afraid that I might get lower grades than my friends and classmates,” says Al Amin. However, things were not so easy for Md Shujon Mian, an SSC examinee who completed his secondary education from a free-school for underprivileged children. He works as a domestic helper and can only find three to four hours to study after a day full of hard work. He cannot afford the luxury of browsing Facebook and he doesn’t have anyone to give him thousands of taka to purchase the leaked question papers. He appeared for each exam after studying hard and

unfortunately he could not solve all the problems in the mathematics exam. “I became so depressed when I got to know that many students are getting questions beforehand. They will obviously make far better scores than me and I will not be able to get admitted to a good college,” says a disheartened Shujon. Disclosure of question papers before the exam date has been a regular phenomenon in Bangladesh. Despite these disgraceful incidents, the ministry of education, this year, did not take any step to cancel the exams, and instead denied the fact that the question papers were leaked. And, the ring leaders behind this heinous crime, that has almost destroyed our entire education system, remain at large.

The process of formulating and printing the question papers can shed light on the question of how the question papers are leaked in the first place. According to the order of the ministry, every education board forms a question paper formulation committee months before the date of a public exam. The committee calls for questions from the experienced teachers of reputed schools and colleges. With all these questions, the committee prepares four sets of questions for each subject.

The finalised questions are then sent to the high security government printing press. The sealed, printed question papers are sent to the government treasury of every district and upazila. On the day before the exam, after deciding which set of questions (among the four sets) will be given to the students on the exam day, a team of two representatives from every exam centre (which is a local school or a college) goes to the treasury. They mark the specified set of question papers for their individual centre so that they can quickly transfer the papers to the centre on the day.

It has been noticed that the particular

question paper set, marked for the exam, has been leaked on the previous night. And, the most shocking and unfortunate fact of the matter is that it is only possible for the high ranking education board officials and teachers employed in the exam centres to know which set of the question paper will be given to the students. Therefore, it is most likely that some morally degenerated teachers and board officials are involved in this heinous crime. Employees in the printing press and members of the formulation committee are also not above suspicion, since in many cases; all four sets of the question papers have been leaked.

Renowned academician Professor Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal thinks that the impact of regular leakage of question paper before every public exam is devastating for the entire society. In his words, “It is very unfortunate that the nation which once won the liberation war, now fails to arrange a transparent, fair exam. The students who are passing the tests with the help of leaked question paper have already failed the test of morality.”

“When they see their parents helping them collect the leaked question papers, they learn corruption from their families which will certainly affect the family bonding and our society’s moral base. And, this corrupt culture is decisively damaging the learning environment where genuinely meritorious students are being discouraged to study and learn,” he adds.

Question paper leakage scam has tainted almost all government controlled exams of Bangladesh-- from Primary School Certificate exam to the written test of Bangladesh Civil Service exam. University and college admission tests are also not spared. In 2015, the incident of question paper leakage before highly competitive medical college admission test agitated the entire nation. However,

the education ministry and responsible departments have constantly denied the fact that question papers were leaked.

“By denying it, when people have concrete proof of question paper leakage, our education minister is actually encouraging the criminals to commit more such crimes. I believe if our education ministry sincerely wants to ensure transparency and fairness in the public exams, they can easily prevent crimes like question paper leakage,” adds Muhammad Zafar Iqbal.

Academicians are also saying that pressure of the increasing number of public exams and the current scoring system has created an adverse psychosocial pressure on these students. The students are now in a race to score GPA 5 out of 5 at any cost. As a result, many students and even their parents do not hesitate to do anything to achieve the highest score. In this regard, academicians have been advocating for overhauling the entire examination and evaluation system for many years. The education minister repeatedly promised to ban all coaching centres, the withdrawal of JSC exam, and also arresting the ring leaders involved in question paper leakage; however, none of these promises came to fruition. It is hard to believe that the current

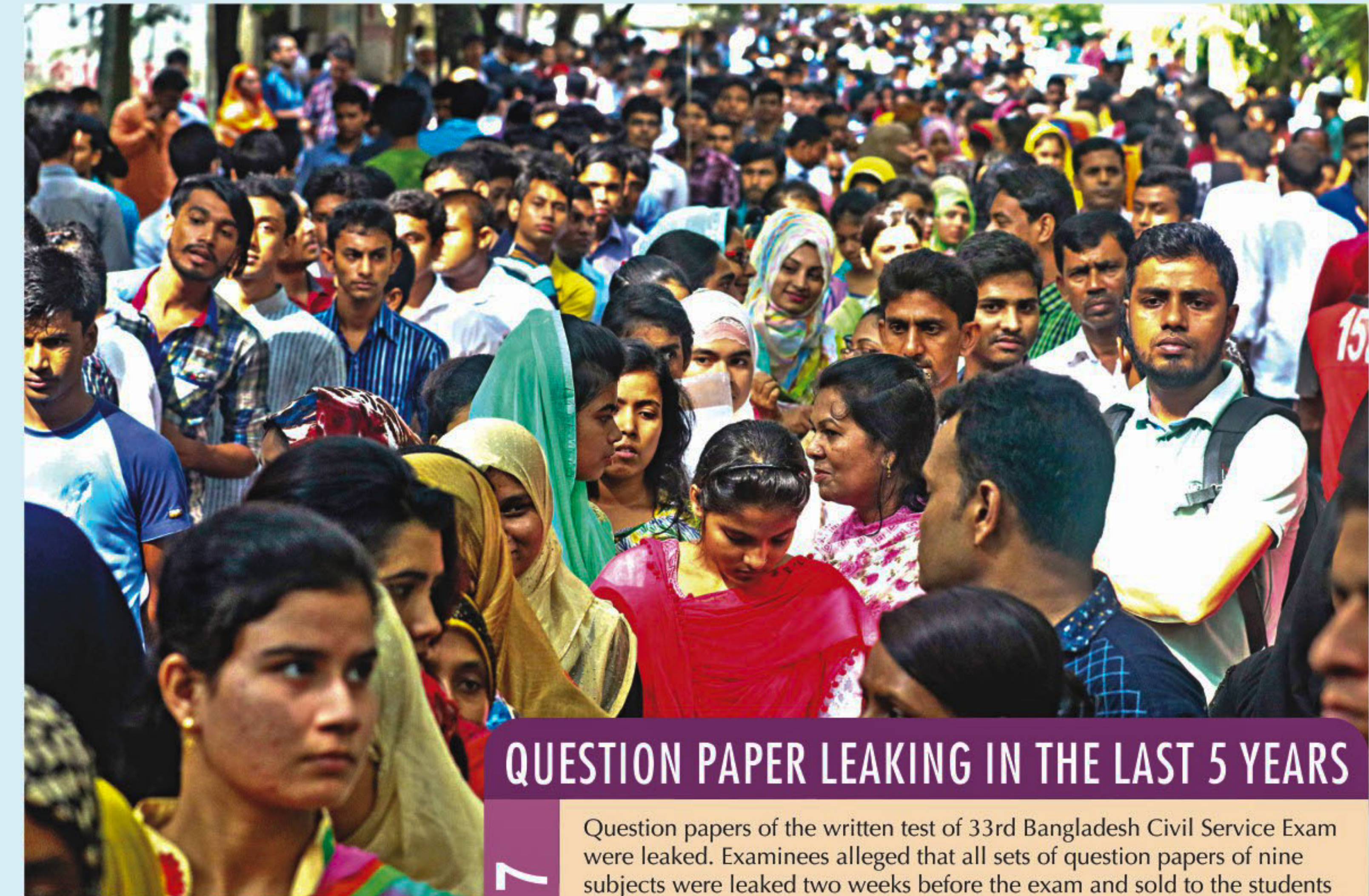


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

QUESTION PAPER LEAKING IN THE LAST 5 YEARS

Question papers of the written test of 33rd Bangladesh Civil Service Exam were leaked. Examinees alleged that all sets of question papers of nine subjects were leaked two weeks before the exam and sold to the students for 3 to 5 hundred thousand taka. Public Service Commission at first rejected this allegation repeatedly, however, just a day before the scheduled date, the commission withheld the exam. Although prominent student leaders of the ruling political party were reported to be involved, nobody was brought to book for this scandal.

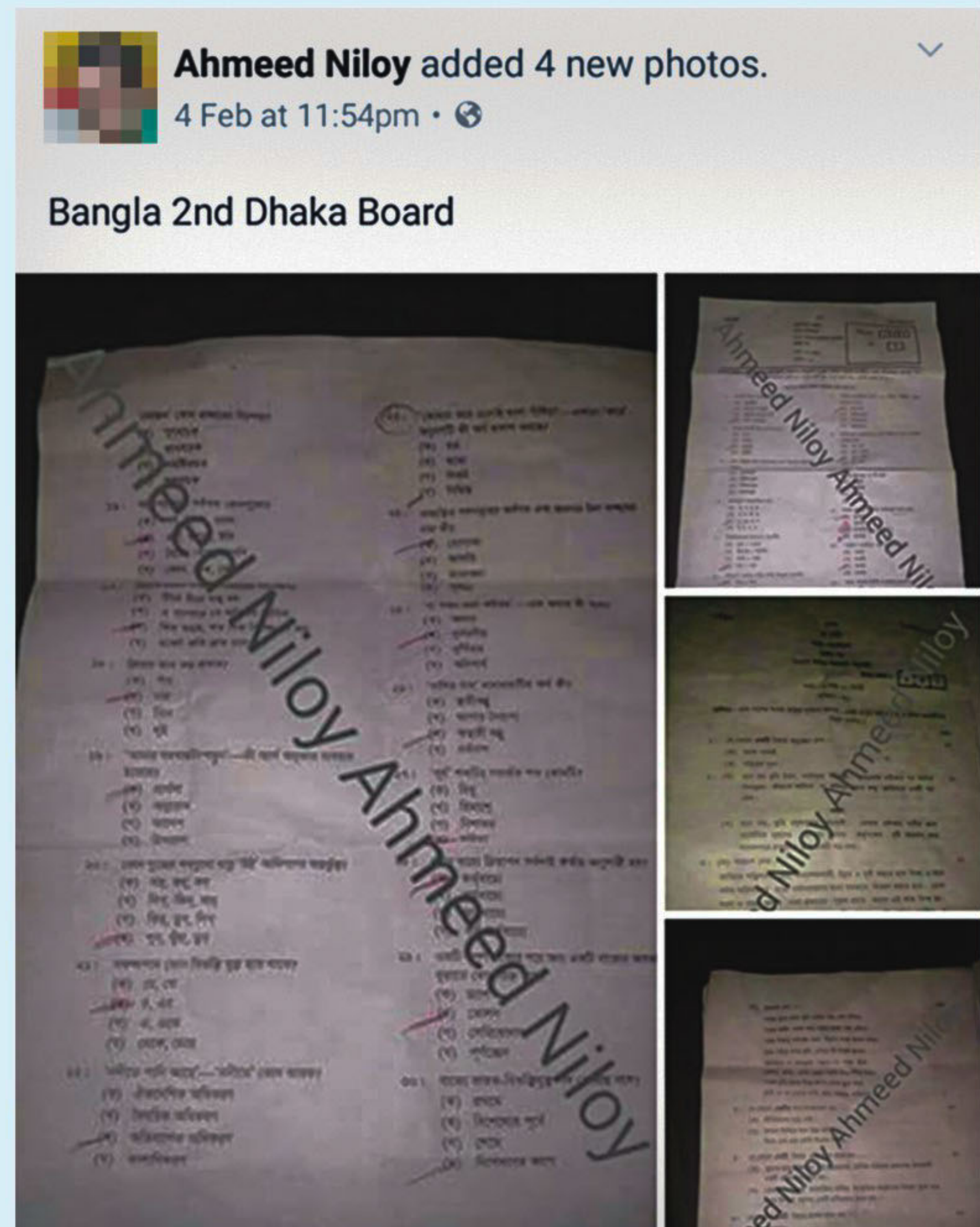
Question papers of Secondary School Certificate Exam in Dhaka Board were leaked and sold to the students through cell phone messages. Besides, examinees and their parents from different districts alleged that question papers of the upcoming exam were available in the local stationery shops which were sold for 50 to 100 tk. However, no measure was taken as the authority told that they didn’t know about such allegations.

Question papers of Primary School Certificate Exam were leaked and sold to the examinees and their guardians. Question papers were leaked days before the exam and sold to the students and their parents through social media and email. It was also alleged that coaching centres were involved in leaking the question papers who distributed the papers among the examinees days before the exam. In the same way, questions of SSC exam were also leaked. However, the responsible ministry and officials denied such allegations.

Medical and dental college admission test question papers were allegedly leaked last night before the exams. It was reported that examinees all over the country got the question papers through social media and e-mail. Hurried publication of the result and abnormally high score of a huge number of candidates strengthened the allegations. A citizen’s committee investigated the fact and found irrefutable evidence of question paper leakage. Thousands of candidates also demanded to cancel the result and retake the exam. However, the responsible ministry and the department denied such allegations.

Rumours of question paper leakage were spread before Junior School Certificate exam and Dhaka University admission test exam in 2016. Social media sites were flooded with allegedly leaked question paper before JSC exam. Several individuals were arrested with fake question papers of Ka unit of Dhaka University admission test. Minister promised stern action against the involved individuals and to ban coaching centres to prevent question paper leakage.

This year question papers of several subjects have been leaked during the ongoing secondary school certificate exam. The leaked question papers were allegedly sold to the students 4 or 5 days prior to the exam for 10,000 taka. And, on the night before the exam, the questions were published online through social media and made public.



The Bangla 2nd part question paper of SSC exam was posted on this Facebook profile on the night before the exam.

