

Focus more on academic activities

PM asks school authorities

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the authorities concerned to give special attention to the academic activities at their educational institutions.

"Our students are talented. We're providing them with all kinds of facilities. Why can't they pass the exams? I think special attention will have to be given to all the institutions whether they are running the academic activities properly," she said.

The premier made the remarks while inaugurating the distribution of free textbooks and receiving the results of this year's Primary Education Completion (PEC), Ebtedayee, Junior School Certificate (JSC), Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) and equivalent exams at the Gono Bhaban.

She opened the free textbook distribution programme by handing over

books to primary and secondary level students.

Hasina directed the authorities concerned to formulate curricula for the students keeping pace with the modern world.

The PM said her government has been doing everything necessary for creating an educated generation to take the country towards the desired goal.

Terming education an asset, Hasina advised the students to develop themselves as well-educated citizens.

The PM expressed satisfaction at the pass rates of the PEC and Ebtedayee exams. She said students regained their confidence through appearing in the exams, which is very essential.

Returning to power in 1996, the Awami League government had taken a programme to make every district free from illiteracy, but the programme

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing over free textbooks to a student. She inaugurated the distribution of free textbooks for 2018 academic year at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

EBTETAI, JDC EXAMS

Pass rate, number of GPA-5 fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The success rate in Ebtetai terminal and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations fell this year while the number of students achieving GPA 5 also came down.

According to the results published yesterday, the pass rate of Ebtetai exams is 92.94 percent, down from 95.85 percent last year.

A total of 5,023 students achieved GPA-5 this year while the number was 5,948 last year.

On the other hand, the pass rate in this year's JDC exams under the madrasa education board is 86.80 percent, dipping 7.22 percentage points from last year.

The number of GPA-5 achievers also saw a sharp fall this year with 7,231 gaining the achievement, a drop from last year's 12,529 candidates.

The number of students in JDC

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Comilla pulls all boards down

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However, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman termed the results "satisfactory".

"It is a matter of special research. There might be various reasons behind it. We cannot tell it now," he said of the drop in the success rate, while announcing the results at a jam-packed press conference at his secretariat office yesterday.

Ministry officials echoed his view. Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, director general of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), which conducts the exams, said, "We will definitely do an analysis as to why the success rate fell."

This year's exams were marred by widespread allegations of question paper leak. In some districts question papers were available on social media hours before the tests.

Despite the overall poor performance, girls have done better in both the examinations than boys in most indicators like last year.

In the primary terminal exam, 95.40 percent girls came out successful (1,47,061 got GPA 5) against 94.93 percent boys (1,15,548 got GPA 5).

In the JSC exam, girls are also ahead of boys in terms of the number of attendees, pass rate and the number of GPA-5 achievers under the nine boards.

FALL IN JSC RESULTS
Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid could not say why the pass rate fell.

"We need some time to do a proper assessment as we need to get to the bottom of it," he said while announcing the overall results at his ministry.

But an analysis of the results indi-

JSC RESULTS COMPARISON

BOARDS	PASS RATE 2017	PASS RATE 2016	GPA-5 2017	GPA-5 2016
Dhaka	81.66	91.36	76,848	86,350
Rajshahi	95.54	97.68	37,633	40,471
Comilla	62.83	89.68	8,875	19,186
Jessore	83.42	95.35	14,612	22,003
Chittagong	81.17	90.75	10,315	14,135
Barisal	96.32	97.38	8,431	15,570
Sylhet	89.41	93.37	7,621	10,255
Dinajpur	88.38	92.99	20,062	27,089
Total	83.10	92.89	18,4397	2,35,059

cates that a poor performance of the students in Comilla Board and students' performance in English and mathematics in other boards led to the fall in the overall pass rate.

Students of Comilla Board also performed badly in this year's SSC and HSC examinations, pushing down the overall pass rates in those exams.

With 62.83 percent students coming out successful, this board is at the bottom among eight general boards in JSC. Last year, the pass rate in the board was 89.68 percent.

Of the total 2.61 lakh students sitting the exams in Comilla Board, 21.38 percent flunked in English and 14.59 percent in maths.

Prof Md Abdus Salam, acting chairman of Comilla Board, told The Daily Star that the results in other subjects were quite good, but the students performed badly in English and maths for a lack of good teachers, especially in rural areas.

"Usually it's either English or mathematics that makes the difference in the results. That was the case here," he said.

He pointed out that the pass rate in English saw a 21 percent fall this year as 70.70 percent students passed in English compared to last year's 92.08 percent. Similarly, 82.46 percent students came out successful in maths against 97.05 percent last year.

"Most of the school in town areas saw a success rate of more than 90 percent, but schools in countryside did poorly," said Prof Salam.

"Scarcity of good teachers for English and mathematics in rural areas might be the reason," he said.

Students in Dhaka, Jessore and Chittagong boards also performed badly in these two subjects this year, results show.

The pass rate in English in Dhaka Board fell to 88.25 percent from last year's 94.14 percent. In mathematics, it dropped by 5.93 percentage points.

In Jessore Board, 90.66 percent students came out successful in English against last year's 96.42 percent. The pass rate in mathematics slumped by 10.25 percentage points and stood at 88.33 percent

this year.

Dhaka Board Chairman Prof Mahabubur Rahman agreed that the pass rate fell because of poor show in English and maths.

However, "proper evaluation" of answer scripts and floods in some districts also played a role, he said.

"Some examiners used to evaluate answer scripts without doing the due diligence. Therefore they might have given extra marks in the past. But now we're giving training and regular guidance to the examiners and that's why they are evaluating answer sheets properly," he told this newspaper.

The students of Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Rajbari and Faridpur districts performed badly and the board authorities assume it was because of the flood, he added.

Prof Shaheda Islam, chairman of Chittagong Education Board, said, "We primarily found the question paper of mathematics was hard and that's why the students could not perform well. But we are still trying to find out the reason behind poor result in English."

Schools in rural areas saw poor results compared to the school in city. And the schools in Khagrachhari and Bandarban performed poorly like previous years "mainly due to poor infrastructure," she claimed.

A total of 21.03 lakh students under eight education boards across the country took part in the exams that began on November 1.

Of them, 17,07,024 students -- 10,96,317 girls and 9,57,825 boys -- came out successful. Some 3,96,739 students failed.

PRIMARY PASS RATE

(YEAR-WISE)	PASS RATE
2017	95.18
2016	98.51
2015	98.52
2014	97.92
2013	98.58
2012	97.35
2011	97.26
2010	92.34
2009	88.84

JSC PASS RATE

(YEAR-WISE)	PASS RATE
2017	83.10
2016	92.89
2015	92.31
2014	89.85
2013	89.71
2012	86.11
2011	82.67
2010	71.34

The pass rate in Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations is 86.80 percent.

The combined pass rate of JSC and JDC in eight general boards and one madrasa board stood at 83.65 percent. It was 93.06 percent last year.

And 562 out of 599 JSC students, who took the test in eight overseas centres, came out successful. Of them, 83 obtained GPA-5.

Barisal Board is at the top of all boards with 96.32 percent pass rate.

This year, the number of institution with 100 percent pass rate also came down to 3,559. Last year some 6,247 institutions saw a 100 percent pass rate. No students passed from 34 institutions, against only eight last year.

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Bangladeshi

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traders as they were entering Indian territory to bring back Indian cattle. Shafiqul Islam died on the spot while others managed to flee, BGB said.

"The Bangladeshi's body remained on the spot, where he was hit, till around 10:00am yesterday. Later BSF took the body for a post-mortem," border area Gotamari's Union Parishad UIP Chairman Abul Kashem said.

Confirming these two incidents, Commanding Officer (CO) of Lalmonirhat 15 BGB Battalion Lieutenant Colonel Golam Morshed said, BSF returned the Bangladeshi farmer after a flag meeting at Mogholhat border and that BSF would hand over the deceased cattle trader's body after post-mortem in India.

"We sent a letter yesterday noon protesting the killing of the Bangladeshi citizen and seeking the return of his body to BSF," he said.

Landslide

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workers fled the scene soon after the accident, he added.

Police and locals later recovered the bodies from the spot and later handed over the bodies to the victims' families.

Sayed said a group of people were involved in cutting hills and selling soil in the area for long. "I warned them of serious consequences for cutting hills, but they didn't pay heed."

Abetted by some local influential people, the gang sells each jeep-load of soil at Tk 2,000. It pays each worker Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 daily, said the public representative.

The gang also felled many trees on forest land in the area, the chairman alleged.

Mohammed Kamal Hossen, upazila nirbahi officer of Rangunia, said they were yet to identify the hill-cutting gang.

"We are trying to find some witnesses of the landslide to know about the gang. We will step up surveillance in the area to check hill cutting," he added.

BPC won't sell fuel to Biman on credit

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Full payment was supposed to be made at the end of each month, but Biman always paid less, resulting in a pile of huge dues, he added.

They issued letters to Biman many times for the payment in vain, said Ahmed, adding that even several letters were sent to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division and the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism through BPC.

The POCL on November 20, 2016 sent a letter to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division of the Ministry of

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, informing it about the dues.

Accordingly, the division on December 15, 2016 in a letter signed by Deputy Secretary Farzana Momtaz requested the secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to take steps to clear the dues and instruct Biman to buy fuel with full payment from 2017.

However, Biman continued its practice of paying less than the bill amount. During the first 19 days of this month, Biman purchased fuel worth Tk 41.88 crore but paid Tk 30.12 crore.

Considering the overall situation, they have decided to stop selling fuel to Biman on credit from New Year, said POCLGM Mohiuddin.

BPC Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Munim on October 26 sent a letter to the secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division conveying the decision.

In the letter, the BPC chairman said if the current trend continued, Padma Oil would not be able to realise the dues in next several decades.

He also suggested that the division should request the Ministry of Civil

Aviation and Tourism to instruct Biman to buy fuel on full payment and make an additional payment of Tk 34.66 crore every month from January 1 to clear the dues in next five years.

BPC Director (Marketing) Mir Ali Reza said they had made the decision after not getting any positive response from Biman even after alerting it several times.

"Since we are also counting interests against bank loan, we cannot take the responsibility of others' failure," Reza added.

Cardboard

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they find a place to sleep for the night.

The idea was sparked by a job rehabilitation centre as a way of working around the existing ban on material tents in the city, according to BX1.

The materials were donated by a local supplier and the tents were assembled by a work initiative at Lantin prison.

Organisers said they hoped it would give the city's homeless somewhere safe to sleep.

"We live in one of the most comfortable countries in the world. I find it difficult to accept that human beings are spending the night on the streets, on the pavements, outside our windows," Xavier Van der Stappen, who financed and distributed the first series of ORIG-AMI prototypes, told SudInfo.

"In Brussels, the capital of Europe, 2,600 people sleep rough. The number is increasing year after year. Such things happen in life, any one of us could find ourselves on the streets, and the homeless in our positions."

Around 20 tents were distributed at the Gare du Nord on Friday, in conjunction with "L'Appel du Coeur", another charity that distributed rucksacks packed with essentials.

Scams dent good show in economy

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implementing a number of mega projects to improve the country's ailing infrastructure, which, if done efficiently and timely, could add further value to the growth of the country's domestic product (GDP).

The projects include the Padma Bridge, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Payra Sea Port, coal-fired Matarbari and Rampal power plants, Metro Rail and Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal. Two more large projects, one for a Padma Bridge rail link and another for the Karnaphuli River Tunnel, have also been taken up for fast implementation.

Yet, the government's success was not praised enough by analysts, experts and businesses, mainly because of its mishandlings in the financial sector, particularly banking industry, which they said undermined the government's success.

Muhammad A (Rumee) Ali, former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, said the role of the financial sector, especially the banking system, has become vital as the country has been implementing many large infrastructure projects.

"All the goods can be undone with the failure to run the banks efficiently,"

said Ali, now working as chief executive officer of Bangladesh International Arbitration Council.

He said the banking system is key to financing resources to industrial and infrastructure projects and if any disruptions happened there, it would affect the entire financial system and the economy.

Toxic loans and recapitalisation in the banking sector, especially in the state-owned banks, have always been a cause for concern in Bangladesh. But takeover of two banks by a Chittagong-based business group and deteriorating health of two new banks were the much-talked about issues in 2017.

First generation lender AB Bank's \$20 million money laundering to accounts of a bank in the UAE revealed two weeks ago was another major scandal. And the government's plans to allow three more banks have become controversial in 2017.

Bangladesh's banking system consists of eight state-owned banks, 40 private sector banks and nine foreign banks. All these banks have nonperforming loans (NPL) worth Tk 80,397 crore or 10.67 percent of the total outstanding loans as of September 2017. The NPL would go up

to 17 percent if rescheduled and restructured loans were included.

Like previous years, state banks were the worst performers as they failed to improve their health in 2017. Bangladesh Bank data shows NPL of eight state banks were Tk 44,126 crore or 55 percent of the total. Some 40 private banks and nine foreign banks together have Tk 36,271 crore NPL.

Together, the state-owned banks had a capital shortfall of Tk 12,683 crore at the end of June 2017 despite the government's injection of Tk 2,000 crore.

But neither the NPL nor capital shortfall was the big issue. Takeover of Islami Bank Bangladesh and SIBL by a Chittagong-based business group was the most-talked about matter as concentration of a number of banks could trigger a systematic risk in the financial market. The group already has a strong grasp of five other banks.

During the last couple of months, two new banks -- Farmers and NRBC -- grabbed the headlines for their sheer failure in running the banks within four years of their inception.

Bangladesh Bank, though late, stepped in and removed managing directors of these two banks for their

failure to protect the depositors' interest. The BB also helped these banks restructure their boards, including forcing Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, a ruling party lawmaker and former home minister, to resign as the chair of Farmers Bank.

NRBC Bank also brought changes to its board, including removal of its chairman.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said the government failed to cash in on the macroeconomic stability for inclusive and accelerated growth, mainly due to its failure to establish good governance in the banking system.

He said problems in the banking sector were due to the government and the regulator failing to address root causes.

"Urgent actions are needed, otherwise things will go beyond [bad] and affect the overall economy," said Mustafizur.

"Bangladesh Bank should be given full autonomy so that it can supervise the banking sector independently," said the CPD fellow.

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