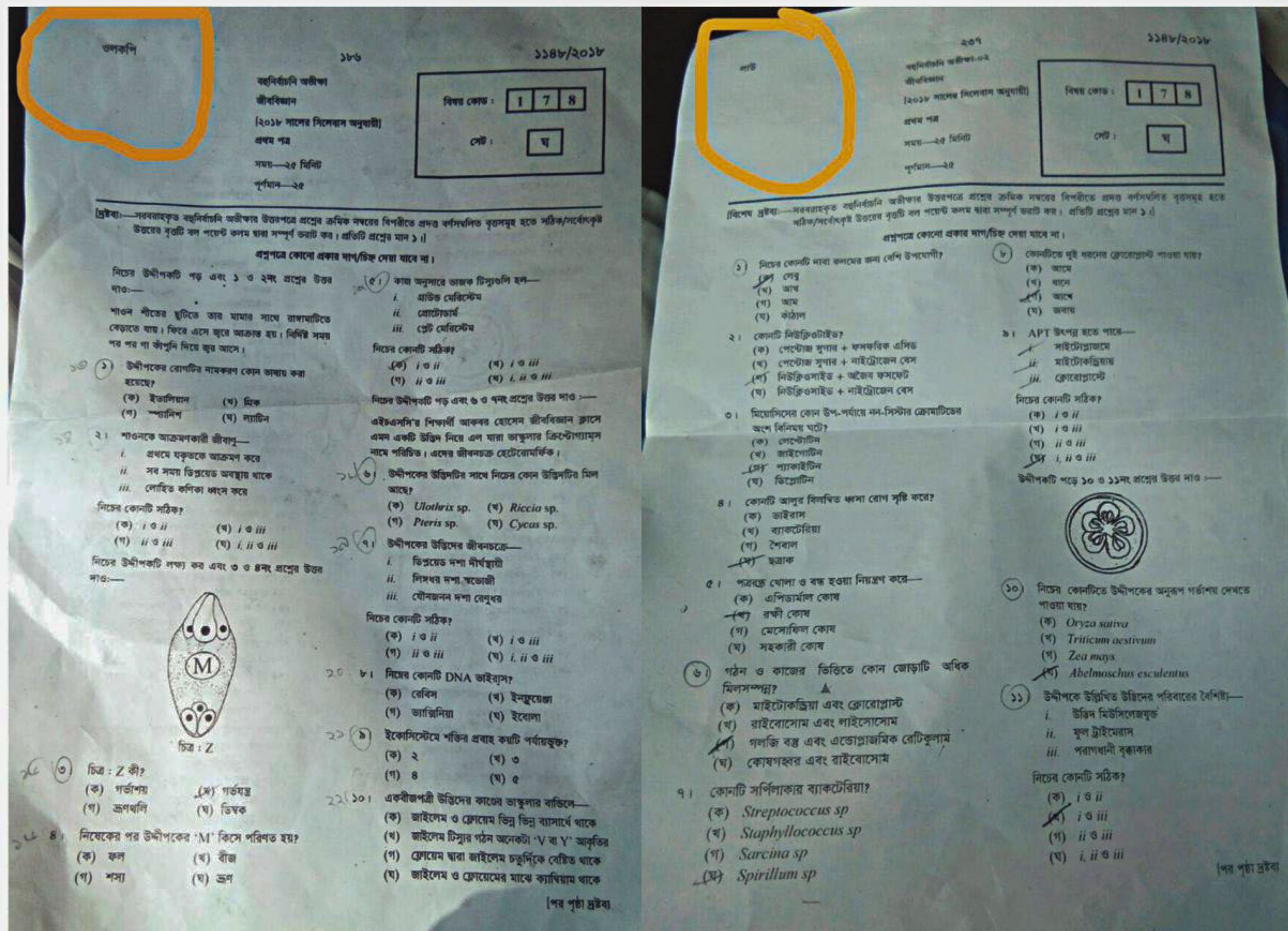


HSC 2018: Panic at the examination centre



The question paper on the left was selected for this exam but the one on the right was given out in some rooms.

PHOTO: ANJELA SAYEDA

NAZIFA RAIDAH

The question leak issue has been at play over the past several years and has been rotting the core of our education's assessment system—board examinations. This year however, after the question leaks in the Secondary School Certificate examination (SSC), the authorities have taken stricter measures to prevent question leaks, including social media surveillance and better security around exam centres. It was also announced that all district boards will supply the same question paper, choosing amongst 4 sets of previously prepared question papers, which will be done 25 minutes before the exam. This policy has given birth to a new set of problems.

On April 12, 2018 students of Viqarunnisa Noon School & College sat for their Biology first paper exam at the exam centre in Mirza Abbas Mohila College, where they were provided with the wrong set of question papers. As per the instruction of the authorities, the students were supposed to answer the objective part of their exam on the MCQ set named "Olkopi" which was selected 25 minutes prior to the exam. However, some rooms were provided with another MCQ paper from another set named "Lau". This was a matter of concern as all students were supposed to be answering

the same question set. The OMR (optical mark reading) sheet only had provision to mark sets A, B, C, or D (corresponding to the first 4 letters in the Bangla alphabet), which raised concern as to how the OMR sheets will be evaluated. This means that unless the answer sheets are hand-checked, all the answers of the students who answered from MCQ set "Lau" would be marked wrong.

The students reportedly said that although most rooms had changed the question papers, the question papers in some rooms remained unchanged. The students in some rooms were notified while many in other rooms weren't, as the invigilators themselves lacked clear instructions on how to handle the situation.

The problem extended to the subjective part of the exams as well. "Almost 25 minutes into the exam, we were informed that our question papers will be changed. We were given the 'Kha' set initially when we were actually supposed to write the answers to the 'Ka' set. Although the invigilators promised us extra time, we were given 15 minutes. This created a sense of panic amongst the students as to whether they could finish in time," says Noshin Saiyara, an HSC candidate sitting for her exams at Mirza Abbas Mohila College. Students are required to finish writing 5 stems (sets of four questions of different mark range) in 2 hours and 35 minutes, which is not an easy task to accomplish on its own. It was unofficially reported that adequate

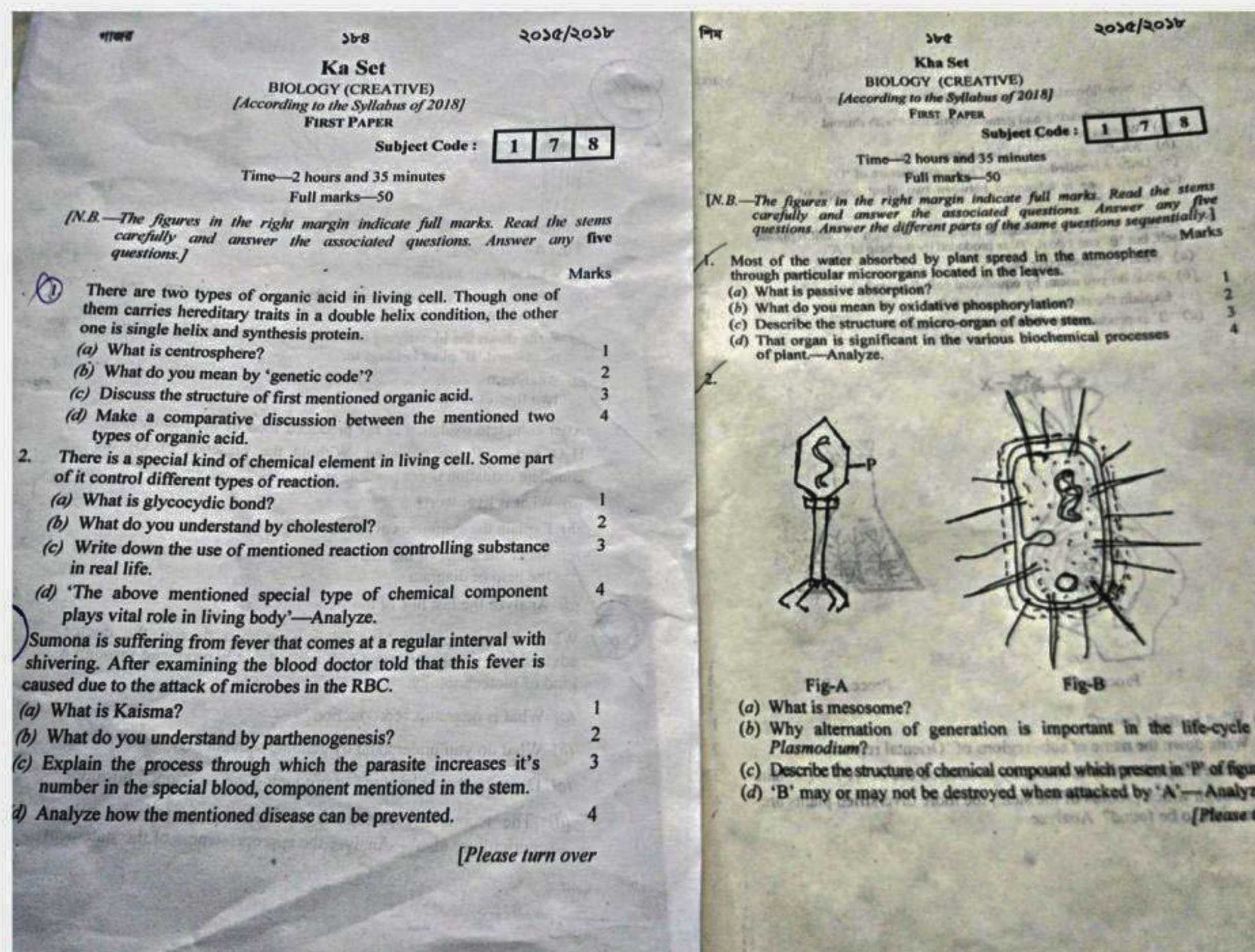
measures would be taken to handle the situation. There has been no official statement as of yet, however.

This hasn't been the only occurrence, as different students of Rajuk Uttara Model College, whose centres were at Nawab Habibullah College and Uttara Girls' High School, reportedly gave their ICT exam in different sets only to realise it after the exams were over. When asked about the reason behind this issue, Sadid Murshed, an HSC candidate from Rajuk Uttara Model College said, "I think arbitrary last minute decision-making from the authorities, including sets to be chosen 25 minutes prior to the exam is a major reason behind this. These frequent changes every year lead to mismanagement as the teachers or the invigilators do not know what awaits them, let alone us, the students."

It has been reported that the centre in-charge at Mirza Abbas Mohila College was suspended from duties as a measure of the incidents. However, most students and concerned parents are still unsure of how this provided solution to the problem at hand. If this mismanagement hasn't been dealt with properly, it means most students will receive unsatisfactory marks or even miss out on a grade.

For HSC students, the board exam grade puts weight in the point grade system of the university admission tests so it's even more important for all the formalities to be sorted and checked properly before a student sits for the exam. In addition, living in a society where the presence or absence of GPA 5 determines a student's worth, it's tremendously unfortunate if the concerned authority's lack of diligence leads to a student missing a grade and thus getting disenfranchised for it.

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The question paper on the right was initially given out and then changed with the one on the left.

PHOTO: NOSHIN SAIYARA