

## DU 'GHA' UNIT EXAM Question paper leaked 45 mins before test

Find law enforcers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers have found evidence that the hand-written question paper of Dhaka University's "Gha" unit admission test, which was leaked around 45 minutes prior to the exam, was circulated from two admission information centres in Bogura to an applicant's guardian.

Six people, including the admission seeker and his father, were arrested on Saturday in connection with the incident. Each of them was taken on a two-day remand yesterday.

After scrutinising one of the admission seeker's mobile phone, investigators found images containing hand-written questions in the applicant's Facebook messenger to be identical to the original ones.

"The questions came at 9:17am on Friday," Molla Nazrul Islam, special superintendent of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police, told The Daily Star.

On Saturday, DU's Chief Security Officer SM Kamrul Ahsan filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing the six and some others, under

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## Editors' Council to form human chain today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) will form a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club today to press for proper amendments to nine sections of the Digital Security Act 2018.

The Parishad, a platform of editors of the country's national dailies, believes the sections are likely to seriously harm the cause of independent journalism and freedom of expression.

It announced the programme at a news conference at the press club on Saturday.

Only members of the Parishad will take part in the human chain scheduled for 11:00am.

Earlier, the Parishad had announced that it would form a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club on September 29 on the same demand after the Digital Security Bill was passed in parliament on September 19, ignoring concern of journalists and rights defenders.

The programme was postponed at the request of Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu.

## Doors

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the much-talked-about Digital Security Bill-2018 was passed in Parliament on September 19 and President Abdul Hamid signed it into a law on October 8.

At a press conference on Saturday, Editors' Council expressed surprise that nothing was done in spite of public commitment by three ministers and a media adviser to the prime minister to raise their concerns before the cabinet and to open a dialogue with the stakeholders to work out acceptable changes to the act.

The Editors' Council also announced that it would hold a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club at 11:00am today, demanding amendment to nine sections of the act -- 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43, and 53. It said the act must be amended appropriately to safeguard the freedom of the media.

Earlier, the Parishad had announced a human chain for September 29 but later postponed the programme at the request of the information minister, who had assured it of raising the concern before the cabinet.

However, there was no such effort in the last two cabinet meetings.

Inu said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was informed about journalists' concerns over the Digital Security Act and that they would sit with the Editors' Council and journalist leaders after the issue would be discussed at the cabinet.

Talking to journalists yesterday, the minister also said they had already met Editors' Council as well as leaders from BFUI, DUJ and DRU and listened to their concerns.

The journalists' concerns could not be presented in the last two cabinet meetings as there was no atmosphere for discussion on the issue, he said.

He hoped that the discussion would be held "anytime".

Asked, he said, "Any law can be amended anytime since there is a government and parliament. It's a routine work."

While answering a question on the Editors Council's human chain today, Inu said, "Raising demand is a democratic way and I would not comment."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being briefed on the overall progress of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge project at Mawa Ghat in Munshiganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## A befitting reply to 'conspirators'

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Highway and inaugurated the construction of the rail link on the Mawa end.

While addressing another rally in Madaripur later in the day, Hasina blasted Dr Kamal Hossain for forging an alliance with the BNP, calling the combine "a platform of killers and opportunists", adds BSS.

At the Munshiganj rally, the PM said the government would ensure an improved and beautiful life for the country's people by constructing the bridge with own funds.

The country's current GDP growth is 7.86 percent and it would be possible to increase that by another 1.2 percent once the bridge is constructed, she said.

"After constructing the rail link, the country will be able to attain 2 percent more growth," she said, adding that once the rail and road on the Padma bridge would be built, government target to attain 10 percent GDP growth would not be a tough job.

"My only aim is to change the fate of the people by keeping up the existing development trend," she said.

Talking about Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus' "conspiracy" against the construction of the Padma bridge, Hasina said he had done that just for securing his Grameen Bank managing director post which he lost for exceeding age limit.

"Losing his MD post, he went to the court. But the court gave its verdict against him as his age was 72 whereas the maximum age limit for that post in Bangladesh is 60 years."

Hasina said Dr Yunus had also "engaged" then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Cherry Blair, wife of the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, to lobby for him. "They called me several times, but I told them that the law doesn't permit Dr Yunus to stay in the MD post."

She said the Nobel Laureate along with the editor of a newspaper of the country convinced Hillary Clinton through sending several emails to withdraw the World Bank funding from the Padma bridge project.

Without taking permission from the board, the then World Bank president on the last day of his office signed the fund withdrawal paper of the project citing corruption in the construction work, the prime minister said.

"When I asked for the proof of the corruption, they failed to show [us] the documents."

"Even, the World Bank said they might again come with funding if we remove our minister, secretary and so on. But I told them clearly that without any proper proof, I would not do anything," she said.

They had also alleged that the prime minister's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and

younger sister Sheikh Rehana were involved in the corruption, she said, adding: "At that time, I said enough is enough. We don't need your money...we'll construct the bridge with our own resources."

She said no one, not even the members of her own party, could believe at that time that the bridge could be constructed without the World Bank funding. The prime minister also said after evaluating all the materials and documents, the Canadian federal court gave its verdict trashing the World Bank's corruption allegation as baseless, untrue and gaseous.

"There was a conspiracy at home and abroad behind withdrawal of the WB fund. It's very much unfortunate that the people behind this conspiracy and instigators are some people from our own country," she said.

Hasina also said that those people have no love for the country and no duty towards its people.

"And how the patriotism will come when they take interest from the poor, become rich taking interest from the poor? This interest monger can't love the country and its people. This is the reality," she said.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Army chief General Aziz Ahmed and Railways Minister Md Mazibul Hoque also

spoke on the occasion.

### 'KAMAL JOINED HANDS WITH KILLERS'

At a rally in Shibchar, Hasina heavily criticised Dr Kamal for forging a new alliance, styled Jatiya Oikyafront, with the BNP.

"Dr Kamal claims to be an advocate of truth, but has joined hands with Tareq Zia, who has no acceptability to the people of Bangladesh," she told the rally organised by Shibchar AL in Kathalbari Ferryghat area yesterday afternoon.

She added that Kamal who claims to be an internationally renowned lawyer forged an alliance with those who are responsible for killing people in arson attacks, embezzling orphans' money and money laundering.

"Kamal Hossain speaks loudly against corruption, terrorism and militancy. But he has formed alliance with two recognised militant and terror organisations -- BNP and Jamaat -- accepting Tareq Zia as his leader," she said.

"Was there no leader in the BNP who is eligible to be the acting chairman of BNP?" asked Hasina, also the president of Awami League, saying Tareq, a fugitive in London, is convicted in a money laundering case, the ten truck arms smuggling case and the August 2004 grenade attack case.

## India's top court showed the way

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on social networking sites.

The SC said the section in question upset the balance between right to free speech and the reasonable restrictions that may be imposed on this right.

In Bangladesh, there was almost a similar provision in the ICT Act -- section 57 -- which was widely abused to harass free thinkers and journalists triggering the demand for it to be scrapped.

In making the demand, journalists and rights activists in Bangladesh cited the landmark judgment by the Indian SC.

In the face of widespread criticism, the government has recently repealed the section but kept its contents in several other provisions in the newly-passed Digital Security Act (DSA), giving police even more arbitrary powers.

Take section 43 of the DSA: If a police official believes that an offence under the law has been or is being committed at a certain place, or there is a possibility of committing crimes or destroying evidence, the official can search the place or any person there.

The officer, upon putting in writing the reason for his/her belief, can also seize the computer, computer system, computer network, data and information or other objects that can help prove the crime while conducting a search.

Besides, police can arrest anyone present at the place without any warrant if he or she is suspected of committing or having committed a crime under this law.

The Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) is opposing at least nine sections of the DSA, including the section 43, and demanding proper amendments to those provisions. They fear these sections may seriously impede independent journalism and freedom of expression.

In a press conference on Saturday, the Council also referred to the Indian SC's verdict delivered in 2015.

Calling section 66A of the IT law "open-ended and unconstitutionally vague", the Indian SC said nothing short of quashing the law "in its entirety" could suffice since the section "arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately" invaded the right to free speech,

right to dissent, right to know, and had a "chilling effect" on constitutional mandates, according to a report published by the Indian Express on March 25, 2015.

The judgment has widely been lauded as it expanded the contours of free speech on the internet.

The verdict not only reaffirmed the unquestionable importance of freedom of speech and expression in a democratic constitution, but also emphasised how a parallel discussion on freedom of the press has been at the core of evolution and expansion of this right.

The judgement discussed and borrowed from a body of judgments by the SC to underscore the indispensability of the free speech and freedom of the press.

It started with the 1950 judgment by the SC in the case of Romesh Thapar versus the state of Madras, where the court stated that freedom of speech lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.

The second judgment that the SC drew from was Sakal Papers (P) Ltd versus Union of India, 1962 in which the court stressed the importance of the freedom of speech "under a democratic Constitution which envisages changes in the composition of legislatures and governments," according to the Indian Express report.

The SC also cited the 1973 judgment on the "Bennett Coleman case" to assert that "freedom of speech and of the press is the Ark of the Covenant of Democracy" because public criticism is essential to the working of its institutions.

The individual rights of freedom of speech and expression of editors, directors and shareholders are all expressed through their newspapers, through which they speak, the court said.

To support the impact and content of freedom of speech, the SC referred to its previous judgment in 1985 in a case relating to Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Ltd.

The freedom of press, the apex court had ruled in that case, was the heart of social and political intercourse and its purpose was to advance the public interest by publishing facts and opinions without which a democratic elec-

torate cannot make responsible judgments.

Protection of this right is essential as newspapers, being purveyors of news and views and having a bearing on public administration, very often carry material which would not be palatable to governments and other authorities, it noted.

There are many more judgements pronounced by the Indian SC and the courts in many other countries upholding the freedom of the press.

Now, take some more examples.

The Madras SC in Nakkheeragopal Editor versus State Rep case verdict in September 2001 said if freedom of speech and expression is the foundation on which the edifice of democracy is built up, freedom of press is a corner stone.

"The freedom of press, therefore, is the heart of the social and political intercourse of democratic institution. Hence, it is the primary duty of the Courts to uphold the freedom of the press and invalidate all the laws and the administrative or executive actions which infringes the freedom of press, as cautioned by the Apex Court in Indian Express Newspapers 9Bombay) P Ltd v. Union of India," it asserted.

A few months earlier in the same year, the Delhi High Court in Shri Surya Khatri versus Madhu Trehan and others case verdict said that freedom of the press has always been regarded as an essential prerequisite of a democratic form of government. It has been regarded as a necessity for mental health and the well being of the society. It is also considered necessary for the full development of the personality of an individual.

"The freedom of press is regarded as the 'mother of all other liberties' in a democratic society," said the court in 2001 verdict.

At a programme in July this year, the immediate past chief justice of India Dipak Misra endorsed that view.

Misra, who retired as CJ just this month, added that the media "should have its own guidelines for self-regulations," according to a NDTV reports on July 25 this year.

## EC sits today to discuss polls plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is going to hold a meeting today to discuss preparations for the 11th National Election likely to be held in late December.

Meantime, the Bangabhaban has yet to inform the EC about the schedule of a meeting between the president and the chief election commissioner and four election commissioners, insiders said.

Earlier last week, the EC sent a letter to President Abdul Hamid seeking his appointment for CEC KM Nurul Huda and the other election commissioners, they added.

The CEC and the election commissioners are likely to update the president on the upcoming parliamentary polls.

Talking to The Daily Star, a joint secretary of the EC Secretariat said, "Discussion on preparations for the next national election is one of the main agendas of tomorrow's [today's] meeting."

Wishing not to be named, the EC official added the election commissioners are likely to discuss the schedule for the parliamentary polls with the CEC in the chair.

Earlier on September 10, EC Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed told

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## Oikyafront

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alliance will announce road marches towards those divisional headquarters, said Mahmudur Rahman Manna, chief of Nagorik Oikya.

The alliance also wants to start holding a series of view-exchange meetings this week with various professionals and civil society members in the capital to explain the rationale of its seven-point demand and 11-point goal unveiled on Saturday.

The 11-point goal includes ensuring checks and balances, decentralisation of administration, freeing MPs from the stringent restrictions imposed by article 70 of the constitution, formation of a constitutional commission to make appointments to all constitutional and other important posts and full independence of the judiciary.

Its seven-point demand includes holding of the next parliamentary election under a nonpartisan government, dissolution of parliament before the polls and recasting the Election Commission

The alliance seeks to complete all these programmes in the next three weeks -- before announcement of the schedule of the next parliamentary election -- to mobilise public opinion for its demands and goals.

The Election Commission may announce the schedule in the first week of November, a week after the beginning of 90 days' timeframe for holding the polls.

As per the constitutional provision introduced in 2011, the polls must be held within 90 days of the expiry of the current parliament. Five-year term of this parliament ends on October 30.

Senior leaders of the Oikyafront are now working to develop an organisational structure. A steering committee may be formed with senior leaders from each of the components, said a senior leader of the platform.

"We do not want any single leadership. We want to run the alliance with a joint leadership," said Dr Kamal Hossain.

Meanwhile, Nagorik Oikya yesterday announced that it would hold a public rally in front of Mirpur Bangla College on October 21. All the top leaders of Oikyafront will be invited to address the rally.

The party has already applied to Dhaka Metropolitan Police for permission.

## Taliban attacks

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added Gul Ahmad Faqiri, a member of the Farah provincial council.

The headline Islamist militant group claimed the attacks.

"Our fighters have killed the police chief and 25 Afghan soldiers in two provinces on Saturday night," its spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahidhe, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the death toll from Saturday's blast at an election rally has risen to at least 22 people, officials said yesterday, as the country braces for more violence ahead of the October 20 poll.

A motorcycle carrying explosives detonated among supporters of Nazifa Yousefibe, a female candidate for the northeastern province of Takhar, provincial governor spokesman Mohammad Jawad Hejri told AFP.

Most of the 22 killed and 36 wounded were civilians, he said.

Also on Saturday, in the western province of Herat, two gunmen attacked the campaign office of a candidate in Injeel district, killing two people, provincial governor spokesman Jailani Farhad said. A nine-year-old boy and a security guard died in the attack and two others were wounded.

Violence related to the long-delayed legislative vote has killed or wounded hundreds of people in recent months.