

## HSC exams begin today

UNB, Dhaka

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent exams begin across the country today.

A total of 14,50,790 students from 9,463 educational institutions are expected to sit for the exams at 2,275 centres.

Of the total examinees, 11,28,281 students are from the nine general education boards, 88,076 from the madrasah board, and 2,34,433 from the technical education board. Additionally, 281 students will take the exams from eight overseas centres.

This year's number of candidates has increased from last year's 13,59,342 examinees.

Earlier on June 20, the government deferred the HSC and equivalent exams scheduled up until July 8 under the Sylhet division due to the ongoing floods. The exams on July 9 and subsequent exams will be held as per schedule. The schedule for the deferred exams was to be announced later.

According to the original routine, HSC written exams will continue till August 11, and practical exams will be held from August 12 to August 21.

Besides, the exams under the technical board will continue till July 18 and their practical exams will begin on July 19 and will continue till August 4.

All examinees have been asked to enter the exam centres 30 minutes before the examinations start.

Mobile phones are strictly prohibited inside the exam centres, except for the in-charges, who are allowed to carry a mobile phone.

Besides, no one except examinees, centre invigilators, teams of the ministry, teams of boards, local administration and upazila administration teams, and security personnel will be allowed in the exam centres.

To ensure smooth conduct, a Quick Response Team (QRT) from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) will be on standby to assist examinees.



At a makeshift recycling shop, workers separate scrap metal and a cement-like substance from waste generated by steel re-rolling mills. While the recycled materials find their way back to steel mills and construction industries, the recycling process itself raises serious health concerns. The photo was taken in Kutubpur area in the capital's Shyampur yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Ukraine drone attack kills 5 in Russian village

Moscow claims east Ukrainian village in offensive on Toretsk

AFP, Moscow

A Ukrainian drone attack on a house in a Russian border village killed five people, including two children, the regional governor said yesterday.

The drone hit a house in the village of Gorodishche, a tiny village in Russia's Kursk region, just a few metres from the border with Ukraine.

"To our great grief, five people were killed ... including two small children. Another two members of the family are in a serious condition," Kursk governor Alexei Smirnov said in a post on Telegram. The attack was with a "copter"-style

drone, he added, a small device that can be fitted to carry grenades or other explosives that are dropped over targets.

Both sides have used drones, including larger self-detonating craft with ranges of up to hundreds of kilometres, extensively throughout the conflict which began in February 2022.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday claimed another village in eastern Ukraine as it pushes towards the city of Toretsk in a fresh local offensive in the embattled Donetsk region.

Toretsk lies north-west of the city of Gorlivka, which has been under separatist control since 2014.

Ukraine has stepped up its attacks on Russian territory this year, targeting both energy sites that it says fuel Russia's military, as well as towns and villages just across the border.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a major new land offensive on Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region last month in what he said was an operation to create a "buffer zone" and push Ukrainian forces back to protect Russia's border Belgorod region from shelling.

The Kursk region, where yesterday's attack occurred, lies further north, across from Ukraine's Sumy region, which Kyiv controls.

## Transwoman found dead in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police recovered the body of a transwoman who was murdered at her home in Jashore's Manirampur upazila on Friday night.

The deceased, identified as Poly, 30, of Khanpur village, had her throat slit, said police.

According to locals, Poly bought land and built a house in Khanpur. On Friday evening, she had come home and had not left the house for a while. When neighbours knocked on her door, they got no response, so they informed the police.

Police then broke into her house and found her dead around 11:00pm.

Her body was later sent to Jashore General Hospital for an autopsy.

ABM Mehdi Masud, officer-in-charge of Manirampur Police Station, said, "The victim was killed sometime between 8:00pm and 11:00pm. We suspect the killer was someone close to her. An investigation is underway."

## Three drown in Sylhet, Habiganj

STAR REPORT

A teenager and two children died by drowning in Sylhet and Habiganj yesterday.

In Sylhet, the body of a 17-year-old was recovered from the Motorgate area of Ratargul swamp forest around 7:00am.

The deceased is Shamim Ahmed, son of Shahjahan Ali, of Sylhet city's Baghbari area. On Friday, he along with three of his friends cycled from the city to the entrance of Motorgate in the forest. They then went to bathe in the Chengerkhal river, where Shamim was swept away by the strong currents.

Nunu Mia, officer-in-charge of Sylhet Airport Police Station, confirmed the matter, reports UNB.

In Habiganj, two children drowned in a pond in Mahmudpur village in Ajmeriganj upazila in the afternoon.

The deceased are Pralay Das, 7, son of Gobinda Das, and Surya Das, 6, son of Rubel Das, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Ajmeriganj Police Station OC Dalim Ahmed said Pralay and Surya and other children went to bathe in the pond next to a local field after playing football there. Pralay and Surya slipped from the steps of the pond and drowned.

Family members and locals took them to the Upazila Health Complex, where the doctor on duty declared them dead, he added.

## No one will be spared in drive against graft

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Referring to power outages, Hasina said she asked the authorities to ensure that the villages do not suffer.

She said outages should be in the wealthy neighbourhoods of Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara so that the well-off are reminded that the comfort of air conditioning, cars, elevators, come at a cost.

Regarding quick rental power plants, Hasina said, "I am also hearing criticism about the special law that we enacted. My question is, what if we did not have this special law? If you had not built power plants, would there be electricity today?"

Referring to the economy, she said, "Some so-called intellectuals criticise everything. There is a lot of talk about loan defaults, a lot of talk about bad debts."

The GDP in 2009 was \$102 billion, she said. The loan was only Tk 22,000 crore then, while bad loans were 10.5 percent, she informed.

"GDP size in 2023 is \$460 billion. The loan amount is Tk 1 lakh and 55 thousand crore. The bad debt ratio is 9.9 percent. That means it has decreased."

She urged the "so-called intellectuals" not to mislead people.

If the construction of MRT Line-1, Line-2, Line-4 and Line-5 is done by 2030, there will be no traffic congestion in Dhaka city and people will be able to commute easily.

There are plans for metro rails in all divisional cities.

Speaking on the universal pension scheme, she said from July 1, 2025, new government officials and employees will be included under the scheme.

The PM said there will be an opportunity for all citizens to participate in the scheme and secure their future financially.

The Leader of the House said some termed the budget as highly ambitious, and a while ago, the opposition leader said this budget is not feasible.

"Taking challenges is our job... I do not think the budget is highly ambitious at all. We set goals. A target is never reached 100 percent. It's not possible. Yet, we have specific goals that we will achieve."

Referring to rising prices, Hasina said, "The results of the steps we have taken to control inflation will be in the market soon. We will be able to lower [inflation] according to our expectation."

## Free Khaleda or face consequences

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Though the rally was scheduled to begin at 3:00pm, BNP leaders and activists from different parts of Dhaka and adjacent districts started thronging the venue since noon braving heavy rain.

Carrying placards and posters, they came to Nayapalton in small processions from different wards. They chanted anti-government slogans.

This was the first major demonstration organised by the BNP in nearly eight months.

Addressing the rally, BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said, "We are talking about Khaleda Zia after a long time. This voice will not fall silent. We will not compromise on her release. We will free her. We will not tolerate any obstacles, come what may."

He said the BNP continued its movement for the last 15 years but could not achieve success for the failure to "act at the right time".

"If we could have stayed on the streets on October 28 last year with

a counter procession, we might have succeeded. But we were afraid of death," he said.

He said that more programmes will be declared in future to force the government to free Khaleda.

"We are tired of demanding proper treatment for her. There is no alternative to Khaleda Zia's leadership to protect the country's independence and sovereignty. We will realise our demands through waging movement without being disheartened," said Abbas, also the chair of the meeting.

Another BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy said, "We had to fight a war to achieve the country's independence. We will not be able to free Khaleda Zia only by delivering speeches."

"Each of the agreements signed with India will spell doom for Bangladesh. We are not anti-India. We are in favour of our country's independence and democracy."

A large number of law enforcers were deployed in and around

Nayapalton to maintain law and order.

A total of 41 BNP leaders spoke at the event. They said that they were ready to make the party's upcoming demonstration programmes successful to ensure Khaleda's release.

On Wednesday, the BNP announced a three-day programme, including yesterday's rally, demanding release of the party chairperson.

The party will hold rallies at all metropolitan cities on July 1 and at district towns on July 3.

Khaleda was sentenced to 10 years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The government suspended her sentence on March 25, 2020 for six months on the conditions that she would stay in her house and not leave the country. Since then she stayed at her Gulshan house. She was moved to a Dhaka hospital several times for treatment.

The government later extended the suspension order several times.

## Glitch stops

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work, as it would require the boiler to cool off," he said.

The other unit of the plant went into regular maintenance during the Eid holidays. That unit is expected to start operation by the first week of July.

"We are getting less electricity from the coal-based power plants. One of the two units of Payra Power Plant is also under maintenance. But with other options, the load-shedding situation is still stable at less than 1,000MW," he said.

## World 'failing' to meet development goals: UN chief

AFP, United Nations

War and funding shortfalls have hampered progress toward the United Nations' flagship development goals which include action to combat climate change, the organization's Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Friday.

In 2015, UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, 17 targets to transform the world by 2030 including by completely ending extreme poverty and eliminating hunger.

But Guterres said Friday that "the world is getting a failing grade."

## Man sued for raping neighbour's child

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A 55-year-old man has been sued in a case filed over the rape of his neighbour's 5-year-old daughter in Jashore's Chougachha upazila.

The accused is Mansher Ali, 55, of Shahjadpur village of the upazila, is a rickshaw-van driver, said police.

According to the case statement, the child was playing in front of her house in Shahjadpur around 12:30pm on Friday, when her neighbour,

Mansher, took her to his house and raped her.

Later, the child returned home and told her mother. That night, the child's father filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Chougachha Police Station.

Chougachha Police Station Officer-in-Charge Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury said a case has been registered. "The accused is absconding. A drive is underway to arrest him."

## Get organised avoid excess

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about corruption as they are the most corrupt party.

"The main leader of your party [Tarique Rahman] is leading a lavish life by laundering thousands of crores. He is now plotting against a legally elected government. He must be returned to Bangladesh and brought to book."

Criticising the media for terming the AL's programme a counter to the BNP's, Quader said, "We announced earlier that we will hold programmes around the year. But some [media] reported that we were holding counter programmes. We held a cycle rally yesterday [Friday]. Was there any

BNP programme on that day?"

He further added that different party units will continue to hold various forms of programmes throughout the year as part of the platinum jubilee celebration of AL's founding anniversary.

Activists of various ward and thana units of Dhaka City South AL attended the discussion programme that began a little after 3:00pm.

Awami League presidium members Abdur Razaque, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury (Maya), and Kamrul Islam; joint general secretaries Mahbub Ul Alam Hanif and AFM Bahauddin Nasim, among others, were also present.

## Calls for Biden

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The New York Times editorial board, which endorsed Biden in 2020, called on him to drop out of the race to give the Democratic Party a better chance of beating Trump by picking another candidate. "The greatest public service Mr Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election," the editorial said.

Democratic campaign spokesperson Michael Tyler said there were no conversations taking place about that possibility. "We'd rather have one bad night than a candidate with a bad vision for where he wants to take the country," he told reporters aboard Air Force One.

Biden, however, said on Friday evening he intended to defeat Trump in the November presidential election, giving no sign he would consider dropping out of the race.

"I know I'm not a young man, to state the obvious," an ebullient Biden said at a rally. "I don't walk as easy as I used to, I don't speak as smoothly as I used to, I don't debate as well as I used to," he said, as the crowd chanted "four more years."

"I would not be running again if I didn't believe with all my heart and soul that I could do this job. The stakes are too high," Biden said.

The campaign held an "all hands on deck" meeting on Friday afternoon to reassure staffers that Biden was not dropping out of the race, according to two people familiar with the meeting.

Though Trump, 78, put forward a series of falsehoods throughout the debate, the focus afterward was squarely on Biden, especially among Democrats.

Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic Party leader in the US House of Representatives, avoided answering directly when asked whether he still had faith in Biden's candidacy, reports Reuters.

Some other Democrats likewise demurred when asked if Biden should stay in the race. "That's the president's decision," Democratic Senator Jack Reed told a local TV station in Rhode Island.

But several of the party's most senior figures, including former presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, said they were sticking with Biden.

"Bad debate nights happen. Trust me, I know. But this election is still a choice between someone who has fought for ordinary folks his entire life and somebody who only cares about himself," former Democratic President Barack Obama wrote on X.