HSC, equivalent exam results likely on Oct 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of this year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations will be published on October 29.

The Bangladesh Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee announced the date in a notice issued yesterday.

The notice, signed by committee president Prof Syed Akhtaruzzaman, also chairman of the Dhaka Education Board, said further details about the publication of the results would be announced through a press release on October 26.

This year's examinations began on July 2, with 12,70,583 candidates registered under 11 education boards.

The written examinations ended on August 8 under most boards. However, flooding delayed several written examinations under the Chattogram Education Board, where the postponed tests continued until September 9.



Workers lay rail lines on the Dhaka-Tongi rail corridor as construction of the third and fourth lines progresses on one of the country's busiest rail links. The long-delayed project, connecting the capital with much of the national rail network, had reached 55% completion by September. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: **ANISUR RAHMAN**

Saudi oil sites, Aden base attacked after deadly strikes, say Houthis

AFP, *Riyadh*

Yemen's Houthis launched fresh attacks on Saudi Arabia and the seat of Yemen's internationally recognised government yesterday after blaming the kingdom for strikes that the Iran-backed group said killed 17 people.

Saudi Arabia and the government it backs in Yemen have come under sustained attack in recent weeks from the Houthis as a years-long truce broke down in the summer, shifting the focus of the wider US-Iran war that erupted in February.

Over the past 24 hours, the Yemeni fighters said they targeted three Saudi airports, including the international airport in the capital, Riyadh; energy installations; a pipeline; and an air base.

Military spokesman Yahya Saree said the group launched missiles at "King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, the capital of the Saudi enemy, in two phases", the airports in Dammam in the east and Najran in the south.

The group also launched attacks on the southern Khamis Mushait air base as well as "crude oil pumping stations and the crude oil pipeline from east to west".

The Saudi civil defence agency said it had also responded to falling debris in the Mecca and Medina regions yesterday after intercepting two Houthi missiles. The Houthis denied targeting the cities, the two holiest in Islam, calling the Saudi claim a "huge lie".

The Houthis also fired at the southern Yemeni city of Aden, the interim seat of the Saudi-backed government, saying they targeted a naval base and military camp overseen by Saudi forces.

Thousands protest crackdown on media in Turkey

AFP, *Istanbul*

Thousands rallied in Istanbul and Ankara yesterday against what they described as growing pressure on journalists in Turkey, including arrests, media shutdowns and the appointment of state administrators.

Press freedom has been increasingly constrained in Turkey since a failed coup attempt in 2016, with sweeping prosecutions, digital censorship and accusations by the authorities that journalists are spreading fake news.

"Enough!" shouted marchers in the crowds, composed mainly of journalists, rights activists and opposition party representatives. "We can no longer breathe!"

On the Asian side of Istanbul, protesters held up photos of jailed journalists, chanting, "We will not be silenced. Enough is enough!" and "We will not bow to pressure".

Police put their number at at least 3,000.

In Ankara, at least 3,000 protesters gathered, according to a police count.

Recent weeks have seen what rights advocates say is mounting pressure on independent journalism.



PHOTO: **AFP**

The authorities have jailed 11 journalists in the past two months and shut down several media outlets, according to the Turkish Journalists' Union.

And earlier this month, police raided Turkey's most-watched news channel, Halk TV, halting broadcasts and installing a government-appointed administrator.

The move was the latest against media outlets seen as critical of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government.

It followed the closure of the website and social media accounts belonging to leading digital news outlet T24 over what authorities described as "LGBT propaganda".

Dhaka, Tokyo likely to ink $2b loan deals

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"During the upcoming visit, Japan is likely to push for regional connectivity, with a focus on the Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI), under its vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)," an official said.

Tokyo is also expected to arrange 1 trillion yen, equivalent to around $6.36 billion, separately in private-sector investment in Bangladesh over the next five years, the official added.

Under Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA) programme, Tokyo is likely to provide a 35-foot vessel to the Bangladesh Coast Guard, the official said.

Earlier this year, Japan handed over five patrol boats to the Bangladesh Navy under the programme, Bangladesh's first OSA project, as part of efforts to strengthen security cooperation.

Japan's largest power generation company, JERA, is also expected to help develop energy reserve infrastructure under MIDI.

"The plans are aimed at realising the FOIP and countering Chinese influence in Bangladesh," the official said.

The visit is also expected to provide an opportunity for the two countries to elevate their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP) and expand cooperation in infrastructure, energy, regional connectivity and investment.

A diplomatic source said Japan had been a longstanding development partner of Bangladesh, providing official development assistance and supporting major infrastructure projects.

"We are working on two to three titles for the elevation of the relationship [to CSP], which is yet to be decided," the source said.

AREAS OF COOPERATION

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam, speaking after an event at the CIRDAP auditorium yesterday, said Japan had remained one of Bangladesh's major trade and development partners for many years.

She described the prime minister's upcoming visit as highly significant and said a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) could be signed in areas including infrastructure, energy, technology, garments, education and health.

She also expressed hope that the visit would help attract fresh Japanese investment.

According to sources in Dhaka and Tokyo, the instruments are likely to be MoUs and memorandums of cooperation (MoCs) covering loans and financial support, infrastructure development, agriculture, civil aviation, business climate development, development at the upazila level, OSA for the Bangladesh Coast Guard, and energy.

CONNECTIVITY PUSH

At the summit, Japan is expected to push for shared prosperity through its Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative as it seeks to advance regional connectivity.

- Tarique-Takaichi summit slated for Oct 27
- Five to eight instruments likely to be signed
- $300m expected as budgetary support
- Japan likely to push for regional connectivity
- JERA to help build energy reserve infrastructure
- Coast Guard to get 35-foot vessel

Japan launched BIG-B in 2014 to promote industrial development and connectivity around the Bay of Bengal, initially focusing on the Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar corridor.

In 2023, it proposed a broader Bay of Bengal-Northeast India Industrial Value Chain Initiative to strengthen economic links between Bangladesh and northeastern India.

Built around three pillars of industry and trade, energy, and transportation, BIG-B aims to encourage Japanese investment, support industrialisation and improve connectivity by linking production centres with regional and global markets through infrastructure, including the Matarbari deep-sea port.

An official familiar with the developments, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Japan had renewed its vision for the region under the FOIP initiative. Tokyo recently elevated its relationship with ASEAN to a CSP and has actively upgraded bilateral ties with Southeast Asian countries, the official said.

"When the discussion comes to the topic of BIG-B, Japan does not consider India alone, but also other Southeast Asian nations. Connectivity through Matarbari is essential to Japan's FOIP vision, and the deep-sea port is being developed not only for bilateral use but also to connect Bangladesh with regional and global supply chains. And on that matter, India is an important partner as Japan has investment and plans in India's northeast," the official said.

PM'S ITINERARY

According to sources in Dhaka and Tokyo, Tarique is scheduled to arrive in Japan on October 26.

Upon arrival, he is expected to meet the president of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League (JBPFL) and the chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (JBCCEC) separately, and later call on the president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

In the evening, he will attend a dinner hosted by the honorary chairman of the Nippon Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

On the second day, he will visit the Japanese prime minister's office for the summit and a luncheon with Takaichi.

He will then travel to Futtsu city in Chiba to visit JERA's LNG terminal and power plant, before visiting a Nippon Express logistics hub in Ichikawa city and returning to his residence.

On the third day, Tarique will call on the governor of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

He will also visit the UNIQLO Ariake office and meet its president and board members, followed by a meeting with the president of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

He is also scheduled to meet representatives of prominent Japanese companies, including Mitsui & Co, Sumitomo Corp, and JERA.

Tarique will attend the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Forum at JETRO, where MoUs on education and human resource development are expected to be signed.

On the final day, the prime minister will visit a Toyota factory before departing for Dhaka.

A system short of healing hands

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they said.

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "If we have a large population with a high burden of disease, the demand for healthcare workers will naturally be very high. Quality services cannot be ensured if we do not have enough healthcare providers."

Referring to overcrowding at hospitals, he said wards designed for around 24 patients sometimes have 48 or more, while nursing staff remain scarce. A doctor at upazila health complex often has to see 100-150 outpatients a day, leaving them with barely a couple of minutes for each patient.

The crisis is even more acute in terms of specialists, with patients often waiting for days or even weeks for appointments. Some specialists see hundreds of patients and work late into the night.

"All these things are not conducive to providing standard health services."

Referring to the government plan to appoint 5,000 doctors, he said the recruitment approach has largely been ad hoc.

"You have to make plans for nurses, allied health professionals, support staff, equipment, beds, and the space required for them to work.

"Unless the entire package is planned and implemented together, simply increasing the number of doctors or beds will not bring the expected improvement in healthcare."

WHAT DO THE LATEST DATA SHOW?

As of 2025, Bangladesh had 1,41,700 registered MBBS graduates and 1,16,194 available for service -- both figures representing an increase of about 51 percent from 2019.

The number of registered nurses also nearly doubled to 1,07,047 over the same period.

The combined density of doctors, nurses, and midwives also rose to 15.16 per 10,000 people last year from 8.3 in 2019, according to the health ministry's Human Resources for Health (HRH) Data Sheet 2025.

Despite the growth, the health workforce remains far below the WHO's indicative threshold of 44.5 set under its 2016 Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030.

HEALTH WORKFORCE RATIO UNEVEN

In Bangladesh, the staffing ratio across government health agencies remains uneven, underscoring a gap in coordination among them in recruiting health workers.

Last year, the DGHS, which employs the largest number of doctors, had 38,255 sanctioned posts for doctors, compared with 50,825 positions for nurses and midwives under the Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery (DGNM) -- a ratio far below the recommended one doctor-to-three nurses ratio.

Other agencies, including the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), also appoint doctors and other health workers.

Asaduzzaman Jewel, general secretary of Bangladesh Nurses Association, said that in the past, recruitment largely focused on doctors whenever staff shortages arose, ignoring the need to maintain a balanced ratio of doctors, nurses and other health professionals.

"We have long been demanding a coordinated recruitment process, but successive governments have paid little attention to these demands."

The current government is no different, he said, adding that while it has moved to recruit 5,000 doctors, no such initiative has been taken to recruit nurses.

The persistent shortage has left nurses in public hospitals overstretched, making it difficult for them to provide quality care. Patients, however, often hold nurses responsible for problems that stem from broader systemic and management failures, he said.

"This creates a misconception about nurses and eventually demotivates them. They become frustrated and lose interest in their work."

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY?

DGHS Director General Prof Pravath Chandra Biswas said the government has already initiated the process of creating around one lakh additional posts for health workers to strengthen primary healthcare.

District health authorities have been instructed to expedite recruitment for vacant posts, he said, adding that most district health facilities are expected to see significant progress within the next three to six months.

According to the HRH 2025 data, 4,308 doctor posts and 1,653 nurse posts remained vacant. However, data from August this year show that both the number of sanctioned posts and vacancies had increased, with 9,990 doctor posts and 4,870 nurse posts remaining vacant.

Biswas said the recruitment of 5,000 doctors is expected to be completed by early next year. The DGHS will then assess the need for further recruitment, taking into account staffing requirements at upazila health complexes slated for expansion to 151 beds each.

Meanwhile, the process of creating 2,500 posts for medical technologists under the DGHS and other health agencies has already begun.

"We will continue the recruitment drive to meet the target," he added.

When contacted, DGNM Director General Dil Afroza said a phased approach is being followed to create posts and recruit health workers to address staff shortages.

"We cannot do everything at once. We have to build our capacity gradually. Nurses need to be trained before the creation of posts and deployment."

Referring to Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain's recent statement, she said the authorities are committed to recruiting around 25,000 midwives for public healthcare facilities within the next few years.

She also said that recruitment was underway to fill vacant posts, and that DGNM had already sent a proposal to the ministry to create 15,000 posts for nurses.

PHP flaw trickles down to service disruptions

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deadline.

BGD e-GOV CIRT's alert asked organisations to identify where PHP is used on their servers, check whether the versions they run are vulnerable and take the necessary security measures.

PHP is a programming language used for building websites and web applications, including many sites that run on WordPress.

The reported security flaw, known as "PHP2Shell", could allow hackers to take control of vulnerable websites.

The flaw involves two security vulnerabilities that can let attackers remotely run malicious code. Researchers have also warned that attackers may be able to access sensitive information stored in a website's memory, including passwords, authentication tokens and API keys.

Security researchers at Wiz estimate that the vulnerabilities could affect around 70 percent of websites across the globe.

The key protection is to install the security updates released by PHP and check that the website's server is running a patched version. Website operators should also review their systems for signs of unauthorised access.

PHP released emergency fixes on October 21. However, a related vulnerability was reported on October 23 and also affects these patched versions. The PHP team is expected to address it in a subsequent regular release.

The vulnerabilities, which emerged on Wednesday, caused governments and companies to pull their websites off the internet and patch them before being potentially attacked.

In the UK, 32 government services had been taken offline, the cybersecurity minister, Liz Lloyd, told parliament. Dutch, French, Danish, and Finnish governments also took sites offline.

So far, there have not been any breaches.

The vulnerability lies in PHP itself, not in website code, leaving even well-coded websites at risk, said Tanvir Hassan Zoha, associate professor at the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Forensics at Daffodil International University.

Bangladesh has no published data on how many government websites run on PHP.

Based on global trends and the widespread use of PHP-based tools, Zoha estimated that between 60 and 85 percent websites could be vulnerable.

He recommended that authorities immediately compile a list of PHP versions running on government servers, prioritising those exposed to the internet, and update them with patched versions.

"Some systems in Bangladesh are so old that you cannot update the server," said Atiqul Islam Khan Shawon, chief executive officer of SoftBD, adding that about 5 percent will have a problem.

Using a news website as an example, he said systems built five or 10 years ago may face trouble because it is uncertain whether they will keep working after the version is updated.

But for those that are regularly updated, there will be no challenge, he said.

Asked how many websites in Bangladesh use PHP, he said, "You can say more than 70 percent -- the e-commerce sites mostly use PHP."

As PHP 8.1 and older versions no longer receive official updates, the authorities may need to use patched packages provided by Linux distributions or migrate to newer versions, according to Zoha.

Until the updates are completed, firewalls should be used as a temporary safeguard, while websites that cannot be secured should be taken offline.

The authorities should also review server logs from recent days for suspicious requests, and the Bangladesh Government's e-Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT) should issue coordinated instructions with clear deadlines, said Zoha, also an additional attorney general.

Muhammad Anwar Uddin, project director at Aspire to Innovate (a2i), which has built and runs thousands of government websites, said they had not experienced any cyberattacks related to the PHP vulnerability.

"We received the alert early, and our technical team was fully alert," he said, adding that the team was working on the necessary updates and had almost completed the process.

Without proper maintenance and regular patching, these systems develop vulnerabilities, said an ICT expert who previously worked at a2i.

The government spends heavily on visible items such as capacity development and training, while the invisible work of securing infrastructure gets little long-term budget or attention.

Efforts to fix systems typically begin only after a major data leak or cyber attack, he said, while calling for security to be built into every stage of a system, from design through operation, and for software and servers to be patched regularly.

"Alongside strong laws, we need updated infrastructure and the capacity to respond quickly. An outdated server does not wait for the law," said Zoha, also a prosecutor at the International Crimes Tribunal.

Shawon's main advice is to keeping the websites up-to-date with proper maintenance.

"Many treat it as a one-time purchase and do not keep the upgrades going with the IT firm. Continuous upgrades are important. Then there is no problem," he said.