

QUESTION LEAKS

Education system under question

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QUESTION leaks that have so far menaced public and other examinations have now started taking place for terminal examinations even at the primary level, further jeopardizing the already declining standards of education.

Academics and guardians, citing incidents of question leaks in terminal exams of Class I-IV students, raised the alarm about the future of the country's education,

already at crossroads, bringing the whole system into question.

Talking to New Age, they blamed government's attitude of denial towards question leaks, non-enforcement of the existing laws, lack of punishment for the offenders and indifferent attitude of responsible authorities for the question papers being leaked.

'People's trust in education and public exam or any kind of exam is completely destroyed,' Dhaka Univer-

sity professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said, warning that a grave impact on the society was waiting.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid held a section of dishonest teachers responsible for question papers being leaked.

'Discussions are there for printing question papers in the exam halls 30 minutes before the tests, but what benefit can be made from it if teachers leak the questions,' he said.

'Coaching centres allures teachers. They engage in question leaks so that their students can perform better and they can get more students and more money,' he explained.

Nahid said that government was taking different measure to check question papers being leaked.

'Public exams and overall education lack credibility with widespread question leaks,' said former Dhaka

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Education system

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University English professor Syed Manzoorul Islam.

'How we can expect that the standard of education would be increased when question papers of terminal exams for Class I or Class II students are leaked,' Manzoorul said.

Authorities on Monday postponed final examinations of mathematics of grades I and IV at 102 government primary schools of Natore sadar upazila as question papers were leaked.

Acting district primary education officer Anwar Hossain said that Monday's examinations for mathematics were postponed after a person showed a hand-written question paper at Agdigha Government Primary School prior to the examination.

At night on December 16, mathematics exams for Grade II at 140 primary schools were postponed following allegation of questions being leaked at Betagi upazila in Barguna, said district primary education officer Md A Mazid.

On December 13, the question papers of school final examinations for Class I and Class IV were leaked at Barguna sadar upazila, prompting the authorities to postpone examinations at 248 primary schools.

On December 12, exams of classes II, III, and IV were postponed at 119 primary schools of Munshiganj sadar upazila as question papers were leaked, said district primary education officials.

The parliamentary standing committee on primary and mass education ministry on Wednesday asked authorities concern to take effective steps to stop question leaks in primary education, said committee chair Motahar Hossain.

Directorate of Primary Education director general Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal said that they would take stern actions against people engaged in question leaks. 'We are serious against question leaks. Whoever engages would be punished,' he said.

These incidents took place when widespread allegations of question leaks in public exams — Primary Education Completion Examination after Class V, Junior School Certificate Examination after Class VIII, Secondary School Certificate Examination after Class X and Higher Secondary Certificate after Class XII — were surfacing every now and then in past few years.

Transparency International Bangladesh in a study in August 2015 found that 63 question papers of public examinations were leaked in four years.

'Incidents of question papers of public examinations being leaked had been found since 1970s but in the past five years it became a regular phenomenon,' the study said.

'Situation regarding question leaks has worsened,' TIB executive director Iftherkharuzzaman said, adding that leak of questions

is one of the major hindrances to quality education.

He blamed non-enforcement of the existing laws, lack of punishment for the offenders and indifferent attitude of responsible authorities for the question papers being leaked. 'We have seen none to be punished in the near past, so offenders feel that their wrongdoing can go without punishment and they also feel one sort of encouragement.'

Manzoorul and Iftherkharuzaman said that a nexus between government employees, coaching centres, guidebook businesses, political activists and some teachers was behind the questions being leaked.

Serajul Islam Choudhury and Manzoorul said that guardians' blind run after results of their children and dependency on memorisation had boasted coaching centres and guidebooks and notebooks business.

'Question leaks and coaching and guidebooks and notebooks business grow hand in hand in Bangladesh,' said Manzoorul.

Mostofa Rahman, a guardian of a Class V student of Monipur High School, said that when exam knocked at the door, a guardian became worried on two counts — their children's result and whether the questions were leaked.

'When a candidate sees some of their fellows getting questions ahead of exams, they simply lose their concentration,' he added.