

POOR HSC RESULTS FOR POLITICAL AGITATION

Of the lucky ones

Kids of leading politicians mostly study safely abroad

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Poor performance of students in this year's HSC examinations gave rise to questions among many about what went wrong. The pass rate this year hit an eight-

year low, slipping to 65.84 percent from last year's 75.74 percent in the eight general education boards.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid were quick to identify the major reason behind the poor results. They blamed it on the BNP-

led alliance's countrywide blockade and frequent shutdowns.

The turmoil had severely disrupted the academic life of around five crore students for three months since January this year, but political leaders of the major political parties, who by and large were respon-

sible for the unrest, took no visible step to resolve the crisis.

They didn't seem much concerned about it, as the children of many of the leaders study abroad, said a number of parents and guardians.

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Of the lucky ones

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The indifference of senior leaders of the ruling Awami League and the BNP indicated that they were less bothered about their programmes' impact on education, they alleged.

"I don't think the political parties really care about our children's education. I heard that the children of many politicians are studying abroad," said Tahmina Sultana, a teacher of Birshrestha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public School and College, whose son passed the HSC exams this year.

She believes that the three-month-long political unrest had a negative impact on students' preparations in this year's SSC and HSC exams.

"The politicians seem oblivious to their programmes' impact on students," she added.

Since January, colleges could not hold regular classes for crucial three months before the exams while students remained uncertain about the exams due to the political unrest.

The Daily Star has found that the children of a number of leaders of the AL, the BNP, the Jatiya Party, the Jamaat-e-Islami and a few other parties either got their education or are studying abroad.

Senior BNP leaders, including Mirza Abbas, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moyeen Khan, Abdullah Al Noman, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and Sadeque Hossain Khoka, got their children admitted to educational institutions abroad.

The children of some other BNP leaders, including Jamiruddin Sircar, Mahbubur Rahman, Hannan Shah, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Mir Nasir, received education abroad.

A number of AL leaders also sent their children abroad to get higher education. They include Suranjit Sengupta, Syed Ashraf Islam, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohammad Nasim, Kazi Zafarullah, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, AHM Mostafa Kamal, Shawkat Ali, Faruk Khan, Jahangir Kabir Nanok, Abdur Razzak, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Abdus Shahid and Shamsul Haq Tuku.

Some leaders of the Jamaat, the JP and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal also sent their children abroad for better education.

The children of Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Mir Quasem Ali either received education or are studying abroad.

JP chief HM Ershad's son and daughter studied in London. Party leaders Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Kazi Firoz Rashid and Ziauddin Bablu also sent their children abroad to study.

All three daughters of Anwar Hossain Manju, chief of Jatiya Party (Manju), studied abroad. Party's

Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam sent his son to Australia to study there.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leaders are also on the list. Three sons and a daughter of JSD leader Mayeenuddin Khan Badal studied abroad. Party leader ASM Abdur Rob's two sons study abroad while another is a student of an educational institution in the capital.

Two sons of Liberal Democratic Party Chief Oli Ahmed studied in the UK.

Bikolpo dhara Bangladesh Chairman AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury's son Mahi B Chowdhury, also joint secretary general of the BDB, studied in the US.

It was a special circumstance that left Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with no choice but to have her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul educated at institutions in India and the US.

Hasina had to stay outside the country following the brutal killing of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most family members on August 15, 1975.

Hasina's four granddaughters and a grandson now study abroad. Putul's four children study in Canada and Joy's daughter in the US.

Three granddaughters of Hasina's political archrival Khaleda Zia are studying abroad. Of them, the only daughter of BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman, elder son of Khaleda, is studying in London.

Two daughters of BNP chief's deceased son Arafat Rahman Koko study in Malaysia.

Following the 1/11 changeover in 2007, Tarique and Koko along with their wives and children left the country on parole in September 2008.

However, there are many leaders who chose to have their children educated at institutions here.

AL leader Tofail Ahmed's daughter studied at Dhaka Medical College.

AL Presidium Member Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin's elder daughter completed her studies here and the younger one is a student of a private university in the capital.

A daughter and a son of AL leader Abdul Matin Khasru also study here.

Talking to The Daily Star, eminent academic Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said the fact that many politicians sent their children abroad to study meant they didn't have faith in the country's education system.

They would have worked to improve the educational institutions in villages if their children had studied there, he said.

"Most of our politicians pay lip

service to issues relating to our education system. Poor allocation for education in the national budget reflects their lack of commitment to education in the country," said Prof Manzoorul.

WHAT THE POLITICIANS SAY

"It is true that many of our politicians don't have concern for students as their children study abroad," said BNP standing committee member Mahbubur Rahman.

"They do politics only to make a fortune. Most of their children neither stay in this country nor study here. Then why will they be concerned about our education system or our children's future?" he asked.

JP Secretary General Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu said, "It is normal for people to think that politicians bother the least about the future of the children of others, as their children get education in developed countries."

General people, especially students and their guardians, lost respect for politicians due to the BNP-led alliance's blockade and hartal that had severely affected academic life of students, he said.

Some leaders, however, said politicians did nothing wrong by sending their children abroad for better education.

"I don't see anything wrong in educating one's children abroad if he or she can afford it," said AL leader Lenin.

The AL presidium member said he didn't have the financial ability to send his daughters abroad for education.

It's not true that children of all politicians study abroad. And it's also unfair to put all politicians in the same category, and to say that they are not worried about hartals and blockade, he said.

Asked, BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said, "The media always tries to malign politicians whenever there is a movement in the country to materialise people's just demands.

"The fact is that no human rights, rule of law or democracy exist now in the country. People's ongoing movement to restore democracy and human rights is very important from this point of view.

"Why are you singling out politicians' children? Is it because of your ill motive to malign them?" asked Nazrul.

AL Presidium Member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim said it was not true that politicians didn't care about the country's education system.

Asked about his children, he said they studied abroad and were now staying in Bangladesh.

"They could have easily settled abroad, as they were educated there. But they are here to serve the country," Selim said, adding all his grandchildren are studying in Bangladesh.