

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE O Level

O Level Bangladesh Studies (7038)

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O Level Bangladesh Studies 7038 Paper 1

General Comments

The standard of work that was presented by the candidates was comparable with that of the previous year. All the candidates answered the required three questions and few candidates displayed any apparent sign of problems relating to time or rubric infringement.

As in previous years, most of the candidates had a tendency to write about topics/characters/events that were listed in the question rather than focusing on the question that was set. The content suggested in the question is only there to guide the candidates rather than be prescriptive.

Comments on individual questions

Section 1

There were only a few candidates who attempted this question. Most of the candidates were able to describe the developments that the Bengali Sultans brought about but, they failed to develop their answers into explaining the Bengali Sultans achievements. Most of the answers were very descriptive.

Few candidates answered question 2 and those that did generally produced very weak answers.

Section 2

Question 3 was fractionally more popular than question 1, but again the answers were very descriptive in nature with candidates relating facts and information without any explanation. Some candidates did score well on this question and the answers were reasonably accurate.

Question 4 was answered by one candidate who produced a weak descriptive answer.

Section 3

Only a few candidates answered Question 5 but in the main the responses were quite good. The candidates tended to concentrate on military actions at the expense of taxation and relations with the Mugal Empire. Though most touched on these latter two areas to a greater or lesser degree.

Question 6 was attempted by two candidates who produced weak simple statement answers.

Section 4

There were only three candidates who attempted questions 7 and 8. Both questions were answered reasonably accurately. On question 7 there was a concentration on the Amritsar Massacre to the detriment of the other two parts of the question. Question 8 was not well answered with candidates not really having full command of the facts needed to answer the question.

Section 5

This was a popular Section from which to select questions and one that saw a number of good answers to both questions. Question 9 on producing a constitution produced some reasonable answers, especially on the Urdu and Constituent Assembly parts. The part on the role of the Governor-General was generally not attempted. The answers tended to be in the top part of band 2. Question 10 produced some good answers with the Language Movement and the Ekushey February being the most popular. Both questions produced strong band 2 responses. However, most of the answers were largely narrative with little explanation.

Section 6

There were a number of good answers to question 11 most of the answers were rather narrative but there was a good level of detail on all aspects of the question. Candidates were particularly knowledgeable on the National Assembly elections and the cyclone. The policies of Yahya Khan were not widely known. Question 12 was attempted by two candidates who produced rather weak answers.

Section 7

This section was rather popular with an equal number attempting questions 13 and 14. In both cases the answers were very narrative and descriptive in nature. However, the quality of the answers was such that the top of band 2 and the bottom of band 3 was achieved in some cases. In question 13 good work was seen on the relations between India and Pakistan, however, the other two areas were not as well attempted. In question 14 industry and agriculture were the main focus of the candidates answers.

Section 8

Question 15 proved to be popular. The candidates had obviously studied this particular person and knew a great deal about her. However, the answers were again very descriptive in nature. Telling the story rather than explaining how important Begum Sufia Kamal was to Bengali culture in the twentieth century. Question 16 was attempted by seven candidates and their responses were rather poor. Most of the answers were simple statements. Few knew anything on folk literature or tribal customs and religious architecture was mainly lists.

O Level Bangladesh Studies 7038 Paper 2

General Comments

As with previous examinations, a feature of the overall performance was its polarisation. However, the good news this time round was that those at the top end of the mark scale outnumbered those at the other end. Another positive was the increase in total candidate numbers - long may that trend continue. Hopefully, this is a sign that more centres and teachers are gradually realising the benefits of 'Bangladesh Studies' as providing an informative grounding in the country's history, geography and some of the issues that confront it today.

One noticeable element in the improved performance was that more candidates were directing a due proportion of their time and effort to tackling the part (c) of the optional questions. Most now appreciate that a note or two will not suffice for marks in Bands 2 and 3.

Section A

Q.1, the compulsory question, seeks to test the candidate's more general knowledge of Bangladesh. In (a) significant numbers of candidates either missed (ii) and (iii) or provided erroneous responses. Responses to (b) tended to provide separate descriptions of the two landforms rather than making any attempt to highlight their differences. Rather worrying in (c)(i) was that the term 'aquaculture' appeared to be unknown to some candidates. However, the remaining candidates coped well with (ii). The increased risk of flooding was widely understood in (d), but the impact on other hazards, such as storm surges, typhoons and landslides, was rather neglected. Some candidates wasted their time by writing about the causes of global warming.

Section B

Q.2 was the minority choice in this section. Most provided accurate answers to (a)(i) and (ii), whilst in (iii) they showed that they were able to read off the general trends shown by the climatic graph - few quoted supporting data. Answers to (b) were coined mainly in terms of the impact of the Himalayas. In (c)(i), all noted the contrast of summer rain and winter drought, but none thought to mention the significant seasonal reversal of wind direction. Answers to (ii) gave a fairly balanced treatment of both heavy rain / drought as well as advantages / disadvantages.

In Q3(a)(i) the distinction between physical and human resources was insecure, but in (ii) the distinction was well understood and often supported by specific examples. In (iii) some candidates were unable to think of anything other than timber. In (b)(i) perceptions of the importance of electricity were rather limited to its role in manufacturing (what about services, transport, air conditioning, etc.?), whilst in (ii) rather too many thought that it was only the rivers that generated the country's electricity. In (c) most candidates were able to explain at least three different ways in which soil fertility is being reduced.

Section C

Q.4 was the overwhelmingly popular option in this section. Most came up with the correct answer to (a)(i) and in (ii) were able to suggest reasons for the falls in the birth and death rates. A common blemish in (b)(i) was to suggest that migration was an international movement of people between countries. But students need to realise the importance of internal or domestic migration, as for example the great volumes of rural-urban migration that have characterised Bangladesh in recent decades. It was encouraging in (ii) that most answers were able to identify benefits other than just remittances. Work in (c) was less distinguished with too many candidates offering anything more than vague statements about soil fertility and cities.

In Q.5 (a)(i) it was worrying that the term was understood only by a handful of candidates. There was some confusion with development. Nonetheless, there was general awareness of the significance of work in (ii). In (iii) education was rightly suggested by most candidates and they were able to explain its importance. Part (b)(i) was largely ignored, but in (ii) most were able to supply separate and informed descriptions of the two cities. No candidate undertook any sort of explicit comparison. Responses to (c) seemed to benefit from firsthand experience.

Section D

The choices in this section were even matched in terms of patronage. In Q.6 candidates coped well with all three sub-parts of both (a) and (b), whilst in (c) it was heartening to see so many candidates willing to address both parts of the question. In short, this question, more than any other on the paper, found candidates particularly well informed.

Q.7 followed closely on its heels, despite some unconvincing justifications of choices other than Chittagong in (b)(ii). In (c) few responses looked beyond international trade (exports and imports) to mention other links such as migration, tourism and aid.

O Level Bangladesh Studies 7038 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary Mark	58	49	40	35	27

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