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Disasters taking toll on edn

Mohiuddin Alamgir | Updated at 12:56am on March 21, 2018

Natural disasters are taking heavy toll on education of thousands of students losing their precious education hours, when another season of natural calamities is imminent.

When frequent natural disasters are causing losses of infrastructure and school materials in the resource-poor areas of the country, a government report says that about 45 per cent of secondary schools and colleges are exposed to natural disasters.

Chief editor of Bangladesh Education Statistics 2017 Shamsul Alam says that 45 per cent of the total secondary school are in risk of natural disasters like cyclone, flood, earthquake, water logging, landslide, river bank erosion and others.

The draft report also shows that during the disaster 20 per cent schools face building damage, 19 per cent furniture damage, 18 per cent door or window damage, 13 per cent face damage of sanitation facilities and connecting roads while six per cent have their roofs damaged.

The report, prepared by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, also finds that after disaster 20 per cent students fall behind in Bangla, 15 per cent in English and mathematics, 14 per cent in science, 12 per cent in social science and 15 per cent in others subjects.

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone nations in the world and its low-lying delta landscape constantly challenges citizens with cyclones, floods and earthquakes.

Bangladesh sits on a three-way junction of major tectonic plates, and dangerous pressure is building along a fault line, according to a research published earlier this year.

It is feared that the situation could unleash a massive earthquake.

The draft report of Bangladesh Education Statistics 2017 says that there are 41,461 post primary educational institutes such as schools, colleges and universities in the country of which 18,638 are situated in disaster-prone areas.

As per the BANBEIS report, 6,861 educational institutions are situated in flood-prone areas, 2,480 in cyclone-prone areas, 1,708 in water-logging-prone areas, 1,207 in surge-prone areas, 1,038 in river erosion-prone areas, 873 in drought-prone areas and 588 in earthquake-prone areas.

In Bangladesh, pre-monsoon hot season with rain usually starts in March through May and full force monsoon season lasts from June through October, when generally floods also take place.

Cyclones generally strike Bangladesh in two seasons, March through July and September through December, with the greatest number of storms arriving in May and October.

BANBEIS officials say that they during preparation of annual reports have been informed by the teachers that education is hampered as the academic activities remain suspended during a natural disaster, especially during floods.

Educational institutions are also used as shelters and many schools witness low attendance rate. Exams need to be rescheduled and on some occasions teachers take classes elsewhere so that children could catch up with their study in order to complete exams.

The displacement of families also has a severely negative impact on the learning environment at home.

Education ministry additional secretary and director of BANBEIS Md Fashiullah said government was working relentlessly to face natural disasters.

'New buildings are being erected as well as old ones are being renovated keeping in mind natural disasters,' he informed.

'There are flexibilities in academic calendar so that school authorities can take immediate steps to make up the losses,' he said.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid observed that this kind of findings was helpful for understanding 'where we are standing now and what will be the future plan.'

'We are trying to improve infrastructure of schools, colleges and madrassahs and in the last nine years we have built at least 1,9500 new buildings for educational institutions,' he added.



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