

# Education budget likely to increase

Mohiuddin Alamgir

THE share of education sector in the national budget for the next 2016-17 financial year is likely to increase by 3.7 percentage point compared to the outgoing 2015-16 financial year while experts have called for pace in the implementation of development programmes.

Low allocation for education with sluggish implementation of development projects contributed a lit-

tle to the enhancement of the quality of education in the outgoing financial year 2015-16, experts and officials said.

Finance ministry sources hinted that the education sector might get allocation of Tk 49,000 crore or 14.4 per cent of the total outlay in the next budget against the allocation of 10.7 per cent of the total outlay in 2015-16.

Government is likely to allocate Tk 26,875 crore for the education ministry and

Tk 22,162 crore for the primary and mass education ministry, they said.

They said that the allocation for development projects in the sector was likely to increase by 1.13 percentage point – from 10.15 per cent of the total outlay of the annual development programme in 2015-16 to 11.28 per cent of that in the upcoming budget.

Experts, however, said that development projects

Continued on page 2 Col. 5

## Education budget likely to increase

Continued from page 1

in education sector needed more allocations and proper and timely implementation of the projects needed to be ensured to improve the quality of education.

Educational institutions need good teachers and infrastructures including laboratories, libraries and well-equipped classrooms for improving the quality of education, which is hampered by budget constraints, said Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury.

Education Policy 2010 formulation committee co-chair Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, also economist, emphasised the need for good governance in education administration and proper utilisation of the budget.

Students continued to attend classes in shabby classrooms and without required facilities as many development projects could not be implemented in 2015-16 like previous years.

Education Engineering Department chief engineer Dewan Mohammad Hanzala said that the government was yet to complete development of physical infrastructure of about 1,000 of the 3,000 non-government secondary schools included in a project that began in 2011. The deadline for the

completion of the project was extended in 2015 by one year till June 2016.

The project of construction of academic buildings for 1,000 non-government madrassahs begun in 2011 and got extension by one year from June 2015 while the constructions at 400 madrassahs were yet to complete.

Dewan Mohammad Hanzala said that slow disbursement of the fund and problems relating to land disputes caused the delay in the implementation of the projects being implemented by the department.

Transformation of 315 schools into model schools at as many upazilas having no government high school also remained sluggish. The project got extension by one year from December 2014, but 20 of the schools were yet to be transformed.

The project director Rafiqul Islam said that in the early days of the project fund disbursement was slow causing them to fall behind the schedule.

Project of development of 70 post-graduate government colleges in district headquarters constructing examination halls, hostels for students, academic buildings, administrative buildings and ICT labs began in 2010 and was supposed to end in December

2014. It got extension by two years till December 2016.

Project director Tahiat Hossain said that academic buildings of 50 colleges had so far been constructed.

The government took the project for Development of 1,500 non-government colleges along with ICT facilities for improving quality of education in 2012. The project is supposed to be implemented by June 2017 while works at 1,100 colleges are still pending, said the Education Engineering Department chief engineer.

The primary and mass education ministry was supposed to establish 1,500 new primary schools at villages having no primary schools by June 2014 but the project officials said that about 150 schools were yet to be built.

Government Primary School Reconstruction and Renovation Project was taken in July 2006 to reconstruct and renovate 5,600 rundown schools by June 2014, but at least 500 schools were yet to be reconstructed, project officials said.

Project director Enayet Hussain, however, claimed only 18 schools were yet to be reconstructed.

Rasheda K Choudhury said that 'bureaucratic tangles, delay in fund release, and lengthy procurement' were major reasons for the slow implementation of the

projects.

'We are disappointed with the slow project implementation. The education sector gets allocation less than what is needed and what it gets should all be spent,' she said.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid said that by the end of the financial year spending of education ministry remained over the line of national level.

'In terms of budgetary allocation, we are passing a tough time... Education budget is decreasing... When we assumed office, the allocation was about 14 per cent of the total budget in 2009 and now it came down to 10 per cent,' said Nahid.

The government will now lay emphasis on health and education after having given priority to power and communication in the past few years, the finance minister AMA Muhith said at a programme in Dhaka on Saturday.

'Now our focus is on education and health because the power and communication sectors have shown some improvement,' he said.

'We'll have to appoint more teachers, and provide and improve teaching materials... I am looking into these matters. It will be possible to raise the allocation for education to some extent in this budget,' Muhith said.