

Education spending continues to shrink

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BANGLADESH continues to spend less on education in terms of percentage of gross domestic products than other South Asian countries although it says that improvement of quality of education is a priority.

A government's education spending should be 4-6 per cent of the GDP or 15-20 per cent of the total budget but Bangladesh spends 1.9 per cent of the GDP and about 13 per cent of the total government expenditure, said 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring Report the UNESCO unveiled in Dhaka on Tuesday.

The report said that Bangladesh's spending on education in terms of percentage of GDP was less than that of other South Asian neighbours. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics data showed that same situation prevailed in 2012-13 financial year.

Campaign For Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury said that they did not understand why spending on education was not increasing even to South Asian level.

For quality education we need extra resources, higher pay for teachers, reduced class sizes or improved facilities, she said.

Many pledges to give priorities to education are made in budgets but it is

not realised. Even allocation for education in budget decreased from 15 per cent in 2010-11 to 11-12 per cent in 2017-18, she added.

'It is true we are still lagging behind when it comes to spending a certain proportion of the GDP on education,' said education minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

Education is a priority for the government but it has other priorities too, Nahid said.

The 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring Report compared the spending of GDP of 205 countries in 2015.

The report said that Bangladesh spent 1.9 per cent of GDP while war torn Afghanistan spent 3.3 per cent, Bhutan 7.4 per cent, India 3.8 per cent, Maldives 5.2 per cent, Nepal 3.7 per cent, Pakistani 2.6 per cent and Sri Lanka spent 2.2 per cent of their GDP.

UNESCO recommends allocation of at least 4-6 per cent of gross domestic product or 15-20 per cent of public expenditure for education sector.

In 2015, median global public expenditure on education was 4.7 per cent of GDP. Median South Asian expenditure was 3.3 per cent. By income group, expenditure ranged from 3.7 per cent in low income countries to 5.1 per cent in high income countries, the report showed.

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Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics quoting UNESCO data said in 2012 the percentage of GDP spent on education was 2.6 in Bangladesh, 4.7 in Bhutan, 3.35 in India, 5.90 in Maldives, 4.70 in Nepal, 2.13 in Pakistan and 1.70 in Sri Lanka.

The allocation for education sector in Bangladesh in the 2017-18 financial year came down to 12.59 per cent of the total expenditures from 14.40 per cent in the previous financial year, said budget documents.

The education budget was about 2 per cent of the

GDP, the budget documents said.

Rasheda K Choudhury said that Bangladesh now spent less in terms of percentage of total expenditure, when number of students in the past one decade increased significantly.

Nahid said that although education sector got less

budget allocation, they emphasised the need for proper utilisation of the allocation. 'We try to prevent wastage and misuse of money,' he said.

'Currently ensuring quality of education is a challenge for us and we are working on the issue,' he added.