

Rural-urban disparities exposed in HSC results

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Disparities between the urban and rural areas of the country were once again exposed in the results of the Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent examinations published on Thursday.

In the results, the candidates from the metropolitan cities and district towns have done better than their fellows from sub-urban and rural areas.

Officials at the education boards said that the disparities occurred due to the lack of teachers and facilities in the rural areas, and urban-centric development activities.

‘Our observation for all 11 boards is the same. The results start to decline from cities to suburban areas, and then to rural areas,’ Bangladesh Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee chair and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka chairman professor Khandaker Ehsanul Kabir said on Thursday.

This year, the combined pass rate in the HSC and equivalent examinations has stood at 58.83 per cent. The rate was 77.78 per cent in 2024.

The pass rate in the HSC and equivalent examinations under nine general boards this year is the lowest after 2005.

The education board officials said that one of the reasons behind this year’s poor results is rural-urban disparities.

Professor Khandaker Ehsanul Kabir officially published the results from his Dhaka board office Thursday morning.

He said that, in Dhaka board, the pass rate this year was 64.62 per cent.

He said that there are 14 districts under the board and, of them, 84.03 per cent of the examinees passed in Dhaka metropolitan city, 61.29 per cent in Dhaka district, 63.86 per cent in Gazipur district, 51.91 per cent in Narayanganj district, 68.18 per cent in Narsingdi district, 58.84 per cent in Munshiganj district, 45.4 per cent in Manikganj district, 44.41 per cent in Tangail district, 51.54 per cent in Faridpur district, 46.38 per cent in Madaripur district, 42.12 per cent in Shariatpur district, 45.98 per cent in Rajbari district, 42.28 per cent in Gopalganj district, and 48.5 per cent in Kishoreganj district.

‘The highest pass rate under Dhaka board is, as always, in Dhaka metropolitan city, for which the average pass rate in Dhaka always remains high,’ the professor continued.

He also said that the same situation was seen in the results of other boards.

‘We also see that the pass rates in the big cities are always high,’ he said.

He mentioned the pass rates in Rajshahi, Chattogram, Cumilla, Barishal and Jashore districts are higher than in other districts under these boards.

‘The pass rate starts to reduce from the district towns to the upazilas,’ he said.

Replying to a question, he said that educational institutions in rural areas had a crisis of teachers and other facilities.

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rajshahi chairman professor ANM Mofakkharul Islam said that, under his board, the separate pass rate was 71.16 per cent in Rajshahi district, 48 per cent in Sirajganj district, 50 per cent in Naogaon district and 58 per cent in Joypurhat district.

‘Students want to get admitted in big colleges in Dhaka or Rajshahi cities,’ he said, adding that the development in the big cities attracts the students and their guardians.

Poor pay-scale and allowances and low social status mark the poor condition of the teachers in Bangladesh, which is affecting the education sector.

The white paper on the state of the Bangladesh economy, submitted to interim government chief adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on December 1, 2024, said that teachers, in primary and tertiary levels, continue to go underpaid compared with their fellows in other Asian countries, which squarely affects the quality of education.

The white paper on the economy cites that the average salary of a primary school teacher in Bangladesh is \$170.02, which is \$953.13 in the Maldives, \$284.64 in India, \$250.44 in Sri Lanka, \$206.07 in Pakistan, and \$189.22 in Myanmar.

‘In terms of primary school teacher salaries, Bangladesh ranks 45th among the Asian countries and 7th in South Asia,’ it read.

According to the white paper, an entry-level teacher or lecturer at universities in Bangladesh earns between \$220 and \$482 per month, which, in contrast, ranges from \$770 to \$2,420 in India, from \$700 to \$2,800 in Malaysia, and from \$2,950 to \$10,300 in Singapore.

Disparities between the urban and rural areas of the country have grown over the past five decades as policies pursued by successive governments have resulted in unequal benefits for the two types of areas.

According to economists and development experts, the urban areas representing the cities and towns have been receiving higher attention in terms of policies and financial allocations than the rural areas since the country's independence 54 years ago