

Rural-urban gap in education widens

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THE results of Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations published on Thursday showed that gap between rural and urban Bangladesh in education continued widening.

The number of educational institution having less than 50 per cent pass rate in SSC and equivalent examinations tripled in three years while the number of educational institutions with a zero per cent pass rate was

also on the rise against overall pass rate of 88-80 per cent in 2015-2017 and most of the institutions.

The statistics demonstrated the widening gap between urban and rural Bangladesh in education standard as most of the institutions with 0-50 per cent pass rate were from rural areas, said board officials and academics.

The academics and education officials blamed shortage of competent teachers, laboratories, libraries and other facilities in rural

schools for the rural students' falling behind their urban compatriots.

Rural students cannot afford coaching, private tuition and do not get better guidance from parents at home and teachers at classrooms, they said.

Dhaka University professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said that it was not only an issue of education, but it also reflected the prevailing social and economic inequality.

Students from urban well-to-do families avail

coaching, private tuition, better guidance, food and nutrition which no rural learners can afford, he said.

Education now is a commodity and those who can afford it are making bright results while those who cannot afford are failing, added the educationist.

Most of the rural schools lack trained teachers, library and laboratories and students of these schools fail to compete with others, said Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury.

Financing is big issue to narrow the widening gap, said Rasheda. Cadet colleges are doing good as they get huge government finance while schools of city areas are also doing good as they get private financing, she added.

According to the results, less than 50 per cent students passed from 3,001 schools and madrassahs in 2017.

The number of such institutions was 875 in 2016 and 947 in 2015, said board officials.

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The number of institutions with a zero per cent pass rate was 93 in 2017. The number was 53 in 2016 and 47 in 2015.

This year, 94.41 per cent students from the capital passed the SSC exam while 78 per cent students from Kishoreganj and Shariatpur passed the exam.

The pass rate was 83.72 per cent in Sylhet while 74.31 per cent in Moulavibazar and over 80 per cent in Barisal while 72 per cent in Barguna.

Inter Services Public Relation Directorate statement said that 622 out of 624 students of 12 cadet colleges archived highest grade point average 5 in this year's SSC exam.

With rural and urban divide in education getting wider the government's claim that it was addressing the issue does not hold good, said Serajul Islam Choudhury.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid said that measures would be taken against the institutions whose success rate was zero. 'We would analyse why schools

are performing poorly,' he added.

'As most students of rural areas fail in English and mathematics, we have put our best efforts in improving the situation arranging extra classes at schools,' he said, adding that the government had so far arranged extra classes for English and mathematics at 8,000 schools.