

Girls ahead of boys in enrolment, results

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GIRLS outnumber in enrolment and outperform in terms of results their boy peers at primary and secondary level and catching up in the university level but feminists see huge challenge about continuation of the successes in the future.

Although the enrolment rate of girls has increased significantly in recent years at secondary and higher secondary levels, the dropout rate of girls continues to be higher at both the levels, which is one of the prime reasons behind the low numbers of female students in higher education.

Women leaders feared

that if girls were not given enough security on their ways to and from educational institutions and facilities like hostels, sanitation and security on the campuses, current growth rate might nosedive.

Girls now account for 54 per cent of secondary enrolment, 51 per cent of primary enrolment and 40 per cent of higher education enrolment.

Ten years ago, girls accounted for 52 per cent of secondary, 50 per cent of primary and 38 per cent of higher education enrolment, according to the officials of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics and University

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Grants Commission.

Government officials said that positive development in girls' enrolment occurred because of some specific government interventions focusing on girls, such as stipends and exemption of tuition fees for girls, and stipend scheme for girls at the secondary level.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad president Ayesha Khanom and Nari Grantha Prabartana executive director Farida Akter said that the number of female students increased because of government intervention and change in the society for girls' education.

'But lack of girls-friendly facilities and security still remain as a challenge to the continuation of the success,' Ayesha Khanom said.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education director general SM Wahiduz-

zaman admitted that there were some challenges for continuing the success. 'We would strengthen government interventions focusing on girls to face the challenges and ensure more quality education,' he said.

Bureau of educational information and statistics officials said that girls accounted for 51 per cent of the 1.87 crore students in all kinds of primary schools and 53 per cent of the 98 lakh students in secondary levels in 2016.

Girls, however, accounted for 41 per cent of the 32.6 lakh students in all colleges and public universities in 2016, said grants commission officials.

In 2007, girls accounted for 50 per cent of the 1.69 crore students in all kinds of primary schools, 52 per cent of the 7.41 lakh students in secondary levels and 38 per cent of the 14 lakh students in all colleges and public uni-

versities, the officials said.

Girls were also performing better during the past one decade, they said.

In 2016, the pass rate was 75.60 per cent for girls and 73.93 per cent for boys in the Higher Secondary Certificate exams and 98.56 per cent for girls and 98.44 per cent for boys in primary education completion exams.

In Secondary School Certificate exams in 2016, girls almost reached to the level of boys as the pass rate was 88.64 per cent for girls and 88.77 per cent for boys.

Dropout rate of girls was, however, still high in comparison to boys.

Bureau officials said that the dropout rate at secondary level was 45.92 per cent for girls and 33.72 per cent for boys.

At higher secondary level, the overall dropout rate was 22.70 per cent while the dropout rate for girls was

26.60 per cent.

Farida and Ayesha expressed fear that the newly enacted Child Marriage Restraint Act with a special provision for allowing underage marriages under 'special circumstances' might put negative impact on the success as the provision would encourage child marriage and increase school dropout among girls.

Women and children affairs state minister Meher Afroze Chumki, who piloted the bill, however, claimed that the special provision would not increase dropout.

'The special provision was needed in order to make the society safer and avoid any untoward incident,' she said.

Social awareness is a must besides law enforcers' effort to ensure security of girls on their ways to and from educational institutions and on campuses, she added.