

INITIAL LEVEL LITERACY FOR ALL

# Progress slow, 44 more years needed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country needs 44 more years to have an initial level of literacy skills for all citizens and 78 years to attain the advanced level if progress in literacy continues at current pace, says a report of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

The report says Bangladesh has made progress in various levels of literacy but at a slow pace, which is 0.7 percent annually.

The progress rate was relatively better in reading and writing skills but very poor in numeracy and application of the 3R's, it mentions.

The report titled "Education Watch 2016: Literacy, Skills, Lifelong Learning, SDG 4 in Bangladesh: Where are We" was made public at an event at the LGRD-RDEC auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

The report says population in each level of literacy has increased due to increase in overall population. In 2002, there were 45.8 million non-literate, 8.6 million semi-literate, 19.5 million literate at initial level and 18.9 million literate at advanced level population in the country.

By 2016, the figures increased to 50.9 million, 12.8 million, 33 million and 33.9 million respectively. In the last 14 years, 28.5 million literate people joined the population at the rate of more than two million per year.

Presenting the report, Samir Ranjan Nath, principal researcher of Education Watch Study 2016, said 3,510 households from 270 neighbourhoods in nine strata were covered through a household survey.

Of the 15,265 individuals lived in the households, 11,280 aged 11 and above were surveyed. "Literacy" was measured through an assessment test developed originally for Education Watch 2002 study, says the report.

Of the surveyed people, 80 percent use cellphones and two-thirds watch programmes on television.

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The report recommends that the national definition of literacy be revisited with an aim of making literacy skills the foundation of lifelong learning as envisioned in SDG 4.

It further says quality of school education must improve to ensure that early primary grades produce students with an initial level of literacy. Besides, by the end of primary education, they should achieve a self-sustaining level of literacy and numeracy.

In her welcome address, CAMPE Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury said they had maintained a democratic process while preparing the report.

Speaking as the chief guest, Primary and Mass Education Minister Advocate Mostafizur Rahman said the government was working to eradicate illiteracy from the country.

Mario Ronconi, head of Cooperation Unit of European Union to Bangladesh, Sun Lei, education programme specialist of Unesco Bangladesh, CAMPE Chairperson Kazi Rafiqul Alam and Vice-chair Manzoor Ahmed, among others, spoke at the event.