

Over 23pc drop out of HSC exams

Financial constraints seen as main reason in study

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Over 23 percent students registered in class XI to sit for the HSC examinations this year have dropped out due mainly to financial constraints.

About 6.07 lakh students were registered as regular students under nine education boards after passing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations. But only 4.64 lakh sat for the Higher Secondary Certificates (HSC) examinations began yesterday, according to statistics prepared by

authorities.

As many as 143,297 students or 23.58 percent will not appear in this year's HSC examinations under seven education boards, one technical education board and one madrasa board, say the statistics published earlier by a coordination unit of the education ministry and boards.

The main cause of the dropout is the financial inability of the students' families to bear their educational expenses, a study of Dhaka Education Board said.

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The problem becomes acute as purchasing capacity of the general people has tremendously reduced, while prices of education materials and different types of fees have sharply shot up in the last two years.

Academicians observe that most families of the low-income group are forced to reduce their children's educational expense thanks to persisting skyrocketing prices of essentials.

Dhaka Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board Chairman Prof Manirul Islam said a huge number of HSC students dropped out this year.

"The main causes are family financial inability, poor results in the test examinations, marriage of girl students, fear in English, forging registration, going abroad, involvement in politics and in some cases, students carelessness," Manirul Islam told The Daily Star.

Academicians say education has become a commodity where investment gets maximum priority, but most of the people have lost their previous purchasing capacity.

They also say most schools in rural areas don't have sufficient teachers, especially for English and math, and the students don't do well in these subjects.

"To do well in English and math, students now have to take help from private tuition, but most families in rural areas cannot afford this," a teacher told The Daily Star.

"Students have to depend on private tuition because schools have failed to provide proper education. For this reason students from poor families, especially in rural areas, are being deprived of education," said renowned academician Prof Dr Zillur Rahman Siddique, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University.

Education Watch Report-2006, a survey conducted by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), also points finger at the tendency for

depending on private tuition.

According to the report, 88 percent students of government institutions and 78 percent of non-government institutions in urban areas have private coaching or tutors. Parents spend Tk 16,894 on an average annually on a child's private tuition.

Expressing deep anxiety, Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said some steps and efforts are being taken to cut the dropout rate down to zero.

"We are trying to review related matters and introduce the clustering efforts to reduce the dropout rate," he said.

He however said achievement in checking dropout would not be seen overnight and all officials and people concerned should take additional efforts to that end.

Dropout rate under the technical education board is the highest among all the boards - 41.4 percent. On the other hand, Barisal has the highest dropout rate among the seven education boards, the board statistics say.

In Dhaka Board, the highest number dropout occurred in Shariatpur, insiders say.