

SUPERB SSC RESULTS

Rural, urban gap in education widens

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The record-breaking SSC results demonstrate the widening gap between urban and rural education standard as most urban schools put on outstanding performance, while the bulk of failure goes to rural institutions.

As many as 2,272 schools made 100 percent success and 52,500 students secured GPA-5 (grade point average) in this year's SSC examinations, while the number of schools with zero pass is 91.

Most of these successful schools and students are from urban areas, while most of the poor performed institutions are in rural areas, according to sources in Inter-Board Computer Section.

Private tuition and quality education make a huge difference in this case. Most of the urban students receive private tuition in addition to better classroom activities.

On the other hand, schools in rural areas don't have sufficient teachers and most guardians can't

afford private tutors for their children.

Educationists say capitalism has engulfed the country's education system where students backed by solvent families achieve glorious results, while rural students from poor families struggle to obtain even pass marks as their schools cannot provide quality education.

"This year's results make it clear that education has now become accessible mainly to the rich and those living in the urban areas. The

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government's willingness is the only way to come out of this cycle," said renowned academician Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal.

He added the educationists are frustrated because the government has curtailed the budgetary allocation for education this year.

The educationists put the blame of poor results in the rural areas on the previous government. They say the BNP-Jamaat alliance government politically enlisted many new schools and madrasas under MPO (monthly payment order) even though many of those schools had no teachers for math and English.

This year around three lakh students did not pass and most of them are from rural areas. No less than 80 percent unsuccessful rural students failed in English or math or in both, sources in the computer section say.

Educationists say most schools in rural areas don't have sufficient teachers, especially for English and math, and the students have to suffer in the end.

Educationist Prof Maniruzzaman Miah, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, said there is wide disparity between rural and urban areas in terms of availability of good teachers and infrastructure facilities.

"Particularly in rural areas the number of skilled English and math teachers is inadequate. So these schools make poor results," he said. Communicative English was introduced a few years ago, but English teachers, particularly in rural areas, are not trained to teach the students

and Employees (NFTE), a platform of eleven non-government teachers' organisation, said good teachers, especially of English and math, have a trend to move to urban areas as they can earn more through private tuition there.

Education Watch Report-2006, a survey conducted by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), also points finger at the trend towards depending on private tuition.

According to the report, 88 percent students of government high schools and 78 percent students of non-government high schools in urban areas receive private coaching or tuition. Parents spend Tk 16,894 annually on average to provide this private education.

Guardians and students of different schools allege many teachers of English and science subjects often don't take classes regularly and encourage students to go for private tuition.