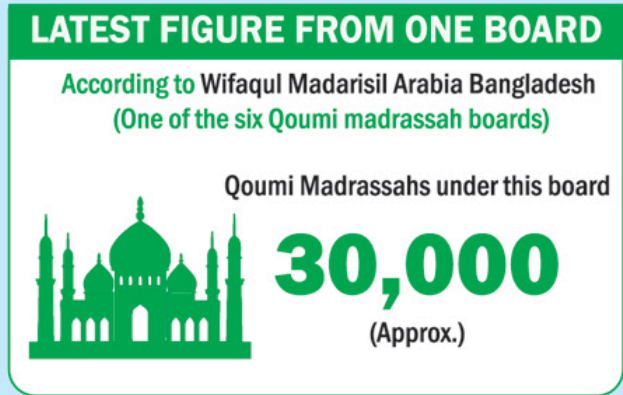
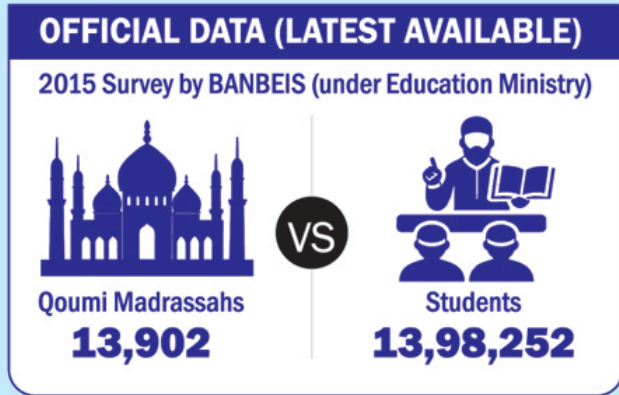


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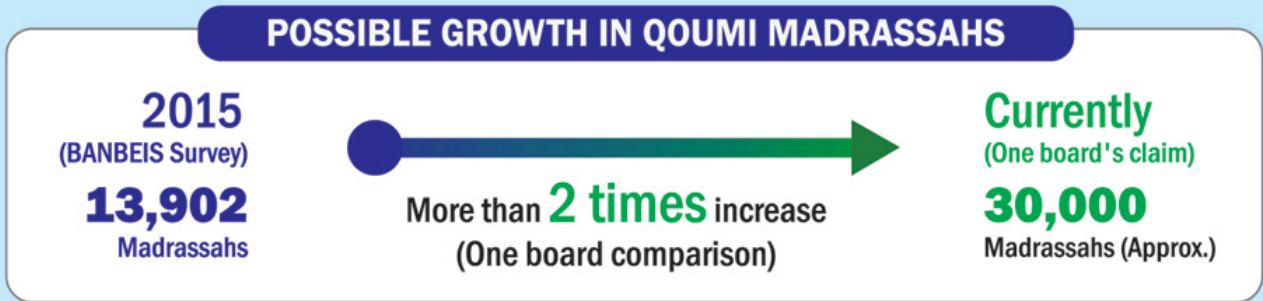
NEWAGE

Qoumi madrassahs continue to remain out of govt radar

Shahin Akhter  17 May, 2026, 00:01



Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), 2015.



Note: The last official data is from 2015. Updated nation-wide survey is necessary to know the exact number of institutions and students.

Qoumi madrassahs are mushrooming in the country as repeated government initiatives to bring them under regulation ended in failure, raising various concerns.

Senior academicians and researchers think that the government should bring these madrassahs under some regulations to ensure the students' safety, their education, and mental and physical health.



As the government is bypassing the responsibility of taking care of the students studying in these madrassahs, they are often deprived of their rights, they added.

Most recently, the government has taken an initiative to standardise the Qoumi madrassah stream while officials concerned say they are not sure when the results will be visible.

According to a 2015 survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics under the education ministry, there were 13,902 Qoumi madrassahs in the country, with 13,98,252 students studying there.

Currently, there are around 30,000 Qoumi madrassahs only under Wifaqul Madarisil Arabia Bangladesh, one of the six boards for Qoumi madrassahs, said assistant director general of the board Ismail Hossain.

He, however, could not give the number of students studying under five other boards.

The government has under its regulation only 4,425 pre-primary to primary levels ibtedayi madrasshas and 9,269 secondary to tertiary levels madrassahs, as per the latest Bangladesh Education Statistics 2024, published by BANBEIS.

Earlier, the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina on April 11, 2017 declared recognition of certificates of Dawrae Hadith under Qoumi Madrassah Education Boards as equivalent to master's degree in Islamic Studies and Arabic.

BRAC University professor emeritus Manzoor Ahmed said that there are various types of Qoumi institutions, such as Hafizia or Furqania madrasas, ranging from lower levels to middle and tertiary levels.

‘We do not know the exact total number, but it is quite a large one,’ he said, adding, ‘some believe the number will be at least one-quarter of children of secondary school age.’

He observed that this lack of government data of Quomi madrassah students is a problem.

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government has a responsibility to ensure children are safe and that their education, mental health, and physical health are proper, he mentioned.

‘The government is currently not taking this responsibility or keeping track of them,’ he added.

Meanwhile the 2024’s Bangladesh Education Statistics revealed last year that the number of students at the schools and colleges from the secondary to tertiary levels of education in the country has dropped in the past few years, while it is growing in madrassahs.

Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury said that these madrassahs were being run according to their own rules and they receive funding from local communities.

‘But we do not know exactly where the money comes from,’ she said and added that because of this, the education ministry has repeatedly said that all types of institutions—including English medium and religious schools—must be brought under a regulatory framework.

‘We have repeatedly called for a Uniform Education Act that applies to everyone under which every educational institution has to be registered,’ she continued.

Rasheda explained that registration would require them to provide data on student and teacher numbers, their syllabus, teacher skills, and their sources of income.

‘Currently, the government does not have this information. This lack of a legal framework creates a kind of chaos that manifests as violence against students,’ she also said.

Recently, the minister for the ministries of education and primary and mass education ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon on May 3 said that they did not want the Qoumi education stream to remain separate.

Attending the first day of the Deputy Commissioners Conference 2026, he also said that the government wanted to standardise the degrees of the Qoumi education stream so that they became equivalent to those of general education.

At the conference proposals were given for a policy for Qoumi madrassahs should be formulated to bring all these educational institutions under its fold, and modernising madrassah and Qoumi education by expanding the opportunities for science, technology and information technology education in addition to the main subjects of religious education, while also ensuring vocational education.

Ehsanul Hoque in his briefing to the journalists said that he had met representatives of Qoumi Madrasahs for three times to discuss the issue of equivalence of their degrees and they would submit their solid proposal in brief' in this regard.

'We are ready to do what they want,' he added.

Manzoor, convener of two consultation committees formed by the previous interim government to submit recommendations on primary and secondary education, said that a regulatory framework and mechanism regarding the Qoumi curriculum should be developed through discussions with these institutions to ensure these children are safe and to know what they are learning.

'This is not happening yet because it is considered a sensitive political issue, and the government has not shown much interest in pursuing it,' he observed.

He mentioned that local studies by Education Watch show that during COVID-19, many primary and secondary students moved to Qoumi madrassahs and stayed there for reasons including increased poverty and inflation rate, costly general stream education and religious belief.

'We need proper assessment and data analysis to formulate any policy or have discussions on this,' he added.

Rasheda mentioned that the Qoumi madrassahs also have primary levels, Hifz khanas, early childhood programs, and even day-care centres.

'This cycle exists outside of any framework,' she continued and added that according to Education Watch data the number of the madrassahs has increased significantly in the last five years.

'Previously, they made up four to five per cent of total educational institutions; now it is around 10 to 12 per cent,' she said.

Ismail Hossain said that as per media reports discussion held on implementation of the recognition of certificates of Dawrae Hadith.

Technical and Madrassah Education Division secretary Md Daud Miah said that they had no statistics regarding the Qoumi madrassahs and added that the government had only one link with these madrassahs at recognising their Dawrae Hadith degree.

‘They have a fear that if degrees of these madrassahs are made equivalent to general stream, their students may decrease,’ he said, adding, ‘they are continuing the discussion and we hope maybe someday they will agree.’

Professor Mohammad Ali Zinnah at Dhaka University’s Institute of Education and Research said that it seems the students under the Qoumi madrassah stream have shortcomings in technological aspects and the qualities of becoming responsible citizens of the country.

‘We do not even know if their curriculum includes Information and Communication Technology education, the fourth industrial revolution, or Artificial Intelligence as their curriculum is not shared with everyone; it is not made open,’ he said, adding, ‘we do not see them participating in high-level jobs.’

Therefore, he said, it can be assumed that they are perhaps lagging behind or backward in this regard.

‘Various government efforts were made but the stream of Qoumi madrassah does not want to merge with the general education stream,’ the professor further said.

This affects their role as responsible citizens especially in areas like loyalty to the country, patriotism, national leadership, and progress, he said.

Professor Zinnah urged the government to integrate this stream with the general stream to gradually enter their education system and turn them into a productive workforce for the country by coordinating general and technical education.

The students under these madrassahs also face discrimination in cases of abuses as most of the incidents of sexual violence and corporal punishment stayed confined within the walls.

Most recently on May 6 police arrested a Qoumi madrassah teacher in a case filed over the rape and impregnation of an 11-year-old student at Madan upazila in Netrakona.

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