

# Tk 346cr stipend for female secondary students stolen by teachers, officials

*13 lakh fake students shown in 1st phase of FESP*

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About Tk 346 core of stipends for female students at secondary level was misappropriated in the 1st phase of Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FESP), according to sources in FESP.

At least 13 lakh fake students were shown to steal the money.

Teachers of the schools in collaboration with a section of project officials misappropriated the huge amount of money by showing fake students, investigation by project authorities revealed, the sources said.

The government initiated the FESP to spread female education in the country, particularly in rural areas.

The 1st phase of the project was started in 1994. About Tk 1800 core was sanctioned for the first phase while Tk 1400 core was shown spent

for stipend during 1994-2004. The rest of the amount was shown spent for other purposes under the project during the period.

But in reality, one third of the stipend money was misappropriated by a section of project officials and authorities of the schools concerned, said an FESP official at a workshop on "Identifying problems and formulation of future plan of FESP", held at Rangpur Town Hall on Sunday.

FESP Project Director Abdur Razzak also joined the workshop as chief guest.

When asked, he admitted that massive irregularities in disbursement of stipend money in previous years were detected.

Citing example of 28 educational institutions in Nilphamari districts, he said, an audit team comprising five officials detected that the school authorities by

showing fake students misappropriated about Tk 9,34,000.

The Director also showed the 2003 audit report of Kalamukhi High School at Sadar upazila in Nqakhali district, which is under the project.

"Stipend was given to 63 students of the school against 42 in class VI, 40 in class VII against 30, 31 against 24 in class VIII, and 19 students against 13 in class IX."

The director however claimed that misappropriation of government money under the 2nd phase of the FESP project has been reduced to 'zero' this year due to 'intensive monitoring, strict vigilance, and deletion of fake and ineligible students from the lists'.

The second phase of the project was started in July, 2005. A total of Tk 502.98 core was sanctioned for the second phase.

The Director said, about Tk 120 core would remain surplus as the number of stipend deserving students has been reduced to almost fifty percent.

It was possible because punishment of identified wrong doing schools and concerned FESP officials, the director added.

"The number of students under the first phase of the project was 25, 55,870 in 2002 declined to 12, 63,421 in 2006 because of strict scrutiny." He however said all deserving students were enlisted for stipend.

A total of Tk 9.34 lakh was realised from the institutions and deposited to the treasury. Immediate punitive steps against the institutions and FESP official concerned were also taken, Abdur Razzak said.

It is interesting that the number of institutions was 13826 in 2002 and it increased to 15649 in 2006.