

SSC RESULTS

No improvement in English, maths

Siddiqur Rahman Khan

EDUCATION bigwigs often claim that a hike in pass percentage and the number of high scorers in public examinations, such as SSC and HSC, reflects a marked improvement in the quality of education.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid has repeat-

edly claimed at press briefings that the overall quality of education has improved considerably thanks to some government steps. He has also acclaimed the successful introduction of creative question papers for contributing a lot to this end.

New Age, however, found the claim a far cry from the

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ground realities. Although most of the post-primary students in the country lack even a rudimentary knowledge of mathematics and English, they get promoted to next classes every year. The quality of teachers of these two subjects is also disappointing, found a government survey. Besides, half of the top graders in SSC and HSC exams have failed to secure even pass marks in written tests for admission to public universities in the past few years.

Siddiqur Rahman, a professor at the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University, termed the situation 'shameful' and said, 'More than half of the admission seekers in the 2012-2013 session failed to get minimum marks in the admission tests, although all of them had achieved GPA 5 in SSC and HSC exams.'

'Such incidents demonstrate the poor quality of education, despite the upward trend in public exam results,' he said.

According to the results published on Thursday, the combined pass percentage in

this year's secondary school certificate and equivalent exams stands at 89.03, posting a rise of 2.66 percentage points from the last year's pass percentage of 86.37. The number of SSC candidates achieving the highest grade point average of 5 this year is 91,226. However, an increase in the pass rate in public exams ultimately depends on examinees' performance in English and maths tests.

New Age, however, has found the quality of English and mathematics teachers in the country below par. The government initiative to hold extra classes on English and mathematics at 4,000 secondary schools under a World Bank-funded project has remained suspended for nearly one year now following allegations of graft.

Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project director M Sirajul Islam on March 10, 2011 sent an order to 121 upazila secondary education officers, directing them to stop the project activities as teachers had allegedly taken their honoraria without even

making the arrangements for holding the extra classes. The order reads, 'You are asked to prepare and send the list of teachers who took the money without taking extra classes by March 31.'

Directorate of secondary and higher education director (monitoring and evaluation) M Didarul Alam in a letter on March 24, 2013 recommended punitive measures against 130 English and maths teachers for pocketing their honoraria without taking the additional classes.

DSHE director (administration) Prof Ataur Rahman told New Age that he found no reason for candidates getting good marks in mathematics in public exams as most students lacked the basic knowledge of maths.

'The undergrads I have to teach at government colleges have surprisingly poor knowledge of maths, although they score GPA 5 in SSC and HSC exams,' said Ataur, who has been teaching maths for the past 25 years.

Like the SEQAEP, another project aimed at training English teachers at a cost of Tk 40

crore has also been shelved due to fund constraints. Again, a government initiative to improve science education has suffered the same fate, too.

The government in September 2010 formed a 27-member committee to identify the obstacles to science education and find ways to make science subjects popular with students. But the high-powered committee has not come up with its report till filing of this report on Friday evening.

An education ministry survey conducted in December 2010 found that 50.72 per cent of the country's secondary school English teachers had BA or MA degrees in subjects other than English.

The survey jointly conducted by the SEQAEP and the DSHE covered around 17,536 teachers of 6,702 educational institutions in 121 upazilas.

The latest government survey, which covered some 18,470 of the country's 18,582 secondary schools, found nearly one-fourth of the country's secondary schools were underperforming or dysfunctional.