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No seats for 1.2 lakh after HSC results

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Around 1.2 lakh of the students who passed Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations this year will be denied admission to the public and private universities and other institutions due to shortage of seats.

Besides, many students getting the highest grade -- GPA-5 -- both in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and HSC examinations will not be able to get admitted to their first-choice institutions among the 26 public universities and 13 medical colleges as their number is much more than the number of seats.

A tough competition awaits aspirants for admission to these public institutions that include Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Dhaka Medical College and Dhaka University (DU).

"In spite of their eagerness, at least 1.2 lakh HSC passed students will be deprived of higher education mainly for shortage of seats in the universities," said Ahsan Abdullah, director of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information

and Statistics (BANBEIS).

About 3.5 lakh students passed HSC examinations this year.

Ahsan said public and private universities have 1.75 lakh seats, some 30,000 students will go for vocational and technical courses or go abroad for education and some 25,000 will involve in different professional work.

According to the BANBEIS, there are about 20,000 seats in the 26 public universities (except National University--NU), 11,000 in the 54 private universities, 4,000 seats in public and private medical colleges, 55,000 in NU-affiliated 61 colleges with honours courses, 80,000 in NU-affiliated 1,069 colleges with degree (pass) courses and around 5,000 seats in private engineering and technical institutes.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said number of seats in the universities will have to be increased as number of HSC passed students is increasing.

"No doubt time has come to take steps for this. But we have to maintain the quality of education,

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Otherwise, the very purpose of higher education will be defeated," he told The Daily Star.

He suggested introducing double shift or evening shift in public universities and well-reputed colleges to meet the present crisis.

Public universities including BUET, DU, Jahangirnagar University (JU), Rajshahi University (RU) and Chittagong University (CU), public medical colleges and some renowned colleges under the NU have only 22,500 seats. Of these, 810 seats are in BUET, around 4,500 in DU, around 1,100 in JU and 1,450 in public medical colleges, sources mentioned.

The authorities do not yet have any plans to increase the number of seats.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of this situation, coaching centres have mushroomed in the capital and other divisional headquarters with hollow promises of ensuring high scores in various admission tests. A large number of HSC passed students are already attending these coaching centres with consequent financial losses to their guardians.

Some renowned academicians have suggested cancellation of admission tests, and introduction of a new system of admission on the basis of GPA (Grade Point Average) in SSC and HSC examinations.

"Some countries have the system of admission in universities considering GPA. It will be better if

all to introduce this also in our country, giving up admission tests," the UGC Chairman said.

This year, 59,450 students in science group passed the HSC examinations and they will have to vie for 25,500 seats for science subjects in the public and private universities. So, a large number of them may be forced to switch over to commerce or humanities groups.

Sources pointed out that admission crisis will be acute this time as the education ministry and UGC have already declared illegal 56 foreign universities' branches, around 100 outer campuses of private universities and 40 private medical colleges. The UGC has asked them not to admit students from this year.

The UGC should introduce new rules for running foreign universities' branches as a large number students can get higher education through those and outer campuses of private universities, said a top official of a foreign university branch.

Meanwhile, due to admission problems at home and various other factors, many of the HSC passed students intend to study in foreign universities especially in US, UK, Canada, Malaysia, India and different countries of European Union (EU). To capitalise on this, a number of fake consultancy firms have sprung up and many students are falling in their trap.