

FY2013 BUDGET: LOOKING BACK

Sluggish project work retards edn progress

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THE sluggish implementation of the development projects under the education and the primary and mass education ministries till March in the current fiscal year is frustrating and contributed little towards enhancing the quality of education in the country, said education experts.

They said although finance minister AMA Muhith in his budget speech said the government had attached priority to conducting teacher's training, particularly in the core subjects, to enhance the quality of education, the actual scenario

was not good.

According to the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the planning ministry, in July to March of fiscal year 2012-2013, the primary and mass education ministry had implemented only 61 per cent of its development programme and the education ministry even less, merely 56 per cent.

The primary and mass education ministry in the nine months had spent only Tk 2,628 crore of its Tk 4,333 crore development budget for implementing 14 projects this fiscal year while the education ministry had spent just Tk 1,393 crore of its Tk 2,485 crore

development outlay for implementing 75 projects.

Planning ministry officials expressed the fear that due to the slow pace of development project implementation so far the ministries would now have to implement the rest of their development programmes in just three months, which might result in a waste of funds and poor quality of project implementation.

Education experts said although the government had promised to establish 1,500 colleges and 306 model high schools in the current fiscal year, the progress in implementing that programme so far had

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 not been satisfactory. They also blamed inadequate budgetary allocation for making the implement the current education policy difficult.

Under the current Annual Development Programme, the education sector received a total allocation of Tk 21,408 crore of which Tk 9,825 crore went to the primary and mass education ministry and Tk 11,583 crore to the education ministry.

Budgetary allocation for education has been decreasing over the past few years. The allocations for education and information technology in the current budget account for only 11.5 per cent of the total outlay. The figure was 12.4 per cent in FY2011-12 and 13.51 per cent in FY2010-11.

But the Awami League's election manifesto had promised, 'In order to ensure human resources development, the highest budgetary allocation will be given to education, science and information technology sectors.'

The UNESCO declaration states the allocation for

education should be at least 20 per cent of the national budget and 6 per cent of the gross domestic product.

In terms of percentage of the GDP, budgetary allocation for education in Bangladesh stands at only 2.2 per cent, which is one of the lowest in South Asia.

According to the World Bank, the Maldives spends 10.3 per cent of its GDP on education, Bhutan 4.7 per cent, Nepal 4.6 per cent, Pakistan 2.4 per cent, and India 3.3 per cent.

Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Chowdhury said, 'We are disappointed at the budget implementation. Allocation for implementation of the education policy was lower and it affected implementation of the education policy.'

'The progress in implementation of the project for establishing 1,500 colleges and 306 model high schools is not satisfactory' said Rasheda, a former primary education adviser to a caretaker government.

The government introduced new school curriculum but is yet to train all the secondary school teach-

ers on how to administer it. Teachers termed the task of teaching the new subjects introduced in the curriculum a challenge as they are not conversant in them.

Although a project was undertaken to train 5,200 master trainers who would train teachers at the district level, only 1,800 master trainers have so far been trained under the project.

Besides, teacher's training courses conducted by master trainers are yet to begin in many districts under the project. Officials concerned confirmed that training of master trainers was yet to be completed, although schools were already in the fifth month of the current academic year.

'Teacher's training and upgrading the curriculum are necessary for improving the quality of education,' said Rasheda adding, 'The government was also slow to begin the project of establishing ICT labs and multimedia classrooms at the schools.'

There is a huge gap between the reality and the expectations regarding the implementation of the education budget, she ob-

served. Power and Participation Research Centre executive chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman also termed the implementation of the education budget unsatisfactory.

'The government now will try to complete the work in a rush and that may result in a poor quality of the development work,' said Hossain, also a former education adviser to a caretaker government.

He emphasised the need for quality expenditure of the budgetary allocations for education.

But education secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury brushed aside the allegations claiming the implementation of the development budget for education was on the right track.

He said the rate of implementation of the development budget for education was higher than the national average and there would be no problem to implement the projects.

The secretary also said the government had promised to improve the quality of education and was doing its best to keep that.