

Literacy rate 61pc

Govt reveals 2013 figure amid confusion; no latest estimate available

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Amid confusion and conflicting statistics about literacy rate over the last four years, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman yesterday said it is 61 percent.

This, however, does not depict the current picture as he quoted the figure from a survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2013. The minister gave the statistics at a briefing at his ministry ahead of the International Literacy Day to be observed tomorrow.

There has been serious confusion over the actual literacy rate since 2011 with the ministers and government officials coming up with conflicting figures on this occasion every year.

Even the incumbent minister at a similar briefing last year claimed the literacy rate was 65 percent without explaining how he got the figure. At the same programme, the then secretary Kazi Akhtar Hossain said the rate was "almost 70 percent".

The then director general of Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) said since they considered BBS's estimate as the yardstick, the rate was 59.82 percent as per a BBS survey conducted in 2010.

In 2013, the then minister Afsarul Ameen claimed that the literacy rate was 71 percent, though he did not explain how he had come up with the number. The previous year, his deputy, Motahar Hossain said the rate was more than 60 percent.

The primary and mass education minister, however, elaborated on the figure yesterday, saying the rate was divided in different categories based on age groups.

Literacy rate of children between seven and 15 years of age was 54.19 percent. It was 59.82 percent for the people over 15, he said, quoting the BBS survey published in June this year.

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"We have taken special initiatives to turn the huge population into human resources by eradicating illiteracy and providing skill-based training," Mostafizur added.

The minister also said they had taken up a project with own funds to eradicate illiteracy.

Basic Literacy, a Tk 483-crore project, would be implemented by the BNFE to school 45 lakh people aged between 15 and 45 in 64 districts.

The deputy commissioners of the districts would carry out the field-level work through selective NGOs, Mostafizur added.

STIPEND TO INCREASE

The minister also announced that the government would increase the number of stipend recipients to 1.3 crore from 78 lakh.

"A total of one crore and 30 lakh primary school students will get monthly stipend," he said, adding that the proposal's approval was at the final stage.

The government at present gives Tk 100 stipend a month to 78 lakh primary students in rural areas.

Mesbah ul Alam, secretary to the ministry, was also present at the briefing.