

Mursalin Kabir, a child of only 11 years, attended three admission tests in the first two weeks of January. After completing his Primary School Completion exam from a primary level kindergarten school, Mursalin was trying to get admission in grade six of a good secondary school. Unfortunately, he did not make it. His pale face, tired and disappointed look, highly unusual for a boy of such a tender age, is a tell-tale sign of the psychological torment and pressure he went through in the past couple of weeks. He didn't even agree to talk to us.

Mursalin's father Arman Kabir says, "There are only three well-regarded secondary schools in my neighbourhood in Uttara. But my son did not qualify in the admission tests where at least 75 students compete for every seat. This is why I enrolled him in this school although it's very expensive and not government-approved."

Mursalin is not alone. This year, this unauthorised secondary school in Uttara (whose name will not be disclosed to prevent any undue attacks on the institution) has admitted 550 students in grade six. Like Arman Kabir, many parents are opting for unauthorised schools after finding no place for their children in government-approved ones.

However, Bangladesh Education Statistics 2016 tells a different story. According to the report, the teacher-student ratio in the secondary level is 1:41 which indicates that there are sufficient secondary schools in the country. However, this ratio is misleading. It does not reveal the crisis faced by the country's secondary level students in densely populated cities like Dhaka.

In Dhaka, there is shortage of quality educational institutions. Moreover, there is a severe shortage of space in the recognised ones. In addition to these limitations, the number of secondary level students in Bangladesh is staggeringly high. In Dhaka city alone, the number of secondary level students is 199,892, whereas there are only 450 government approved secondary level schools for almost two hundred thousand students. Such a dearth of recognised educational institutions creates extreme competition in school admission exams every year. These admission exams ensure that only a few lucky students with marginally higher scores will have the chance to get admitted to approved institutions.

On the other hand, most of the unauthorised schools enrol students without any prior admission exam. They are also flexible in that they enrol students who have a poorer academic performance. Many of these schools publish flashy advertisements promising guaranteed A+ for "inattentive" students.

Special care and residential facilities for derailed students, which is almost absent in mainstream

THE TROUBLE WITH UNAUTHORISED SCHOOLS

In the first part of this article, published on January 12, 2018, we revealed how unauthorised schools have mushroomed all over the country and are affecting the quality of our education system. In this instalment, we explore how parents are being compelled to send their children to these very schools.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

institutions, is also a major marketing factor of these schools. Lured by these advertisements and rejected by recognised schools, thousands of parents enrol their children in unauthorised schools. Rozina Begum, mother of four children and the wife of an expat worker, had to admit her eldest son Shahinul Islam in one such unauthorised, residential school.

"My neighbours and relatives used to rebuke me for my spirit. I loved to organise cricket and badminton tournaments and I used to lead the youngsters of our

neighbourhood in all these activities," shares Shahin. What Shahin didn't like at all is the idea of going to school regularly. Time and again, Shahin's school teachers from when he was studying in a government boy's school, reported his absence in the classroom to his mother. However, when Shahin's school teacher spotted him smoking cigarettes with his friends in the school playground, Shahin was expelled. He was in grade seven.

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মাদার নতুন নাম

কালার গার্ড
কাপড়ের রঙকে রাখে
নতুনের মতো ঝকঝকে

মাল্টি বুষ্টার
Multi Booster
কাপড়ের যে কোন দাগ-
ময়লাকে নিমিবেই দূর করে

Fast wash
Brilliant White
DETERGENT POWDER

সবচেয়ে ফাস্ট, সবচেয়ে কার্যকরী ..