

Educational inequality on the rise

Data revealing how badly students from lower-income groups fare in university entrance exams showcase the widening gap between Iran's rich and poor.

Social Desk

Only two percent of the ranks below 3,000 in university entrance exams in 2021-22 belong to the first, second, and third income groups, i.e., the less well-off strata.

The data was announced by Mansour Kobagarian, a member of Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. It serves as an indicator of the role money plays in education.

According to the statistics provided by Kobagarian, 86 percent of the entrants to the fields of medicine and dentistry are from the eighth, ninth, and tenth income groups, i.e., the well-to-do and wealthy strata. The statistic means that in the future, 86 percent of doctors will be members of rich and prosperous families. In contrast, only 1.3 percent of medical and dental students are from families belonging to low-income strata.

Nevertheless, this information is not new. Despite annual fluctuations in the

statistics and numerical data regarding participant counts, one consistent factor remains unchanged from previous years: The persistent academic challenges faced by students from lower-income backgrounds.

The statistics should sound the alarm for authorities on the increasing educational inequality in the country.

Most education analysts attribute government policies as the primary source of inequality and class-based education, particularly through the adoption of contractionary policies aligned with the principles of the free market. This alarming trend highlights the marginalization of public schools, leading to a disruption in the implementation of the 30th Article of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to this article, the government is obligated to ensure free education for the entire nation until the completion of secondary education, and to provide affordable options for higher education. However, the

core essence of this principle has been neglected, clearly reflecting the government's increasing disregard for education. As a consequence, the financial burden of the education sector has been shifted onto parents.

It's been many years that the national university entrance exams in our country have not served as a battleground where weaker and stronger candidates compete; instead, it has turned into a platform upon which schools compete, and in this competition, public schools are consistently overshadowed by private ones, with their portion of top rankings in the entrance examination gradually dwindling year after year.

All this happens despite the consistent emphasis of the Leader of the Revolution on the necessity of reinforcing the caliber of public schools. The Leader advocates for an elevation in the level and quality of education provided in these schools, ensuring that students do not perceive studying there



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as diminishing their chances of success in the entrance exam. Families, too, should be reassured that sending their children to these institutions is not akin to consigning them to a destitute environment.

Iran's turmoil within the realm of public education is unparalleled on a global scale. Extensive research conducted on 12 prominent

and pioneering countries in the education sector reveals a striking reality: Disadvantaged families receive educational, economic, and social support. However, in our country, this situation runs counter to both the 30th Article of the Constitution and the policies established at the outset of the Islamic Revolution.

Mohammadreza Niknejad,

teacher and researcher, maintains that "reverting to the law can pave the way and alleviate educational inequity. Today, Scandinavian countries are implementing Article 30 of our Constitution, whereas in our own nation, policies and laws designed to uphold social and educational justice have been inexplicably disregarded."

Festival records oral history of retirees for future benefits

Social Desk

The first-ever festival of 'Lasting Experience' concluded with an emphasis on using the valuable experiences of retired individuals.

Mohammad Chakkoshian, the cultural and social deputy of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, highlighted the festival's objective of collecting and preserving the oral accounts of retirees as a guiding light for the future, Fars News Agency reported.

"The festival of 'Lasting Experience' is held with the aim of recording the oral history of retirees so that we can benefit from this experiential knowledge as a beacon for the future," Chakkoshian stated.

Recognizing the vital contributions of retirees and elders

in the realms of service, work, and production, the official accentuated the significance of incorporating their experiences into societal accolades.

"Using the experiences of retirees and elders is one of the components of honoring these worthy individuals," he asserted.

The festival's underlying philosophy rests on the conviction that understanding the past correctly is essential for progress.

"Knowledge is an accumulation of experience that is presented in a systematic way, and there are many instances showing that we don't use the existing tacit knowledge," Chakkoshian explained.

Moreover, he elucidated the pivotal aspects of the Second Step of Iran's Islamic Revolution, emphasizing the impor-



tance of drawing upon the experiences of elders while nurturing the creativity and initiative of the younger generation. "The Second Step of Iran's Islamic Revolution, by the order of the Leader, should be followed by relying on the experiences of the elders and the creativity and initiative of the youth," Chakkoshian elaborated.

Chakkoshian further highlighted the perils of neglecting experiences and opting for a trial-and-error approach. "Ignoring experiences makes us move forward with trial and error," he stressed.

Iran aims to bolster its health ...

"Iran has met more than 98 percent of its pharmaceutical needs by utilizing its domestic capacity," the minister said, adding, "This capacity can create a favorable market for Iran's pharmaceutical industry in the countries of the region."

Einollahi described his two-day trip to Tajikistan as a strategic move to bolster health diplomacy. The visit will focus on exporting medical and pharmaceutical equipment, which, in turn, strengthens the capacity of knowledge-based companies active in the production and development of medical equipment in Iran's market. Doing a tour of Tajikistan's medical and academic centers is another goal of this trip.

The health official also emphasized the potential that the shared language between Iran and Tajikistan holds for expanding health tourism. "Plans are underway to select and send Iranian health advisors to friendly countries as soon as possible," he said.

"Tajikistan will be one of the first countries where we will establish the post of health advisor with the aim of developing the market for health-oriented products as well as health tourism."



IRNA

Iran's police set on curbing the problem of 'shutis'

Social Desk

Emphasizing the necessity of addressing the issue of 'shutis' seriously, the deputy police chief of Iran stated, "The utilization of these vehicles is increasingly becoming a prevalent means of transporting contraband."

Shutis are customized cars that are used in Iran to transport smuggled goods and in some cases people. In response to the rising number of such vehicles on the roads and in cities, Commander Qassem Rezaei asserted, "Shutis are unquestionably illegal, and it is the duty of the police to confront any unlawful prac-

tice," IRNA reported.

He further elaborated on the criminal and perilous behavior associated with these cars, stating, "At times, their actions result in further criminal activities and even human casualties, and on several occasions, they have resulted in the martyrdom of police officers."

The deputy police chief remarked, "What is evident is that this issue is unorthodox and spreading across various provinces. However, police officers working on multiple checkpoints and roads, as well as specialized operational teams, are working towards addressing the phenomenon."

Rezaei said the country's police force has placed significant emphasis on dealing with the shutis, stressing that the reckless actions of these illicit vehicles will be curbed.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of so-called 'shuti' cars carrying smuggled goods, particularly in Tehran, which is the economic hub of the country. In addition to the disruptive nature of smuggling activities, the reckless behavior of the drivers of these cars on the roads contributes to a significant number of traffic accidents. These behaviors are primarily used as an attempt to escape the

police. Shutis cars — predominantly of the Peugeot 405, Peugeot Pars, and Samand models — primarily focus on smuggling goods from the country's entry points, such as port areas in the south and the north, as well as border regions in the east and the west. In certain cases, the illicit trade involves the transportation of individuals as well.

The anti-trafficking police recently characterized the issue of shutis as a secondary problem and attributed the

prevalence of this hazardous mode of transportation to its profitability and the less-than-satisfactory management at the country's entry points.

