

## Quality of primary education worsens

NOAKHALI, Feb 15: Quality of primary education in the country deteriorated although the number of the school going children increased significantly, reports UNB.

Shortage of teachers, furniture and accommodation for the students are mainly responsible for deterioration of the standard of the elementary education.

A survey titled "Food for Education Programme: Improvement or Deterioration of the Quality of Child Education" revealed that the number of school going children increased with the introduction of the Food for Education Programme.

It also found that number of dropouts decrease side by side with increase in the numbers of the school going children in the age limit of 6-10 years.

The government with the financial assistance of World Bank started the programme in July 1993 aimed at helping the poor families to bring down the

dropout rate.

However, government, non-government and registered primary schools of a union from each of the 460 thanas of the country were initially brought under the programme.

Some 4,487 primary schools were brought under the programme in the first year and another 127 madrasas were also included in the next year (1994).

Some 14.80 lakh children were enrolled in these primary schools in 1994. Of them, 6.98 lakh were given food facilities. It was 47 per cent of the total number of students enrolled in 1994.

Over 1.14 lakh metric tons of wheat were distributed among poor students that was increased in the calendar years 1995, '96, '97 and '98 considering the survey reports of the respective years.

However, a steering committee comprising representatives from Primary and Mass Educa-

tion Department, Internal Food Policy Research Institute, Food Ministry, Bangladesh Statistical Bureau and World Bank was formed to evaluate the quality of primary education.

According to their recommendations the survey was conducted in 104 primary schools under the programme and in 97 schools out of the programme.

The survey found that the presence of total children in the schools reached at 77.6 per cent after the programme was started which was 63 per cent before starting of the programme.

Rate of dropout per year before starting the programme was 18.5 per cent that came down to 10.9 per cent after the programme was initiated.

Moreover, lack of adequate teachers, furniture and audio-visual systems and lack of proper supervision by the authorities concerned contributed mostly to the deterioration of the standard of education.