

## Khulna school for the blind, deaf limping along

UNB, Khulna

Housed in a dilapidated building and functioning with only half its staff, Goalkhali Government School for the Blind and the Deaf in Khulna city is plagued with multi-pronged problems over the years.

All of its activities are running in the 50-year-old school buildings, which are now in a crumbling state.

Alongside the prolonged teacher shortage, 50 percent posts of the school staff, including that of superintendent, are lying vacant. There are no steps in sight to solve the problems, though especially shortage of skilled teachers is hampering studies beyond description.

The authorities said only government intervention can save the school from further deterioration.

School sources said during inception it offered education up to grade 5, which was later elevated to grade 10.

At present, 120 students are studying in the school against its total capacity of 130. Of them, 44 are blind and 76 are deaf.

Three students of the school are prospective Secondary School Certificate examinees, but there are no teachers to guide them presently.

They now have to take lessons in other nearby schools with regular students.

As regular textbooks are not disabled-friendly, these physically challenged students are finding it hard to keep pace with their regular peers.

The school has enough space for accommodation of the students but the buildings have become so old that they are unfit for living in. Also with as less as Tk 2,600 monthly allocation for each student, it is very difficult to maintain their living at the school. Three posts of teachers at the school are currently lying vacant. At present, only four fulltime teachers and eight part time teachers teach at the school.

Visually impaired students Saddam and Azizul told the news agency that as long as the school coordinator is here, they feel good but when he is not there, there is nobody to look after them.

Additional Coordinator Kazi Mohammad Ibrahim said, "Technically I'm not the school coordinator but since there is nobody here, I am performing extra duties of four other posts."