

Level of primary education notched up *Ensuring quality is the key*

We will address this from two different angles. Firstly, as a policy, enhancing the level of primary education to class VIII from class V is a very timely and well-thought-out move for which the government should be commended. It takes into consideration the socio-economic reality of the country since the 5-year basic education did really nothing to help a person acquire the minimum work skill which the new system of 8-year primary education will, hopefully, help do.

However, we would like to believe that the government is well aware of the challenges that it will face in implementing the new policy. It should tackle these on an immediate, short and long term basis addressing the lacunae in three important areas that affect the quality of primary education, namely infrastructure, trained teachers and financing. The budgetary allocation should receive more than the current 1.8 percent of the GDP to allow the plan to be implemented quickly and efficiently.

Secondly, another equally important issue is the quality of the current system that is hamstrung by certain inadequacies, in spite of the efforts of the government. Needless to say, these deficiencies affect the output and defeat the aim of primary education. And those are related to the quality and training of teachers, not to speak of the infrastructure deficiencies. While moving forward adds dynamism to a system, as the new policy will certainly do, moving forward without removing the current deficits and consolidating the existing system will inevitably result in the carryover of the existing lacunae. That will detract from the main purpose of the new policy.