

Refreshment betters kids' school performance

Midday meal programme benefits 2 lakh primary children in Noakhali

Md NURUL AMIN, Noakhali

Admission, attendance and pass rates of government primary school students in nine upazilas under district have seen significant improvement during the last one year, thanks to the introduction of midday meal to provide refreshment to the kids during school hours.

The programme, brainchild of Hazera Khatun, headmistress of Charbata Primary School in Subarnachar upazila, gained tremendous success solely depending on the guardians' cooperation, without any grant from any government or non-government organisation.

Hazera initiated the programme at her school early last year and seeing the success, other primary schools in the district started introducing it in phases.

Now 1.99 lakh 120 students of 1,213 primary schools in nine upazilas of the district are getting the benefit of the programme. They attend school from 9:00am 4:00pm daily.

However, 64 schools in the district are yet to introduce the programme.

At the beginning of the programme, mothers' rallies were held at the schools where they were made aware of giving children regular nutritious food and the bad effects of not taking meals on time by the school children.

School bags and tiffin boxes for the school children were bought with the money collected from the



mothers and those were distributed among the students.

The mothers were advised to give rice, bread, eggs, khicuri, chira (beaten rice), muri (puffed rice), vegetables etc in the tiffin boxes of their children.

"After introduction of midday meal, students' attention to classes has improved. They are doing better results," said Hazera Khatun, headmistress of Charbata Primary School in Subarnachar upazila in the district.

Nuruzzaman, a small trader at a local bazaar, said, "When I started giving home-made tiffin to my two kids reading in Class V and Class IV, they became more inter-

ested to go to school and study regularly.

Hasib and Nayan, students of Class V at Dakkhin Char Jabbar Model Government Primary School, said they enjoy taking midday meal with other classmates during the tiffin period.

Md Harun-or-Rashid, upazila nirbahi officer of Subarnachar, said all the 90 primary schools in the remote upazila have been brought under the midday meal programme.

"Now the admission rate of the children in the upazila is 99 percent and the pass rate has reached 100 percent. The drop out percentage has come down to zero from earlier

13 percent.

"The success could be achieved as the guardians have become aware of the importance of nutrition for attention to study. Sincerity of the local administration, teachers and guardians of the schools concerned is enough for introducing the programme all over the country," he said.

Noakhali District Primary Education Officer Anwar Hossain said introduction of midday meal programme in the primary schools has greatly helped to ensure children's regular attendance at classes and improve their performance.