

Teacher absenteeism cripples primary education in Hatiya

Inspections find empty classrooms, poor oversight and falling attendance across island schools

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Anwarul Haider



Photo: Anwarul Haider

The primary education system in Hatiya, a remote island upazila of Noakhali, is under severe strain due to widespread teacher absenteeism and weak monitoring, raising fears of a looming education crisis.

Visits to several schools in Charking union revealed a pattern of irregular attendance by teachers, leaving students without supervision and disrupting regular classes.



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Although classes are scheduled from 9:00am to 4:00pm, most teachers were absent even at midday during recent inspections.

In several schools, headmasters and assistant teachers were found missing, while students wandered around classrooms and school grounds without instruction.

Locals said prolonged negligence has already led many students to drop out or lose interest in schooling.



Photo: Anwarul Haider

At around 12:15pm on March 30, a visit to Dakshin-Paschim Boalia Government Primary School found fifth-grade students loitering in corridors and on the school field.

Students, requesting anonymity, said classes were not being held due to the absence of the headmaster.

The school peon, Rashed Uddin, was seen using his mobile phone and later went to a nearby market to call Headmaster Ripon Chandra Das after learning the visit by the reporter.

On the second floor, assistant teacher Shabnur Akter was conducting a class with only seven to eight fourth-grade students, while the third-grade classroom was empty.

Another assistant teacher was absent despite her leave officially beginning the following day. Attempts to contact her by phone were unsuccessful.

Headmaster Ripon Chandra Das said he had briefly gone to the market for tea and claimed the assistant teacher had left after taking leave.

He added that the school, established in 1940, has six approved teaching posts but only three teachers currently in place.

Despite official enrolment of 212 students, fewer than 20 were present during the visit.

The headmaster also cited a lack of safe drinking water, absence of hygienic sanitation facilities, and shortages of classrooms and furniture.

Classes are being held in two dilapidated buildings, where falling plaster has exposed rusted reinforcement rods. Although constructed in 2011 and 2014, the buildings have deteriorated significantly, reports our correspondent.

A separate visit at 12:45pm to Boalia Harakumar Das Government Primary School found similar conditions.

The headmaster was absent, and only three students were present in a third-grade classroom with assistant teacher Anup Chandra Das.

No students attended fourth grade, while a fifth-grade teacher sat idle due to the absence of pupils.

“The school has six sanctioned posts, of which four are filled. One teacher is currently on maternity leave. Although official records show 30 enrolled students, only five were present,” Anup said.

Local residents, including Amin Hossain, Nirab Uddin and Md Badsha, alleged that the school has effectively become defunct, with most parents shifting their children to distant schools or nearby madrasas due to irregular classes.

They also claimed some teachers send their own children to other institutions.

Acting headmaster Ratneshwar Roy denied the allegations, saying he had been at the upazila education office on official duty and attends school regularly.

According to the Hatiya Upazila Primary Education Office, there are 227 government primary schools across 10 unions. Of the 12 sanctioned posts for assistant upazila education officers responsible for monitoring, only two are currently filled.

Contact, Upazila Education Officer Abdul Jabbar said departmental action would be taken if allegations of irregularities against any teacher are proven.

