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Villages around Savar—III

Education sector badly neglected

Staff Correspondent

With a population of nearly 4500, Gokulnagar village under Savar Upazila could produce only one post-graduate degree holder from the nearby Jahangirnagar University so far. The University was set up 18 years ago.

A survey revealed that there are nine persons of the village who had been graduated from different institutions and about 20 others passed their HSC examinations.

The sorry plight of the village's education scenario is not just an exception in consideration of the overall picture of Bangladesh. In a country where only 20 per cent people are literate, it is not expected that Gokulnagar would cross the average mark. But many of the local people had really nourished a dream that since Jahangirnagar University is within a stone's throw, local lads will be encouraged to go for higher studies but unfortunately that spirit did not work. Abject poverty has made it impossible for the shining stars to bloom.

During my survey in the area, I was really impressed with the fact that some local enthusiasts have started a kindergarten school at their own initiatives. It was not immediately known what motive worked behind the establishment of the school. The objective might be busi-

ness or honest endeavour, but the launching of a school should always be welcome. Gokulnagar has one primary school, one high school and a mosque where Arabic teachings are offered. Since the primary school is owned by government, there is no question of being financially handicapped. But the high school has been facing many problems among which financial problem is number one. Only 40 students could pass the SSC examinations from the village so far. This implies that the school has been failing to offer maximum services to the villagers since its inception.

The primary school has an enrolment of 350 students with its five teaching staff. But the high school's enrolment is far less and limited to 200 students only.

As the academic atmosphere of the high school deteriorates, some guardians thought it wise to send their wards to the Savar Cantonment Public School and the Jahangirnagar University School. The condition of both the primary and high school buildings are miserable.

A semi-pucca building houses only three classes of the primary school and two other classes are held under the open sky. There is no common room for the teachers and, as such, they have to move around during

interval periods. The building housing Gokulnagar High School is also in a dilapidated condition and needs immediate renovation. Although the main source of income is tuition fees of the students and voluntary donations from the generous villagers, the school gets fixed monthly benefits from the Government regularly. All these somehow manage the teachers' salaries but are insufficient to do any development work for the school.

During my survey, I found that about 20 per cent of the villagers are financially solvent. They can promote the cause of higher education. Another 50 per cent of them reap harvests from their own lands every year which make them earn a living almost all the year round. This group is not in a position to give financial assistance to the school but they can help at least by sending their children to the schools regularly. In fact, there is an apparent lack of motivation everywhere. What my children will do after getting higher education, demanded a villagerman. 'Since there is huge unemployment problem in the country, how can you assure that my son will be provided with a job to make a meaningful use of my expenditure', he said. In reality, I could not give any right answer to his queries.