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Irregularities, malpractices in FEP execution 60,000 deprived of primary education, no schools in 1100 Comilla villages

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, May 24:—About 60,000 children are deprived of education as there are no primary schools in 1100 out of 3,605 villages under 12 thanas of Comilla district.

There are 2494 primary schools in Comilla district of which 1334 are government schools, 415 registered schools, 50 unregistered schools, 202 community schools, 97 satellite schools, 62 kindergartens, 18 primary schools attach to high school, one PTI school, 181 Ebtedai Madrasahs and 134 Ebtedai schools.

With the introduction of Food for Education Programme the number of students has increased in the rural areas. Some children are reading in the schools only to collect foodgrains under the programme.

The different NGOs have also extended educational facilities to the remote villages by introducing non-formal education programmes. Yet about 60,000

children are still deprived of primary education in the district.

Meanwhile, widespread irregularities and malpractices are hampering the implementation of the Food for Education Programme (FEP) in the district causing a serious setback to achieve the goal of the project undertaken by the government.

Corruption, village politics

According to local people, the primary school enjoying the facilities under the FEP have been turned into dens of corruption, favouritism and village politics. As a result, the academic atmosphere in these schools has been vitiated as the teachers, managing committees and the local influential people are now engaged in FEP activities directly and indirectly.

The teachers and others concerned with FEP project are distributing the allotted, wheat or

rice for other purposes than teaching of the students. The authorities supervising the process are silent for unknown reasons.

According to sources, the government undertook the FEP project to bring the children from the poor and destitute families under the primary education network. According to the programme only 40 per cent of the total students of a school will get the FEP facilities. But in fact, this rule is not being strictly followed by the institutions under the FEP project.

A section of corrupt headmasters, teachers and managing committees in connivance with some corrupt thana education office employees are involved in the overall misappropriation of the fund and malpractices.

In many cases FEP cards have been allotted to fake students and students of comparatively solvent families.

6 to 9 kgs distributed

According to the programme, the students from a family is entitled to get 16 kilogrammes of wheat or rice per month. But there are allegations that in most of the cases only 6 to 9 kgs of the commodity are distributed per card.

Besides the corrupt officials are collecting Tk 100 to Tk 200 per head for issuing new FEP cards.

Sources said that numerous rival groups have been formed in almost all the primary schools

under FEP project on the issues of distribution of cards and irregularities in the distribution of wheat or rice.

The institutions have been turned into the centres of village politics as the guardians and teachers have been involved in it. As a result, academic atmosphere has been polluted signallying chaos and uncertainty of the overall programme in the district.

About one third of the total allotted wheat or rice is grabbed or misappropriated in these institutions.