

Primary schools in wretched state

Enrolment in Old Dhaka falling?

A report published in this daily yesterday revealed the awful conditions of Islamia UP Government Primary School in Sutrapur of Old Dhaka. Four other schools in the same area are in no better state.

To focus on Islamia UP Government Primary School, students and teachers alike fear for their safety due to its appalling condition which often leads to rainwater dripping from the ceiling and plasters falling off the walls. The recent earthquake scare has further worsened the sense of security of teachers and pupils. The school, which has only four usable classrooms left, has seen a sharp decrease in enrolment over the years due to its dilapidated condition. The number of students in 1990 was 600 whereas it now stands at a shocking 51.

That students and teachers should have to worry about their safety in an institution that is supposed to provide a safe environment conducive to learning is extremely concerning. How exactly does the government, having made primary education compulsory for children, expect a rise in primary school enrolment when schools are left badly neglected? Long-standing encroachment by influential locals upon land allocated to the institution in question has made it even more challenging to renovate the school. There we urge the administration's intervention to mitigate the situation.

Overall, we draw the attention of the primary education ministry to the lack of primary school infrastructure countrywide and the threat of land-grabbing posed to schools in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment -- a basic right of every child. Since the underprivileged rely on government run primary schools, the authorities should be obliged to provide safe access to them.