

# Forgotten pry schools

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A 64-YEAR old primary school on Banagram Road in the capital remains closed during heavy rains as its roofs leak.

Classes are held on only four rooms on the first floor of the three-storey school building.

No wonder the number of students at Islamia UP Government Primary School dropped to 51 from 1,000 two decades ago.

The dilapidated school building was not repaired for years for which this school, hardly three km from the secretariat, got into its current state.

The story of dilapidation and non repair is common for hundreds of government run primary schools across Bangladesh.

Parents in the neighbourhood said that they try to avoid sending children to Islamia UP Government  
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In the absence of open spaces or playgrounds, students of Islamia UP Government Primary School of Old Town of Dhaka take part in assembly in a small and dark classroom with plasters coming off the roof the beams of which have developed cracks. — Indrajit Ghosh.

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Primary School housed in a risky dilapidated building which looks like an abandoned house.

Even after brief heavy showers it gets difficult to enter the school campus as it gets submerged by stagnant water.

Due to dilapidation no classes can be held in nine rooms on the first and the second floors which stink.

In the first floor too, students feel scared and insecure to attend classes in tiny and dark classrooms with plasters falling from the roof, the beams of which developed cracks.

As day light does not get in teachers depend on electric light for taking classes.

For these reasons, said head teacher Shahnaj Parvin, the number of students dropped sharply.

She said that classes cannot be taken in the tin roofed second floor as monkeys visit there frequently through the unprotected windows

and roof.

The government neglected the maintenance since it took over the school in 1973.

At Muslim Government Primary School on Lal Mohan Saha Street in the Old Town six classes are held in its lone room.

There is no toilet for 72 students and three teachers of the one-room primary school.

The tiny school building might collapse any moment, said head teacher Henoara Begum.

Due to acute space shortage classes are held in two shifts, three at a time in the lone room for which students hear three lectures simultaneously, said the head teacher.

She said that the 58-year old school no more attracts students.

Local residents pass through the all three classrooms of Banglabazar Government Primary School even during the school hours also as there is no

other passage for them, said acting head teacher Sadia Mou. Another class room remained unusable since its roof came down in 2012, she said.

Rainwater leaks through the roofs of all the classrooms, she said.

After each vacation, she said, teachers have to remove excreta of dogs and cats and other litter from the class rooms to make them usable, she said.

The school has no toilet and water supply for 50 students and three teachers.

After some of the benches, tables and ceiling fans were stolen from the classrooms during the last Ramadan vacation, she said, the remaining tables and benches had to be secured with chains, she said.

Faridabad Government Primary School, Mahuttuli Renaissance Government Primary School and Chhoto Katra Government Primary School are housed in ruin down buildings.

Due to non repair for years students attend classes in dilapidated class rooms, said teachers.

In the Old Town of the capital 12 schools are housed in dilapidated buildings, said district primary education officer Shahin Ara Begum.

Primary and Mass Education Ministry could not say how many primary schools are housed in dilapidated and risky buildings across the country.

But recent media reports say that at least 800 primary schools are housed in dilapidated buildings across the country.

Primary and Mass Education Ministry additional secretary Gyanendra Nath Biswas said that most of the 26,000 newly nationalized primary schools were in accommodations that are in bad shape.

He said that moves were underway to repair and renovate the primary school buildings across the country.