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Cyclone-damaged schools not yet repaired 36,846 deprived of primary education in Panchagarh

From Our Correspondent

PANCHAGARH, Sept. 12: The Universal Primary Education Programme (UPEP) has faced with various crisis in five thanas of Panchagarh district.

The dilapidated condition of most of the primary school buildings, inadequacy of furniture, scarcity of teachers are ascribed to be the main cause for hampering the education in the district.

The high price of papers and other educational appliances, financial crisis, poverty and other social factors are also hampering education of the children.

The primary schools which had been damaged in floods, storms, cyclones and others natural calamities during the last 8 years have not yet been repaired in rural areas. In most of the schools students attend their classes standing due to shortage of benches and accommodation.

There are 418 primary schools in the district of which 310 are government and the rest 108 are non-government enroling 90774 pupils. There are 1108 teachers in these schools.

Teacher-student ratio

The ratio of teachers and taught is 1:80 as against the recognised ratio of 1:50 depicting the picture of deprivation of the pupils from the proper teaching.

In addition as many as 36 posts of primary school teachers have been lying vacant for a long time in five thanas of the district. Officials sources said, of the total posts 20 are of headmasters and the rest 16 are of assistant teachers.

According to informed sources, the quota of teachers in government schools in the district is not maintained properly. Some schools with a large number of students have been facing problems due to shortage of teachers while many schools with requisite number of students have excess teachers.

About 36846 children of the district are denied primary education due to shortage of schools, necessary educational appliances and poverty of guardians.

A recent survey conducted by the District Primary Education office shows that the number of school-age children in the district stands at 1,27,620. Of them 90,774 study in 310 government and 108 non-government primary schools and 36,846 are not going to schools.

Economic hardship

A good number of children failed to enroll themselves in schools due to economic hardship of their guardians, the survey said.

A survey reveals that teacher attendance is satisfactory in the schools that are situated by the side of the highway or in a place which is connected with good road with dis-

trict and thana headquarters. But the situation is reverse in the school located in remote corners with bad road communication where thana education department personnel hardly pay visit.

In the later category of schools teachers in mutual understanding remain absent for months together which after their resuming duties treated as present.

There are five thana education officers and 18 assistants to supervise the overall performance of the teachers in the schools. It appears that each of the inspecting personnel shares around 20 schools for inspection which is not difficult to perform in a month if they are imbued with the spirit of devotion to their profession.

It is gathered that they can visit each school at least 10 times a year. But they do not pay visit school more than one time a year.

False visit

In some schools they pay false visit to avoid travelling expenses in collaboration with the headmasters of concern schools and ask them to bring their inspection book to a previously specified school with good road link on a particular day.

An ATEO who did not like to disclose his identity told me that in spite of their devotion to duty they could not pay visit schools for fund constraints.

It is learnt that they are favoured with only Tk. 100/- per month against TATA which is quite sufficient.

Teachers are not methodic and cordial to make the lesson interesting who after growing tired of their house-hold work or of private coaching become exhausted of energy and do not even raise their body from the chair while imparting lesson ignoring the blackboard work and using of teaching aids which is a must to leave an good impression of the lesson in the minds of pupils. And by turning the pages of the text books and marking home task from here to there, they usually leave classroom.

Accommodation crisis

Accommodation crisis prevails in almost all schools but it is acute in a non-government primary schools which have been founded by the local initiative and did not get any financial support from the government. Pupils sit here on the kutchha floor spreading out on thin bamboo mat and sack while in government primary schools they are generally accommodated in unspacious rooms and many of them remain standing in the class for want of benches.

Absence of subjectwise recruitment of teachers is another contributory factor in the deterioration of the standard of education.

There are many schools where madrasah degree holders are greater in number on the staff causing acute suffering in teaching english, bengali, arithmatics, social science, and general science. Pupils with deficiency in those subjects are being promoted to the next higher classes with weak basic foundation.

The school houses of one hundred and twenty government primary schools have become quite unfit for use. They may collapse in any moment with the loss of many valuable lives. Despite this precarious position of the houses, teachers have been forced to hold classes there. It is alleged that usages of inferior quality construction materials is only the cause of the deplorable condition of the houses.

Scarcity of drinking water

Scarcity of drinking water is a common feature of these educational institutions. As most of the tubewells sunk in the compounds of the schools are either out of order or their head have been stolen away. The Public Health Engineering Department does not feels necessity of repairing them despite the repeated reminder of the school authority.

Absence of proper sanitation arrangement in these educational institutions has added another impediment. The pupils and teachers are to go to the nearby bushes or by the side of the canals in response to the call of nature.

Kushtia

UNB reports from Kushtia: The Universal Primary Education Programme of the government has been facing setback due to manifold problems in six thanas of the district.

Local leaders said dilapidated condition of the school buildings, shortage of teachers and accommodation are hampering the implementation of the programme.

Many schools damaged in floods and other natural calamities in the last few years are yet to be repaired. Students of these schools are attending their classes in the open sky!

Moreover, high prices of educational appliances including paper, pen and pencil have gone beyond the reach of the poor students.

Local people have urged the authorities to take necessary steps to remove the bottlenecks for the successful implementation of the programme.