

Primary school staffing *Fill up the shortage quickly*

THE figures are horrendous but true. More than 45,000 posts of teachers in the government primary schools in the country are vacant and more than 25 percent of those are without headmasters. These figures were revealed in the parliament by the Minister of the Primary and Mass Education ministry recently. While the country has made commendable progress in the field of mass education recognising the fact that primary education is a fundamental right, there are a number of weak areas that are hindering the attainment of the objectives of the system. One of the challenges is poor quality of education, which is caused by both the quality and the number of teachers. As it is, the existing number of teachers is much below the ideal student-teacher ratio of 30:1 which the government is trying to achieve.

We wonder why there is such a large gap in the number of teachers and headmasters. Surely the situation has not occurred in a day or a month or a year. This has accreted over a period of time exacerbated by several associated matters. We feel that the process of recruitment should be made less lengthy and cumbersome apart from making the process transparent where selection of the best candidates must get preference over any extraneous consideration. And the recruitment cycle should keep in mind the natural waste in the number of teachers at all levels that occurs every year. And since all the encumbrances related to appointment of headmasters have been removed, there is no reason why the vacant posts of headmaster's cannot be filled up on urgent basis.