

## Illegal occupation of school property

*Primary education directorate must act*

**A**N investigative report of this newspaper has come up with disturbing facts that land belonging to state-owned schools has been forcibly grabbed, hampering the normal educational functions of these institutions. An official report submitted in September 2014 to the primary and mass education ministry stated that some 54 such schools were under illegal occupation. We understand that land repossession is a laborious process, but the fact that school property is being taken away not only by strong arm tactics of vested interests but also by other state agencies, is a very disturbing trend. The fallout of all this grabbing is of course the quality of education in these schools has fallen dramatically.

Children are deprived of adequate space not only in classrooms but with fields and open spaces being grabbed, there is the question of children's physical education being hampered. The net result is overcrowding in the limited space that is available. The educational environment is being compromised and for what? Giving the excuse that these are "sensitive" matters and have to be dealt with softly is not an acceptable excuse.

As we understand it, whatever next move the authorities are planning to take is still limited to the movement of reports among district primary education office of Dhaka (DPEO) and the Directorate of Primary Education, which in turn, will submit a report to the sub-committee of parliamentary standing committee on primary and mass education ministry. This is illegal occupation of school property and the ministry must act decisively to restore the school lands and ensure a proper school environment for our children.