

82 schools closed as teachers go on picnics

*Parents angry over the 'irresponsible'
act of teachers in Dinajpur*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Keeping 82 government primary schools in Parbatipur upazila closed, at least 265 teachers along with their family members went on picnics on Saturday, angering parents.

"Saturday is a working day. They [the teachers] should have done it on a Friday," Aleya Begum, mother of a class-V student at Rajabasir Government Primary School, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Several other parents said the teachers' move deprived nearly 13,000 students of a day in school at a time when the entire country is observing education week that began on February 4.

All the schools are in Mominpur, Polashbari, and Sorkerbari unions.

Locals said the teachers split in two groups and went to two picnic spots at Swapnapuri in Dinajpur's and Bhinnyajagat in Rangpur on Saturday.

Mohammad Kamruzzaman and Mohammad Azizul Haque, two officials of the upazila primary education office, joined the programmes as chief guests.

Many of the teachers, wishing not to be named, said the picnics were organised by five headmasters, including Mokarram Hossain of Dogachhi Primary Government School and Motiar Rahman of Monmathpur Chaitapara Primary Government School.

They alleged that many of them were forced to pay Tk 500 each as entry fee.

The headmasters rejected the allegation. They also said the picnics were organised with the permission of Dinajpur Primary Education Officer Samaresh Mazumder.

They, however, did not answer when this correspondent asked them why they didn't have a picnic on a Friday.

Contacted, Samaresh admitted that he had given the teachers a verbal permission for the picnics. He, however, said he did not know that they would go outside the schools.

Parbatipur UNO Tarafdar Mahmudur Rahman said going on picnics keeping such a huge number of schools closed was unethical.