

## Pilot project on primary schools

*Brac's role is focused on improving quality*

**T**HE government approved pilot project under which Brac is assigned to improve the functioning of primary schools in 20 upazilas is facing resistance from four primary school teachers' association.

Brac is to play a well-defined role in supervising and improving the quality of education at the crucial level through teacher training, strengthening of school management committees and introduction of consultative processes among the teachers and the guardians with the headmaster presiding over.

It is an incontrovertible fact that most primary schools, both in government and private sectors, are in dire straits. In rural areas particularly, they are in a deplorable state, beginning with the bare look through lack of classrooms, educational aids and minimally qualified teachers to poorly constituted management committees, you name it and they have it. Barring notable exceptions, the school staff were politically appointed rather than selected on the basis of merit and qualifications. The school hours were dismally low as teachers attended schools at will. The composition of the school committees would change with the power alternating between major political parties. There was no accountability and no transparency in the running of the schools and the quality of classroom environment and instructions declined over time.

In this context, Brac has been brought into the scene by the caretaker government in acknowledgement of the fact that the organisation is globally reputed for its efficiency and cost effectiveness in running primary schools. Under an elected government, Brac had successfully completed a pilot project involving four schools in Sherpur. Its expertise is worth utilising in enhancing the quality of primary education in the country.

In response to misgivings expressed by the teachers community, Brac chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed has asserted that his organisation has no intention to commercialise or privatise primary schools in the country. We understand that control of the primary education remains very much with the government and that there is no relinquishment of the authority by it in this sphere. But these words need to be stated in clear terms by the government itself. We would therefore suggest that the education ministry make a public statement focusing on the objectives it seeks to achieve through the pilot project. This should be repeated through radio and television to make a positive impression on the public mind.