

RECEPTION FOR MINISTER 209 primary schools shut

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Primary school teachers of Khulna's Dumuria held a reception programme for the state minister for fisheries and livestock yesterday, keeping 209 schools of the upazila closed.

Primary teachers association of Dumuria, with permission of the upazila education officer, accorded Narayan Chandra Chanda, MP, the reception on the upazila parishad premises. The programme was held between 11:30am and 2:30pm.

The teachers also presented the state minister with a replica of a boat made of silver weighing 6.5 bhoiri. Narayan Chandra, however, later returned the silver boat.

According to students of the schools and their guardians, the reception was scheduled to be held on April 26. But it was postponed as the state minister was not available on the day.

"My son told me that the school was declared closed for today [Saturday] due to the reception programme," said a guardian whose son goes to Khulshi Government Primary School.

The teachers, however, have defended their move.

"The schools were kept closed upon the decision of all teachers. This would count as a holiday taken from the quota reserved for teachers," said Rabiul Islam, a leader of the association.

Contacted, Upazila Primary Education Officer Sumanto Kumar Podder said he had no hand in arranging the



Narayan Chandra

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programme. "Teachers association leaders arranged the programme. They invited me and made me chairman of the programme."

As to why he gave the permission, he said he did not want to go against the wishes of all the teachers of the upazila.

Signatures were taken from all the teachers present at the programme.

Dumuria Upazila Parishad Chairman Khan Ali Mansur, also the president of upazila primary school committee, criticised this and said the programme could have been arranged on a holiday.

"The upazila education officer will be given a notice in this regard," he told The Daily Star.

Though the reception was arranged on the premises of his office and he holds the highest post in the local primary school management committee, the upazila chairman, who is a local leader of the BNP, was not invited to the programme.

The state minister could not be reached for his comments despite several attempts over the phone.