

Schooling eludes 4,000 kids in 33 enclaves

S DILIP ROY, *Salmonirhat*

Over 4,000 children in 33 enclaves belonging to Salmonirhat district are deprived of basic education as there is no primary school in these adversely possessed Bangladesh lands surrounded by Indian territories.

Bangladesh government provides free primary education along with textbooks and monthly stipend to check dropout of schoolchildren.

In poverty-stricken areas of several northern districts including Salmonirhat, the government in association

with World Food Programme distributes vitamin-enriched biscuits to primary school children during school hours.

But the enclave children are too unfortunate like their parents, being virtually deprived of the basic civic amenities as citizens of Bangladesh.

"I took my two sons to Sree Ramganj Primary School in Jolpaiguri district of India early January this year but the school authority declined to enrol them as they are Bangladeshis," said Sattar Miah, 35, an inhabitant of Kuchlibari enclave under Patgram

upazila of Salmonirhat district.

Dabibar Rahman, 38, of Kisamot Batrigachh enclave under Aditmari upazila, said, "As my daughter Fatema Khatun expressed desire to learn how to read and write, I took her to an Indian school named Gidaldah Primary School in Cooch Behar district for admission to Class one on January 1 this year but the school authority turned down the request. My daughter finally burst into crying."

Admitting the situation,

Primary Education Officer Nabez Uddin Sarker said, "We do not have any plan to build primary schools in Bangladeshi enclave areas as the matter concerns high authorities of the two countries."

The enclave people have urged that the governments of Bangladesh and India reach an understanding to ensure their children's access to education.

The children should either be enrolled in Indian schools or allowed to travel freely to attend any nearby school in Bangladesh mainland, they said.