

School ground rental and a budgeting issue

GOVERNMENT primary school ground, and even classroom, coming to be rented out by the managing committees and teachers for wedding ceremonies and birthday and circumcision parties brings to the fore a gross violation of a directive that primary education authorities issued in August 2009 prohibiting any such social events in the places that could dirty the physical environment and academic atmosphere of the institutions. While teachers in some schools say, as New Age reported on Thursday, that they have to rent out the ground or classrooms for such social programmes under pressure of managing committees, members on managing committees of some schools say that they charge no fees for such programmes, which mostly take place Fridays and on other holidays. Some other teachers yet say that they mobilise funds from school ground rents to pay for wages of ayahs and cleaners. But, even after all this, what is worrying is that the school grounds and classrooms are illegally rented out, earning money that largely goes unaccounted for. The holding of such programmes, then again, dirty the grounds and classrooms, which makes attending school and classes, difficult for students and teachers alike.

Primary education officials appear to be knowing full well — as proved in the 2009 action that prohibits the holding of such programmes — and if they do not, they should do know — that such illegal practice continues unabated and yet they seek to explain that action would be taken against such irregularities, with no tangible action having been taken so far since 2009. This illegal practice of renting out school grounds, which is corroborated by what New Age quoted ranking primary education officials as saying, also brings up a failure, of the national education managers, which is worth looking into. Some of the schoolteachers, as quoted in the report, admitted to renting out school grounds and classrooms to arrange for the money to pay for wages of ayahs and cleaners, and even part-time teachers, at least in some of the schools. This means that the budget that the schools receive is inadequate. A headteacher has said that there is no sanctioned position of cleaners for her school, which has about 850 students. Schools, where hundreds of students spend a substantial amount of time day after day, are not immune to being dirtied with litters and, thus, they need cleaners and ayahs for daily small chores. It is, therefore, unwise for managers of national education not to have thought about the issue.

The relevant authorities, under the circumstances, must stop school grounds and classrooms being rented out for social events as the schools need to be kept clean for a sound academic environment. As the money earned from such rental is unaccounted for, this could breed corruption and it for the government to look into the issues and sort them out while thinking about the budgeting issue that forces many schools to mobilise funds through this illegal practice.