

## // Early teacher recruitment needed to save education //

VACANCY in teaching positions accounting for about a fifth less — or about 17.74 per cent, to be precise — of the total required to impart education on 2.69 crore students in government primary, and government and non-government secondary schools and colleges is gravely concerning. The shortage of teacher is the most acute in government colleges, accounting for about 21.7 per cent, followed by government schools where the percentage is about 20.5 and, then, by government primary schools where the percentage is 18.6. The non-government secondary schools and intermediate colleges are in a relatively better position with the shortage percentage accounting for about 16.5. The figures very well point out the deplorable condition in government educational institutions; and the higher the level of education, the graver the problem. While all this points to a serious educational mismanagement by the government on the whole, what is more disappointing is that, as New Age reported on Thursday quoting education officials, government schools and colleges in district towns and rural areas continue to face a far greater teacher shortage than institutions in cities and big towns do. This also betrays the government's apathy towards education in outlying areas.

Teaching position vacancies, many of which have come to persist for about five years, harm both academic and administrative management in individual institutions and classroom teaching. In the 63,500 government primary schools, according to the primary education directorate, 16,603 positions of headteachers have been vacant for about five years and this means that a similar number of assistant teachers have had to spend their time on administrative and other academic chores than on classroom teaching. Such an overwhelming shortage of headteachers cuts the system both ways, harming the institutions, as these teachers need to worry about too many issues, and the students as well, as these teachers cannot dedicate their time to classroom teaching. In the absence of 44,095 assistant teachers in government primary schools, other assistant teachers are forced to take additional classes to make up for the course curriculum which they are not supposed to do, failing them in properly teaching their students. School administrations have repeatedly sought these vacancies to be filled in, but nothing tangible has happened over these years. The recruitment of headteachers in government secondary schools had also been caught in a bureaucratic tangle since 2012 when the government upgraded the status of assistant teachers in secondary schools to Class Two, requiring the government to amend the recruitment rules, which has not happened in the past four years.

Now that the bureaucratic complications have ended, as the primary and mass education minister is quoted in the New Age report, especially over the headteacher recruitment, the government, under the circumstances, must act expeditiously to arrange for the recruitment of headteachers. It must also act, in earnest and quickly, to fill in the vacant teaching positions in all the educational institutions so that students are not left in the lurch.