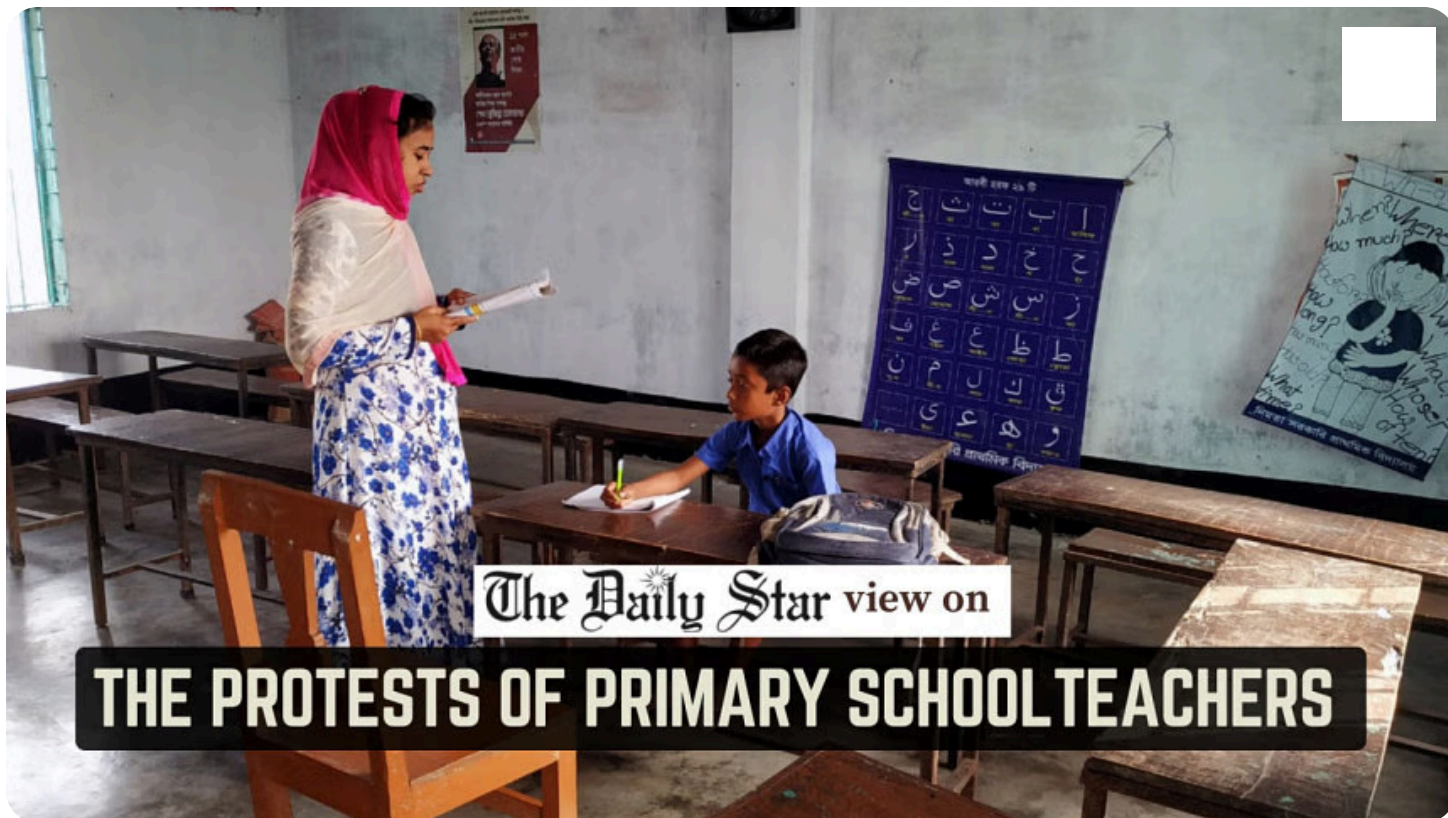


Primary teachers' demands should not go unheard

Govt should be prompt in resolving the issue



VISUAL: STAR

We are concerned about the protest [currently being carried out](#) by the assistant teachers of government primary schools. The teachers, who have been observing partial work abstention since May 5, started a full work abstention programme yesterday. They plan to continue their protest indefinitely to press home their three-point demand: setting their starting salary at the 11th grade of national pay scale; resolving complications in availing higher grades after 10 and 16 years of service; and ensuring faster promotions, including promotion of assistant teachers to fill 100 percent of headteacher positions. After the interim government took office in August last year, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education formed a nine-member consultation committee to improve primary and non-formal education in the country. The committee submitted its report on February 10, proposing over a hundred recommendations, including pay scale upgrades and promotions for assistant teachers of primary schools. The teachers are staging their protest seeking revisions to some of these recommendations.

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Teachers' empowerment can do wonders for education in Bangladesh



There are currently more than [65,000](#) government primary schools in the country, which employ around 3.75 lakh teachers. Among them, headteachers are in the 11th pay grade, while assistant teachers fall under the 13th grade, with a starting basic salary of Tk 11,000, plus benefits. The consultation committee recommended eliminating the "assistant teacher" position and introducing "teacher" as the entry-level designation. Under this change, the initial pay grade for teachers would be the 12th, with a starting basic salary of Tk 11,300, plus benefits. After two years, their jobs would be made permanent, and following another two years, they would be promoted to senior teacher, moving to the 11th pay grade. The committee also recommended upgrading headteachers to the 10th grade and suggested that all headteacher positions be filled through promotions. Currently, 65 percent of headteachers are promoted, while 35 percent are recruited directly.



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Will the primary schools in Bangladesh remain neglected?



Under the circumstances, we urge the government to address the primary schoolteachers' grievances through dialogue and take prompt action. Rising living costs are affecting these teachers, too, making it increasingly difficult for them to manage their expenses. During the previous regime, promised salary increases were not properly implemented, while promotions to the headteacher positions remained stalled since 2009. Many primary schoolteachers retired in the same position they joined. We, therefore, call on the government to recognise the urgency of the issue and act swiftly to resolve it.