

1.30 CRORE PRY STUDENTS Stipend held up for one year

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ABOUT 1.30 primary students from rural schools are not getting stipend for about one year due to delay in disbursement of fund under the Primary Education Stipend Project.

Non-payment of the stipend for such a long period can adversely affect enrolment and attendance rate in primary education, leading to increase in the dropout rate, said primary and mass education ministry officials. Officials of the stipend

project have said they are under huge pressure from the teachers who are being continually prodded by the guardian regarding the stipend pending for one year.

After completion of the second phase of Primary Education Stipend Project in June 2015, government took a two-year initiative under the third phase of the project and ECNEC in March this year approved the project.

In the new phase, government increased the number of beneficiaries to 1.30 crore from 78 lakh in the second

phase. 'Students are not getting stipends from June 2015' said a top PESP official.

Admitting that the students were not getting stipend for about one year, PESP project director Irtiza Ahmed Choudhury said, 'We had sent a letter to the finance ministry last week for disbursement of money'.

We are hopeful that the students will get the stipend soon,' he said.

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council approved the

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project in March this year and they got administrative approval in April, which delayed the handing over of stipend to the students, he said.

About 1.30 crore students of pre-primary to class VIII of schools situated at 486 upazilas, excluding those in city corporation and municipal areas, are entitled to the stipend.

Under the project, monthly stipend for one student is Tk 100 and two students from same family will get Tk 200 and three students from same family is entitled to get Tk 250. The money is given to the mothers of the students every three months.

Poor students of government primary schools, independent ibtedayi madrassahs, community primary schools, primary schools run by S.ishu Kalayan Trust, who have at least 85 per cent class attendance or get pass marks, 33, in the final exam, are eligible for the stipend.

Government is providing the stipend aiming to increase enrolment of school-age children of poor families, working children and increase attendance rate and reduce dropout rate.

Primary Education Stipend Project assistant director Mohammad Mahfujur Rahman said that amounts of four installments would be given to the students in one go once

the fund was available.

The government will need Tk 1,400 crore to give the pending stipend in one installment, said officials.

Government began the project in 2002. The second phase of the project was implemented from June 2008 to June 2015, at a cost of Tk 5,680 crore from public exchequer. The number of beneficiaries was increased to 77.30 lakh in 2010 from that year's 48 lakh.

Officials who monitor the

stipend project said this was for the first time since its inception in 2002 that the stipend was delayed for about one year.

The students who came under coverage of the project for the first time were frustrated, they said.

'We are under huge pressure from teachers who are asking us when the students will get stipend. Teachers are under pressure from guardians,' said a monitoring officer at the project office.