

Lack of facilities hinders primary education in Azamgarh-Abu Zafar, IANS

Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh): Even as Uttar Pradesh elected a new government in the hope for change, people of Azamgarh, especially its teachers, hope poor roads and electricity shortages will now be taken care of so that they can concentrate on their mission - educating the young and eager minds of the district that is steeped in history.

In this eastern Uttar Pradesh district and nearby areas, unfavourable conditions of road and electricity remain the biggest obstacles to primary education. Lack of such basic amenities in the town is not just the concern of parents and school administrations but also the cause of increased price of education.

Abu Sufyan, manager of Al-Ittihad Educational Society Beenapara, which runs two schools, Sir Syed Higher Secondary English Medium School and Ayesha Siddiqua Niswan School (Girls College), told IANS: "There are more problems. The school vehicles need more maintenance and have to spend more money on diesel."

Both schools have eight vehicles, including six buses and two vans. Naseem Ahmad, 55, bus driver, feels driving eight-wheeler buses on 3.5-metre wide roads is a really tough job for him. "It is horrible to drive on this thin and broken road. I have to spend one and a half hours instead of 35 minutes for a 20-km ride," Ahmad told IANS.

"No one can believe that it is a road. You can't find even half a kilometre without a single pothole," said Sahid, another driver. "I have to stop the bus when any vehicle passes near it," he added.

The condition in the villages is so bad that it has even given rise to fears among parents about sending their children to schools. Moniba Khatoon, a housewife of Kaunra Gahni village, 19 km from Beenapara, fears to send her two children via the same route to school.

"I fear to send them by this road as it is completely broken and may cause accidents. Several times I have thought not to send them there, but there is no good school nearby," she said.

"It is very hard to catch the bus at 6.30 in the morning and then bear jerks sitting inside the vehicle during the one-and-a-half hour journey on the broken road," Ajay Kumar, a Class 8 student in Sir Syed Higher Secondary School in Beenapara, told IANS.

Not just the roads but electricity is also a major concern among people of the area.

Abdul Majeed, an 85-year-old farmer of Beenapara has never experienced electricity continuously for a whole day. "Electricity is rare here. It comes only for 8 to 10 hours per day with low voltage and you have to wait for it."

"I have never seen continuous 24 hours electric supply in my entire life," says Majeed.

"Here, electricity comes for 8 hours - during the daytime for one week, and at night for the other," says another villager Tabrez Alam. "It is difficult for our children to study for want of electricity," he further said.

But Maulana Abdul Wasay, a madrasa graduate, does not agree.

According to him, these things are not hurdles for quality education. "We all need good facilities, but it can't be treated as an obstacle to have quality education. Our forefathers did great things without these facilities."

"The books, which have been written under clay lamps, we are not able to study them under tube lights," Wasay argues.

(Abu Zafar can be contacted at abuzafar@journalist.com)

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