

Teaching work hit in Himachal schools

Teaching has been hit in more than 250 schools in Himachal Pradesh for the past two days as 15,000 teachers, appointed through the parent-teacher associations (PTAs), have gone on strike.

Most of the schools are located in rural areas of the state.

Chamba district has 82 PTA-run schools, while Shimla district 48, Solan district 15 and Mandi district 17.

The PTA teachers had been appointed by the previous Congress government. At the time, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), which was in the opposition, had raised fingers at the appointments.

When the BJP came to power in the state this year, it started a probe into the appointments.

A visit to various schools in Shimla district Tuesday revealed that most of the PTA teachers abstained from work.

Neena Thakur, a Class 7 student of Government Primary School, Junga, 25 kms from Shimla, told IANS that most of the students are not coming to the school due to the strike.

'The teachers have told us in advance not to come to the school till the strike is over. We are suffering for no fault of ours,' she says.

Similarly a school in Kufri town, 25 km from here, wore a deserted look.

Even non-PTA teachers in some of the schools have expressed solidarity with the teachers on strike.

'We have also decided that they would go to the school but would not undertake any teaching work or any other school activity in protest,' a teacher admitted, requesting anonymity.

'The setting up of a probe into our appointments is politically motivated despite the fact that many of us had put in four to five years of service,' said Ram Singh, a teacher from Chopal village, who is in Shimla town to stage a dharna (sit-in) along with others.

President of the Himachal Pradesh PTA Lecturer and Teachers Union Vivek Mehta said that the teachers had no option but to go on an indefinite strike as the grants to the PTAs in various schools had not been released, because of which the teachers had not got their salaries.

He said they had been given an assurance by the chief minister that their services would not be terminated till March 31, 2009. But they were being harassed with inquiries being made into their appointments, which only indicated that the government had made up its mind to throw them out.

Asked what would happen to the large number of students who would suffer because of the agitation, he said the government had forced the teachers to go on the warpath.

However, director, education, O.P. Sharma said the department had not been informed of any

strike. As far as the issue of the PTA teachers was concerned, he said a policy would be made in this regard soon.

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