

Govt should walk the talk on education law

THE failure to enact the education act despite recommendations in the Education Policy 2010 over the issue is, indeed, unfortunate. The government initiative that began in January 2011 to prepare a draft in this regard is, as New Age reported on Saturday, yet to produce any effective results. The education policy formulation committee recommended the enactment of the law, as its co-chairman said, to make the policy proposals legally binding on the government. It is also vital for the smooth functioning of all educational institutions. There are reasons, in such a situation, for fears that the latest education policy, accepted in the parliament with much fanfare in 2010, may face the fate of its predecessors that failed to see the light of day. It is important to note that the education ministry has made at least three drafts and posted two of them online since the formation of the subcommittee in 2011 to propose the law. Moreover, one of the drafts even received feedbacks from several hundred people. Yet, the ministry felt the necessity to work out a fresh draft, which, according to a high ministry official, is in the final stage, for mysterious reasons.

One can easily blame the much-talked-about bureaucratic tangle for the situation. But one could be forgiven to conclude that it is essentially the lack of political will of the government which resulted in the apparently futile exercise on framing the law so far. It is pertinent to mention here that the law, once put in place, will make the government set up an autonomous education commission to implement the education policy, which may, at least to some extent, curb the authority of the ministry on the sector. It is all the more so because the law will end the ministry's predilection about running activities centred on notifications, circulars, office orders, etc. Contrary to its election promises, meanwhile, the Awami League-led government appears hell bent on giving less priority to the education sector, at least for now. One can refer in this connection to the downward trend in the budget allocation for the sector for the past few years. The decrease in the allocation takes place at a time when the implementation of the education policy requires a huge amount of money. Additionally, according to UNESCO recommendations, any government willing to ensure quality education for all of its citizens should spend at least 6 per cent of the gross domestic product on the purpose while Bangladesh now allocates a little more than 2 per cent of its GDP for education in the budget.

In fact, all, including educationists, need to come forward to mount pressure on the government to immediately come out of the lackadaisical approach in framing the education act. It is all the more important as the country can hardly afford a failure in framing the law that is crucial for streamlining the education sector that has for long been in almost a chaotic condition.