

Grave consequences of cheating on age in school admission

PARENTS and guardians falsifying the age of their children, showing them to be of lower age in birth certificates having been re-issued, commonly for the second time and rarely for the fourth, for admission to schools at the primary level has telling consequences. The issuance of a second birth certificate with age being lowered is illegal, both for the government agency and parents or guardians. There may be genuine cases of re-issuance in the event of mistakes but the repeated issuance of birth certificates with fabricated age shows that either the birth registration system, which is supposed to be centrally maintained, is, in effect, not so and not properly coordinated or there has been the presence of money illegally playing in the process. A ranking birth and death registration official, as New Age reported on Friday, admitted to having flaws in the system, which leaves the scope for people to collect more than one certificates for a single individual. But either of the cases calls out the government on shoring up its birth registration management besides taking legal action against the falsification in the certificates.

Such a situation has already given rise to agents prowling school surroundings giving out handbills in case parents or guardians need to have birth certificates for their children re-issued with falsified age. What, however, is the gravest issue about such falsification is the shortage of good schools in both the capital and outlying areas. Parents or guardians resort to birth certificate falsification so that they could send their children to good schools and this phenomenon is noticeable in cities, mostly in the capital, and in large towns, where there are a few good schools. The admission rush being the heaviest at about five boys and seven girls' schools in Dhaka and being normal at most of the government and non-government schools points to a deplorable state of the quality of education. Another issue to take note of in this is that children being forced to repeat academic years, even in good schools for the second time, are highly likely to get demotivated. Such a practice also denies others the fairness in their right to schooling as students from senior classes retaking admission tests, understandably more mature, can have an edge over others from junior classes taking tests for the first time. The other danger lurking in the process is that, as a teacher of psychology in the University of Dhaka said, children aged six years or above quickly learn cheating from what their parents or guardians do for their enrolment with good schools, having a risk of further straining the morale fabric of society in the long run.

The government, under the circumstances, must not only take steps to stop the re-issuance of birth certificates with fabricated age but also take steps to improve the quality of education, in both government and non-government schools, as a whole and to set up more schools to cater to the demand for children's education for the law enforcement efforts to be successful.