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The Bangladesh Times

COMPUTER-CONFIDENCE

We have to keep pace with the times. The world has already moved a long way into the "Age of Information". Despite potential Bangladesh lags far behind. It is not possible to catch up through the traditional technology. We have to go, in a big way, for the modern Information Technology (IT) which combines the computer and communications technology.

The journey on the new course has indeed already begun and the progress in recent years at least in some limited spheres may be termed phenomenal. The newspaper industry is far ahead of others in this respect. The leading dailies and periodicals have mostly switched over to the new technology which not only reduces cost but also ensures better quality production. The old establishments had of course faced tremendous resistance from their respective workforce. But the battle against technology is essentially a losing one. There is really no options and unless one seizes one of the early opportunities for the latest technology one runs the risk of failing irretrievably in the race. It should nevertheless be ensured that the changeover is effected with the least possible stress.

The use of the new technology in other fields in the country is still limited mainly to institutions handling large volumes of data. The knowledge about computers—the uses to which it may be put, the benefits that may be derived and so on—are still limited. It has not travelled any distance either horizontally or vertically, and most of the policy makers and many of the top educationists are almost unaware of the benefits of computers.

The 50 and odd computer training schools in the capital running courses of different types do not seem to have made much of a dent in the situation. It has certainly increased the number of users of personal computers but the gap between the need and use remains wide. And that too due mainly to lack of information.

The main battle in the sphere has thus to be fought against ignorance. The most effective strategy for that obviously is to acquaint the school kids with the technology. All the same there should be determined efforts to introduce the system in public offices and commercial houses for enhancing speed and increasing efficiency.

In contrast to this unencouraging picture of computer use, Bangladesh manufactured computer hardware are already in the world export market. The sector has been getting incentives but something more perhaps needs to be done.

The issues came to the fore at a seminar on "Information technology for economic and social benefits—options for Bangladesh" held at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB). The founder president of Bangladesh Computer Society and Director General of the International Centre for Vocational Training and Research (ICVTR), Prof A M Patwary said at the seminar organised by the IEB that some companies in Dhaka were producing hardware of micro computers with impressive seals and exporting them. He expressed optimism about development of computer technology in the country and said the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) should act as a catalysing agent in the field helping the users and manufacturers of computer software and hardware. Prof Patwary felt that the share of Bangladesh in the world computer market was still very small.

We hope the issues would be taken up seriously and the new generation equipped adequately to face the 21st century with confidence.