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Education reforms

Education Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud told the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday that the government is poised on effecting a 'qualitative change' in the education system of the country. The statement will be welcome by all conscientious citizens. They are concerned about the anarchy and chaos on the campus, and the deteriorating standard of learning. They are anxious to find some positive moves aimed at improving the situation.

Bad education and lack of education are a curse for a nation and affect both the present well-being and future progress. For an underdeveloped country like ours, the very survival of the nation with honour and dignity crucially depended on the quality as well as the numbers of the educated population; and progress and development are just impossible without proper education for the entire population. Nothing in the modern era—not even agriculture—can be practised without adequate education.

The Education Minister gave an outline of reforms the government is contemplating: gradual recognition of tutorial homes as schools, selection of primary school teachers through competitive examinations at district level, stopping of further nationalisation of secondary and higher educational institutions, further affiliation of schools and colleges after proper assessment of local needs, setting up two affiliating universities for mufassil areas, measures like setting of objective questions to stop copying in the examinations, recognition of English as a second language, and necessary amendments to the 1973 University Ordinance through discussion with the concerned people to improve academic atmosphere on the campus.

It is evident that the Minister refrained from usual philosophical haranguing but instead directed his attention to specific problems in the existing system of education. There may be differences of opinion on some points but there is universal realisation that steps are overdue to correct the mistakes of the past, bring improvement at the present and to plan for the future. The nationalisation scheme and the University Ordinance, for example, need to be reviewed in the light of the experience of the recent past. Copying in the examinations is a national shame: it has to be curbed and eliminated. Mushroom growth of kindergarten schools and tutorial homes has to be regulated. The place of English in education—like the University Ordinance—may be a controversial matter; but one should note that even the proud Chinese have virtually accepted English as their second language. None can deny that English is the most effective language of science and communication worldwide; and we should review our attitude towards the language, not sentimentally but keeping in view our national needs of scientific development and global communication.

Talks of any reform—and of education in particular—raises passions in various sections of the population. The history of our educational reforms is very chequered. We would hope that the concerned people and sections would rein in their passion and look into the problem with pragmatism and judiciousness. Education deserves to be treated as a truly national cause.