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Primary education

If inadequate in content and scope, primary education will provide a fledgling foundation, a precarious perch, as it were, for the secondary and higher stages of learning to be on. That way, the whole education system of a country can be a casualty. Equally important is the fact that basic education has an inherent potency in its broad sweep over the country's teeming millions who can be brought under its pale. This being the case, formal and non-formal basic instructions constitute a crucial factor at this cross-roads of our national life.

Our polity has been democratised and durable institutions for its unambiguous sustenance have to be built. The import of prudent exercise of the right of franchise by our people will be always there. But the big thing in the present context is that a process of participation is on as a necessary prerequisite for strengthening the institutions of democratic polity with the people as the central element in it. Devolution of authority to the bottom-level elected tiers is to associate many in chain effect with the processes of administration and development. This is an institutional measure no doubt rightly taken to encourage self-relying activities in the fields of concern to the villages. But people at the grassroots have to appreciate the considerations that went behind lending this power and functionability to them so that they can use these to their maximum benefit. Avenues of peaceful socio-economic changes are opening to them and they ought to acquire right social attitudes, moral values and ample skill to take the fullest advantage of the new dispensation. This provided the background for President Ziaur Rahman to say at the Commonwealth seminar on primary education in Asia and Pacific, now being held in Dacca, that basic schooling has our 'utmost priority'.

The primary education that we visualise drawing from the available formulations on the subject, admits of being made free, compulsory and universal within a reasonably short time and in a cost-efficient manner as well. What promises a good beginning in the endeavour is effecting non-formal mass literacy at the earliest because such a step can create an educational atmosphere in the countryside where parents seem not too appreciative of the need for sending their children to schools. Village communities can be stimulated to be involved, as a cost-saving measure, in procuring local construction materials for building the additional schools needed. The same spirit may help in equipping these with adequate teaching aids. Participation of capable women, youth and students in their spare time as teaching hands can help us get over the dearth of instructors. Such and other headway points can be mentioned for this national undertaking that has but a short time to begin.