



The Bangladesh Times

TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC DECAY

THE announcement of a ten per cent dearness allowance to teachers is a recognition of the vital national responsibility being fulfilled by the teaching community. It is also a reflection of the genuine concern in government about the economic condition of teachers both in the public and in the private sectors. The purchasing power of teachers along with other fixed income groups have been declining for sometime because of rising consumer prices. The dearness allowance is to cushion them against the inflationary pressure.

The teachers on Wednesday pledged to carry on their responsibility of spreading literacy and creating an educated nation. Those who were present at the Dhaka rally addressed by President Ershad represented thousands of teachers from colleges, schools and the madrassahs.

There is no doubt that the community of teachers faces an onerous responsibility with education standards declining rapidly. In recent nationwide exams, copying and unruly behaviour by a section of students have not only brought disrepute to the country, it has caused serious consternation among different sections of the population about the future of education. No individual in his proper senses can remain unconcerned to the state of affairs in the examination system. The teachers will certainly be more than worried about the situation. In the last secondary school certificate examination about 5000 students had to be expelled for adopting unfair means. In some examination centres, police used force to restore order and in several others, exams had to be postponed because the situation went out of control.



Such behaviour has brought shame to the teaching community because it pointed out their own failure in ingraining in the young minds the values of honesty, integrity and decency. But perhaps the malaise affecting the examination system is too deep to be appreciated by a superficial observation. It should be ascertained as to why there is such a propensity to cheat in the examinations. It must also be known as to whether teaching standards in schools and colleges have anything to do with the current phenomenon of copying. There have been frequent complaints that teaching quality is declining. The response to it has been enhanced training facilities to teachers so that they can effectively master the modern techniques of public education. It is a fact that overcrowding in schools contributes to a breakdown of classroom discipline. The answer to such a problem is more schools.

Despite the efforts by the state for more schools, private sponsorships and charity can always fill up the gap. There was a time when private endeavours for setting up educational institutions surpassed the efforts of the government. But the scenario has changed. There is very little private initiative now either at the level of the individual or at the community in respect of sponsoring schools and colleges.

There has to be also changes in the examination procedures. These have to be reordered according to the needs of the time. The government has spoken of reforms in the education system. To these efforts the teachers with their experience and knowledge can make the best contributions.

It is apparent that the decay in the lower levels of the education system has affected the quality of higher education. Falling standards have been plaguing the universities, the medical and the technical colleges. A turnaround is now visible with the academic councils exercising greater vigilance on the institutions. The only thing which can restore the former prestige of these institutions is a greater amount of discipline.