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## Technical manpower

There were seventeen polytechnic institutions in the country before independence and the number increased by only three during the last twenty five years. Pakistan, which had a similar number of polytechnics before 1971 now has about fifty. Even Sri Lanka has notably expanded training and education opportunities for its mid-level technical manpower during the last two decades. The only exception in this regard seems to be Bangladesh. All of these aspects and much more were discussed recently in a seminar jointly organized by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the Institute of Diploma Engineers.

The seminar noted that countries at different stages of development such as India, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea and Malaysia experienced varying degrees of economic growth and development by promoting the creation of mid-level technical manpower. In fact, the industrial revolution in Germany and other Western countries was triggered and sustained because they had created large numbers of mid-level technicians in every sector.

The stagnation of technical education in Bangladesh, therefore, is most undesirable. Time has come to recognize the very great necessity of technical education as supportive of the goals of faster economic growth for which Bangladesh is striving.

Not only at intermediate levels that scope for technical education in Bangladesh has shrunk. It is a pity that during the last twenty-five years, Bangladesh could not set up another full-fledged university like the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) at Dhaka. The engineering college at Khulna is now called an engineering university. But this description is superfluous and hardly befitting in view of its actual capacities to train students at higher level in engineering and other allied branches.

A great deal of resources are now being spent on expanding primary and secondary education in the country. Even madrasa education has been receiving higher allocations in comparison to the past. In contrast, spendings on technical education have remained stagnant. There is an urgent case for redrawing our priorities and to give greater attention to technical education.