

Can We Do Without Note Books Now ?

— Jawadur Rahman

IS it a surprise that note books are still available in the city and elsewhere in spite of the ban on them? The publication, distribution and sale of all note-books for class VII downward were banned in 1982. But one can buy note-books even for class II. Note books are not only available, as a report published in this paper on February 16 indicates, they sell at exorbitant prices. This only shows that they are in demand. For nothing can be there in the market for long unless it has a demand. And if a banned item is available in large numbers and the prices are exorbitant, irrespective of quality, one can reasonably conclude that it is in great demand. So the trends in the book industry and market indicate that for, whatever reason, students tend to heavily depend on note-books though they are supposed not to consult them. Now, why is it so?

Mere ban on an item and follow-up by police action can

hardly prevent its sale in the blackmarket. For those needing it and those making illegal money out of it will always find a behind-the scene meeting point. As the Bengali saying goes, if the cow and the calf have understanding between them, the cowboy can never prevent suckling.

Note-books for up to class VII has been banned. But have the authorities succeeded in creating conditions so that students can do without them? Had they succeeded, the ban would have been effective, no doubt. Note-books harm the students by crippling their imagination and if they be misleading and full of mistakes, as most of the note-books are, the harm they can do is simply irremediable. So note-books should go. There is no dispute about that. But the cause that made the students depend on them should also be removed simultaneously. And it is here that we seem to have failed. Unscheduled closures of schools for various reasons, lack of

qualified teachers in required numbers in most of the schools and the recently introduced difficult elements into the syllabus have all jointly created a situation that makes a student even more dependent on out-of-school assistance in pursuit of study. And many seek such assistance in substandard note books. For every student cannot get the expert service of private tutors for obvious reasons. Without improving the academic atmosphere, without rectifying the books to suit them to the needs of the present-day society and without ensuring that contents of the prescribed books are properly handled in the class rooms, we cannot remove the tendency in a section of students, to take to note-books as a convenient means to pass the examination. And, needless to say, examination method has also to change so that a student finds note-books of little or no help in doing well in examination.

A seasoned teacher working

with a reputed institution, discussing the issue, said that there are even some teachers who look for note-books since the prescribed text-books leave much to be desired. In the rural areas where qualified teachers are not many, note-books are in demand by both students and a section of teachers and even some guardians interested in their wards' education. Thus there are social reasons for note-books to be still there, he thinks.

Some guardians feel that the ban on note-books and relevant issues should be reviewed and if it is found pragmatic to relax the ban, the authorities should take measures to ensure that only quality note-books for class V onward are produced. If they find no sufficient ground to relax the present ban, they must take early measures to create conditions so that students do not look for note-books and must im-

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plement the ban effectively.

The issue indeed calls for a dispassionate study. Whether the ban should continue or should be relaxed or lifted now and re-imposed later and only quality note-books allowed during the intervening period is a question that should be given attention to by the relevant quarters including the policy makers in the administration. If the ban is to continue, it has to be implemented strictly and the hurdles in the way removed.