

The Bangladesh Times

Dhaka Sunday, January 18, 1987

Note books and ...

The police seizure of several thousand note books which are banned upto Class VIII in the schools serves as an eye-opener to the commercialisation of education, even at that level. While the action is welcome for the good it does to save many impressionable minds from the poor quality made easies threatening to let loose an unhealthy dependency, we are not a bit surprised that they were at all there.

The business with primary education, let alone at the higher stages of learning, has been the order of the day for quite sometime now. Note books are the third in the line of the trade; with kindergartens and fillipant-sounding coaching outhouses at every bend of the road, and other downright informal private tuition arrangements making up the other two dimensions. The anonymous note book writers and their dare devil frontmen of publisher and seller friends are merely taking a piece of the action. We are only underlining the trend with due regards to the good schools and the harmless tuitioning.

It is from the note book issue that we can retrace our steps to arrive where the crisis of dependence on made easies and private tuition really lies. Schools these days are so many places of unbaked and indifferent teaching; meaning those where the parents crash land after unsuccessful attempts for the better schools. The text books do not reach them timely, as has happened this year too, according to some newspaper reports, and the teacher: student ratio is poor with a dash of the novices as teachers.

Little wonder, there would be undisguised demands for note books and private tutors in such a situation. We can think of two remedies straight out of the tangle we have got ourselves into. It is unnecessary to reopen the question of note books for school students in junior classes, once it has been settled after due deliberations. It is no use recounting the pros and cons even academically.

058

Our first suggestion is that let the text books be self-explanatory with adequate illustrations and foot-notes so that the need for any guide book cannot arise at all. The thing to realise is that the supplementary books are usually called "sure successes". Now, that is where the teachers are required to give suggestions, within the limits of propriety, to the students in the classes about the line of studies to pursue for tests, rather than dish these out in the secrecy of private coaching. Judging from the rather unsatisfactory publication of text books in which silly but harmful mistakes crept in the Board concerned will have to be extra careful with the task of making the books self-sufficient.

Secondly, there should be coaching in the schools themselves, if necessary, at nominal charges spread thin over many parents. The idea gains ground following the step taken recently to put the students to three terminal tests from the current session, which itself promises well.