

On education

There is increasing concern in the public mind over the state of education in the country. These concerns relate to standards of teaching, the quality of students and the effectiveness of the curriculum. In recent national level examinations, a series of incidents raised these concerns, further and also exposed the deep malaise in the education system. Police, on one occasion, had to resort to warning shots to dissuade students from copying in an examination hall outside the capital. In another incident, some teachers were caught supplying answer scripts to some of their favourite candidates. These are not stray cases of adoption of unfair means in the examination halls. Newspaper reports indicate that in many areas national examinations turn into an open competition at copying. It is obvious that the national level examination systems, like the HSC and the SSC, are crumbling and one of the cogent factors can be the pressure of population of students at the lower levels which has increased over the years and stretched thin the facilities for holding such examinations.

But the malaise is more than the present pressure of population. This involves the fundamental approach to education which deserves a change. In basic terms, the country is still following with some window dressing, the education system of the pre-independence days, which at that time was already becoming obsolete and unsuitable to the needs of a contemporary age. It is unfortunate that when most countries of the world are changing their educational approaches bringing them in tune with the needs of the 21st century computer age, we are still trying to flog a dead horse with the fond hope that it may get up eventually and serve our purpose.

We have to decide first of all what purpose we would like the education system to serve. Certainly, a developing country like Bangladesh, cannot afford to have an education policy which does not have definite goals to reach. Bangladesh, burdened with a large population and apparently limited resources, has to lay stress on creating a skilled work force. We have to have both the intermediate skills which are so vital for our development and also the sophisticated technology that has been ushered in by the dawn of the computer age. Unfortunately, there are no such emphases visible in our education. We are creating an army of so called educated youth who find very late that they do not have the necessary skills to contribute to national development. Frustration sets in from which follow social and political problems.

The two-day national conference of college teachers which is concluding today in the capital should deal with these vital education issues. The college teachers occupy an important position in the system because of their being the bridge between secondary and higher levels of education.

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