

Enrolment and drop-out rates up

UPE seems remote possibility

By A Staff Reporter

Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) and eradication of illiteracy—the two priority goals of the government's perspective development plan for the period 1980-2000—seem to be a remote possibility. Though the enrolment rate in country's 44,681 primary schools has recently shown an upward trend, it has been obliterated by the drop-out rate.

According to reports, there was an increase in the enrolment rate by over 65 per cent as against 48 per cent in 1973, but the drop-out rate has now increased to 66 per cent from the 63 per cent between the period 1973-87.

The universal primary education programme, commonly known as 'Second-Primary Education Project (SPEP)' was approved by the ECNEC in a meeting on October 30, 1985 and introduced in the country with the following objectives:

(a) to increase primary school enrolment of the 6-11 age group (girls in particular).

(b) to ensure that a great majority of those who enrol in

1985 complete the five-year primary cycle and;

(c) to improve internal efficiency of primary schools through better management, effective supervision and improved instruction.

The SPEP is being implemented by the Education Ministry through the Directorate of Primary Education and the upazila parishads. World Bank, UNICEF, SIDA, UNDP, UNESCO and other agencies have been providing the government with necessary assistance.

Upto 1980, development of primary education was seriously hindered by financial and other constraints. The second Five-Year Plan, 1980-85, marked

the beginning of the perspective plan (1980-2000) for the universal primary education and the development of primary education was included as a priority goal for the SFYP period.

Under the UPE project, a total of 2,649 primary schools were constructed. Of them, 2,255 in rural areas while the rest were in urban areas. Work under the same project included, repair of 3,300 schools (excluding those damaged by the floods), construction of 23,621 class rooms at 7,356 schools, installation of 13,132 tubewells, at 13,132 schools and construction of 14,222 latrines at 14,222 schools. Besides, one new Pri-

mary Training Institute (PTI) at Joydebpur, a Directorate of Primary Education office were also constructed.

Though the allocation of funds for development of primary education reached over 46 per cent of country's total allocation for the education sector. The results achieved out of it is not that encouraging. The revenue budget for the year 1989-90 for primary education was Taka 450.14 crore and development budget was 167.9 crore which is slightly higher than the previous year. It was Taka 440.06 crore and Taka 131.57 crore, respectively, the previous year. Lack of pa-

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participation by community members, lack of sincerity and dedication of most teachers and corruption by a section of primary education personnel have been found to be the main obstacles on way to the total implementation of the UPE programme.

Besides the UPE programme, another similar project covering 44 upazilas was introduced with the World Bank Assistance. The project which ended in June 1986 reported to have failed to yield satisfactory result.

On the other hand, while the drop out rate increased, the physical facilities did not increase, commensurately during the last three years ending in 1988. Only five new primary schools were constructed during the period. Even if one primary school is to be set up in each village, another 24,000 schools are to be constructed in the country, it is learnt.

However, to achieve the stipulated objectives of increased enrolment and higher rate of retention of children in the five primary grades, the UPE programme has provided a community orientation programme and effective participation by the member of the school managing committee, parent teacher association and upazila education committee. In addition, special training programme have been provided for DPEO, UEO, head teachers and teachers.