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The New Nation

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Modernisation of madrasa education

WHILE announcing the results of Alim, Fazil and Kamil examinations the Education Minister disclosed that a move for balancing and modernising of Madrasa education is underway. The Madrasa Education Commission has been formed for making recommendations to this end and the modernisation programme will be undertaken on the basis of such recommendations.

In consonance with its comprehensive philosophy of life the concept of education in life was also a comprehensive one embracing both theological lessons and the secular disciplines. Islam gave knowledge and science topmost priority in its scheme of things and even the first seminary attached to the first mosque built in Madina by the Holy Prophet included such secular subjects as arithmetic, horse riding and archery. The subsequent flowering of Islamic science and philosophy also took place within this comprehensive framework.

During the British rule based on secular ideals, a split between

secular education and religious education took place and the two streams flowed separately with the result that Madrasa education ceased to play any meaningful rôle in the mundane business of life, in the fields of administration and development. Madrasa education became largely fossilized like the species that stagnated at a particular point of evolution. A move was taken at the fag end of the British rule, more precisely during the thirties, to give Madrasa education a new orientation, particularly in Calcutta, Rajshahi and Chittagong. But it failed to produce any tangible results.

A slow movement has been going on since the end of the British rule towards the modernisation of Madrasa education. Different sciences and arts and crafts have recently been included in its curriculum but these fall short of the desired modernisation and Madrasa education still remains largely anachronistic, its products failing to participate fully in national progress and development. On the other hand, general education has become devoid of ethics and values with the result that education has ceased to be the full development of man—physical, mental and moral. The situation therefore demands modernisation of Madrasa education and making general education value-

orientated for removing the painful dichotomy between life and values, the serious schism of the soul. Madrasa education needs to be fully modernised with inclusion of the secular sciences and humanities for enabling its products, who constitute a sizeable segment of our society, full participants in our national development.

Alongside such modernisation, steps should be taken gradually to allow such well-equipped and modernised products of Madrasas to compete freely without any inhibition for jobs in the administrative and developmental fields for their incorporation into the mainstream of national life.