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Editorial

The New Nation

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Children's education

A TOP executive on Monday said 'government would no more allow mushroom growth of kindergarten schools'. This would, we fear, fail to impress a lot of people who may say, if you mean that just go and do it and spare us the rhetoric. Indeed, there is a hefty record of such pronouncements coming to nothing. This latest assertion was made on the occasion of inaugurating yet another 'kindergarten' the name of which and the medium proposed

to be used there hardly persuading one to hope that this set up was not going to be one of those denounced. Such mild contradictions do contribute towards an element of hilarity, if not farce, which enlivens life so much.

Children's education in the metropolitan city is in a shambles. There is little social or governmental control over the situation. There has never been any planned or concerted move to cope with the demands made by a population that has galloped ten times from five lakhs to fifty in less than three decades. How many primary-level children are there in the city? How many seats are there for them in the bizarre array of schools including

\* the rightly denounced 250 'kindergartens'? It is heavy demand and little supply and the resulting bright commercial prospect that invites into the pedagogical scene scalpers of the worst kind. With seat availability glued to figures right for a half-a-million-people city or even less than that—it would be high farce to talk of all-round quality.

Putting aside the question of education of all or most children in the city, which is in a truly hopeless shape, one is still very much entitled to ask for money's value from whatever joint one sends the youngsters. You can possibly buy here status for you and a little manners for the kids by choosing particular institutions, but hardly good education.

In the west which, together with Japan, generally offers high-quality education—the financing, organisation and management of it are done mostly by private philanthropic bodies running the show as very sound commercial ventures wedded eternally to the concept of quality. In the socialist nations it's all a state affair but concern for quality remains as firm as in the west. Looking at them one may be inclined to go as far as to say—in matters educational it should be quality or none.

Even in our metropolitan city the first pedagogical concern should be literacy for all children—a good grasp of reading and writing and a little of arithmetic, that is. Have we been able to make much headway in

that?—products of exclusive schools maybe as inept in writing a sentence in good vernacular as those passing out of neglected municipal primaries.

For all residents of this city—and all others in the country one of the first priorities of life is provision of education for the kids. The 'kindergarten' business keeps reminding us even in off-season that most parents, have a bout with nightmare in a matter of months—every year. Will there be none to spare the citizen this agony and salvage the society from the morass of unlettered living?