

Accountability of varsities urged

By A Staff Reporter

Education Minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam on Sunday underscored the need for ensuring accountability from the university authorities since over 98 per cent of the budget expenditures of universities came from public exchequer.

He, however, said that the government was opposed to interference into academic freedom of the universities.

Initiating a lively discussion on the situation in the educational arena, at the Jatiya Sangsad, the Education Minister said that the University Ordinance of 1973 was democratic and liberal. But, he said, the people who ran the affairs of those universities had failed to reciprocate in the same spirit.

Sheikh Shahid said that there was a need to amend the University Ordinance to make it timely and befitting to the aspirations of the people. To examine the issue, two committees—one headed by the University Grant Commission and another by a Parliament Mem-

ber—had been constituted, he said.

Barring the Education Minister, 20 Members belonging to both Opposition and Treasury Benches took part in the discussion. Leader of the Opposition Mr A S M Abdur Rab, Opposition Chief Whip Mr Nur Alam Ziku, Independent Member Nurul Islam Moni, Mr Sirajuddin Ahmed, Mia Abbasuddin, JP Members TIM Fazle Rabbi, Mr Golam Sarwar Milon, Mr M A Reza Mr Abu Nur Mohammad Baharul Huq, Mr Shahidul Islam Khan, Mr Saad Jaglul Farque and Principal Azharul Huq, Freedom Party Group Leader Major (Retd.) Bazlul Huda, JSD (Siraj) Members Mr Mazharul Huq Shah Chowdhury and Abdul Matin

Mia, COP (Rokon) Member Mr Mofizur Rahman Rokon took part in the discussion.

The Education Minister said that the root cause of the prevailing situation in educational institutions was "over politicization".

The Education Minister said that situation in higher educational institutions, though had improved slightly, was far from rosy. "There is no security in universities. We can only know that university is open if there is a gun shot and bomb blast on the campus, he said adding that two brilliant students like Liton and Arif had been victims of terrorism the university campus.

He said that the government was committed to make the universities of political rivalries free. The desire of the government to this effect had been amply demonstrated through the dissolution of the student wing of the ruling Jatiya Party. He said that general students had responded to this step and situation was improving gradually.

Sheikh Shahid urged the Opposition political parties not use the students as political weapon and leave them to do things in their own way.

He said that in line with the UN Declaration to observe the year 1990 as International Literacy Year, President Ershad on the first day of the new year had announced two important decisions — introduction of compulsory primary education and free education for female students all over the country except pourashava areas.

He said that it was expected that 70 per cent of the school going children would be covered by the primary education by June this year. He admitted that the drop out rate of primary students was still high, 11 per cent, the drop out rate would be reduced to 5 per cent.

Mr A. S. M. Abdur Rab regretted that though 10 education commissions had been constituted so far, no education policy had so far been formulated.

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lated to put the entire education system on the right track.

Giving a comparative picture of students politics before and after liberation periods, the Leader of the Opposition said that during Pakistan days, student politics had not been based on pretty party politics and centred mainly on national issues. But, he said, since 1972, students were being utilised for narrow party objectives.

Mr Saad Jaglul Faruque suggested that the Vice-Chancellors be appointed directly by the Chancellor of Universities instead of selecting one from the persons elected by the University Senate.

Mr Sirajuddin Ahmed said that governments after independence in 1971 had sidetracked the real problems faced by students and thereby helped creation of the present situation in educational institutions.

Mr Golam Sarwar Milon said that those who advocated continuation of 1973 University Ordinance also wanted continuation of terrorism in universities.

Major (Retd) Asgar Ali felt that establishment of democracy in the country could only help restore congenial atmosphere in the educational arena.

The discussion on the issue is expected to conclude today with a summing up speech by the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed.