

Education act still in the making after 5 years

Latest policy looks destined for predecessors' fate

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THE much-hyped education policy 2010 appears headed in the same direction as all other previous recommendations of education commissions, as the government has failed to implement it in the last five years.

The education ministry had taken up an initiative to prepare a draft of the first ever education act in January 2011, but are yet to finalise the draft till now, confirmed ministry officials.

Since independence, there have been six education commissions set up by

different governments, none of whose recommendations were ever fully implemented.

'Bangladesh is yet to get an education act, which is vital for proper implementation of the education policy proposals and smooth functioning and management of education institutes,' Education Policy 2010 Formulation Committee co-chair Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said.

Educationists said to make all education policy decisions legally binding, a law is necessary. The education sector is now running on notifications, circulars, office orders etc. which

leaves the government vulnerable to legal action.

In the last five years the education ministry had made at least three drafts of the act, and twice put it up on the website of the ministry soliciting opinion from stakeholders, educationists and others.

Educationists blamed lack of political will and bureaucratic red tape for the failure in finalising the draft. 'It has been held back because of bureaucratic red tape,' Kholiquzzaman said.

Education ministry additional secretary Abdullah Al Hasan Chowdhury, howev-

er, said preparing a draft 'is a time-consuming job'.

He said the work was at its final stage. 'We are thinking of putting up the latest draft on the website,' he added.

The first such commission in the country was the Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission-1972, followed by Mofiz Uddin Education Commission-1988, Shamsul Haque Education Committee-1997, Dr MA Bari Commission-2002 and Mohammad Moniruzzaman Miah Commission-2003.

The ministry on January 26, 2011 set up a sub-com-

mittee in line with recommendations of the National Education Policy 2010, which said that a law was necessary for the proper implementation of the policy.

The draft of the education act was put up on the website of the education ministry on August 7, 2013 and the ministry subsequently received several hundred recommendations. There have been at least two further drafts since.

The ministry uploaded another draft on October 19, 2015 but removed it on October 27.

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Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury said the government lacks the political will to finalise the education act.

A fresh legislation would basically aim to implement the policy promises and will provide a system of rules that would become obligatory for all to follow, she said. The law is necessary to implement policy recommendations like extending primary education to class VIII, setting up a permanent education commission etc.

A joint secretary said an inter-ministerial meeting during the second week of the current month had ordered the ministry to put the draft on the website before finalising it.

He said the ministry will have to also send the draft to the cabinet division, then for law ministry vetting and later to the parliament.

Education ministry officials said that latest draft of the act has provisions for penalising all educational institutions — Bangla and English mediums, kindergartens, and madrassahs —

who offer nursery, primary and secondary education without government approval and registration with relevant authorities.

Fees for all streams of educational institutions, including English mediums, should be decided on government approval.

It also proposed a fine of minimum Tk two lakh or six months imprisonment, or both, for publication and distribution of note and guidebooks at primary and secondary levels.

The draft proposed a ban on private coaching and tui-

tions. The draft of the law says compulsory primary education will be up to Class VIII from Class I.

The draft says that a separate non-government teacher selection commission will be set up, disbanding the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority, for teacher appointment at non-government educational institutions.

The ministry will set up an autonomous permanent education commission to implement the education policy.