

# Experts for further modernisation of madrassah education

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ALTHOUGH the Alia madrassah education system has been 'modernised' with its integration into the mainstream education, noted educationists and analysts are of the opinion that it could not reach the desired goal of producing required skilled human resources due to faulty and imprudent plans.

Talking to UNB, Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor Abul Barakat and Dhaka Alia Madrassah principal Professor Siraj Uddin Ahmad said students now can properly learn neither science nor English or even Arabic as the so-called modernisation of the Alia education has largely failed to attract students and ease their study load.

The educationists observe that formation of a madrassah education commission is imperative to bring the madrassah education under a single platform with a holistic approach combining science, English and Arabic education to turn madrassahs into effective educational institutions to create knowledgeable and skilled human resources.

There are now two types of madrassah education systems — one Alia system regulated by the government under the Madrassah Education Board and another Qawmi system financed by donors and run independently.

According to the Bangladesh Madrassah Education Board, there are now 9,389 madrasahs under it across the country with around 35-lakh students.

About modernisation of madrasah education, Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury said madrasah students suffer from isolation due to their

faulty curriculum which has no focus on mother language, history, culture and science.

'We've long been talking about modernisation of madrasah education. We should introduce a real, unified education system merging the existing Bangla, English and Madrasah system. The unified education should be based on the mother language,' he said.

Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University's English Department said there should not be two types of madrasah education. 'We should bring the madrasah education under a single platform with its proper modernisation. We can follow Kolkata madrasah modernisation model which has turned very effective to produce very skilled human resources.'

In the Kolkata model madrasah system, he said students from any religion can study in madrasahs, and they are nicely picking up the modern education and becoming doctors, engineers and IT experts and getting good jobs.

The noted educationist observed that although a small number of madrasah students of Bangladesh can get admitted to different public universities, very few of them are getting chance in Buet, medical and science-based subjects as they are not getting quality science education.

He said the government should form a commission immediately to streamline the madrasah education through discussion and dialogue with the different stakeholders.

According to the findings of their research on madrasah education that was updated in 2015, Dhaka University Professor Abul Barakat said 50 per cent Alia madrasah

students opined that their education system is almost ineffective to get good jobs while 70 per cent said their textbooks should be modernised further and 73 per cent said their teachers are not well-trained.'

He said they also found the degrees of both Fazil and Kamil not comparable to university ones as the curricula at the two levels place high emphasis on religious aspects.

Professor Siraj Uddin Ahmad also feels a madrasah education commission should be constituted and the madrasah curriculum at all levels should be modernised further to make the education more effective, attractive and conducive to producing very skilled human resources.

'As there's now huge unnecessary study pressure on madrasah students,' he said adding that textbooks should be redesigned with an approach of load-management.

Professor Siraj bemoaned that most madrasah students cannot speak Arabic and write it correctly despite reading the subject for many years.

'We're now giving special focus on the issue.'

Contacted, education minister Nurul Islam Nahid said now there is no big difference between general and madrasah education systems when it comes to curricula except the latter's additional Arabic and Islamic subjects.

'Still, we're taking various steps to modernise and improve alia madrasah education further. We've set up a separate directorate for madrasah education to give more focus on it. We want the madrasah students to get educated properly with modern knowledge so that they can hold prestigious positions in society,' he said.