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Making science popular

068

President Ziaur Rahman has asked for popularisation of science along with technological infrastructure-building in a policy-planning meeting with the National Council for Science and Technology. Confinement of science to higher academic groves, seminar rostrums and academic research organisations has proved merely pretentious, and therefore, costly. Bewildering confusion about development directions and persistent dependence on others for technological consultancy, even for matters of routine nature, are all traceable to our scientific poverty and passivity.

The above conclusion would not appear sweeping when viewed in the context of what could have been easily done, yet what remains obviously so much undone. The spirit of scientific inquiry, and meaningful response to problems at hand could only stem from the broad masses if we had succeeded in diffusing rudimentary knowledge pertaining to such physical sciences as, botany, geology, geography, ecology chemistry and physics among them over a period of time. Such an acquisition of knowledge and scientific attitudes may probably cease to bear any meaning unless they are applicable to real life situations. Local contrivance is known to have transformed agriculture in some Asian and East European countries without their recourse to dependence on others. We have an added advantage of having used imported agricultural equipment, for sometime now.

Along with knowledge of science therefore, we must also provide the people with technological inputs so that their inquisitiveness may crystallise into skill.

In this backdrop, we have to phase out a popularisation programme among the masses systematically. Students should be the first converts to this new outlook with the roving scientists delivering popular lectures on science and technology to them all throughout the country. An extension of this course can also include non-students. Also as a facet to the practical working experience that they will gather as members of work companies, the students can continue in the same vein amidst the masses. Since demonstration implants knowledge and helps its retention among the people, educational institutions and specific science bodies, like, the Atomic Energy Commission, BCSIR and Defense Science Organisation should also organise science exhibitions. And towards building a technological infrastructure which alone can ensure steady flow of inputs, establishment of engineering production workshops throughout the country and that of the national computer centre, research reactor of the Roopur nuclear power plant and Landsat ground station assume real priority.

The dynamism with which the task is being approached is sufficiently summed up by the placement of the Science and Technology Division under the Cabinet Secretariat. One hopes that there would be effective coordination at this centralised level and that the days of sporadic scientific activity and academic research will come to an end.