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Political Consensus Needed For Education For All -II

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2) The leading opposition party in Parliament, Bangladesh Awami League, also declared in their manifesto a programme of "education and human resource development". The programme stated that (i) Education is not an opportunity but a basic right of every citizen. To establish this right the curse of illiteracy must be banished from natural life within the shortest possible time. (ii) The policy of compulsory universal free primary education will be implemented. (iii) For setting up an egalitarian education system equality of opportunity for all citizens should be ensured at all levels of education so that poverty does not stand in the way of development of talent. (iv) Development of sufficient technical, vocational and professional institutions keeping in view the growing need and the aims of economic development.

3) The second largest opposition party in parliament, the Jatiya Party, spoke in its election manifesto under the head 'policy on education' of a programme to build a comprehensive education system in conformity with national aspirations, social reality and the needs of development: (a)

To make all-out effort for the success of compulsory universal free primary education with special emphasis on the education of women, (b) Laying emphasis on vocational education alongside general education, (c) Removing the disparity that exists in education, (d) Making the illiterate citizens literate.

4) The salient features of the educational reform programme of Jammat-e-Islam, the fourth largest party in parliament, as contained in their election manifesto are: (i) Giving Hafizia and Furqania Madrasah the status equivalent to primary education, (ii) To compulsorily introduce moral teaching in every branch of education, instead of keeping education confined to textual knowledge, to produce for society and the state men of character and ability who may be cognizant of their responsibility. To infuse Islamic philosophy of life in all branches of education, technology and the arts, from the primary to the highest level, (iv) Providing military training in the

educational institutions (v) Utilising the cinema and TV as the media of mass education for disseminating information about subjects like science, technology, agriculture and public health.

5) The left parties combine has stated in their programme on education that science-based, egalitarian, secular education policy would be introduced.

It may be mentioned that the political parties in their election manifesto have stated about compulsory primary education but have not outlined any concrete programme for achieving Education for All. There is no clear mention of what percentage of national income should be allocated for education sector.

Statements : Professor Abdul Rashid, secretary for education of the ruling BNP, said they are going to announce their programme of promoting education. But this programme is so broadbased and so much dependent on the surrounding conditions that it is not possible for us to

reach the goal singly. Until all political forces are united, practical gains will elude us. Giving a call for integrating education with social movement, he said that the various government/organisations can play a significant role in it. Professor Rashid further said this kind of movement cannot be built up without giving institutional shape to democracy. A society can move forward only after it is rid of political unrest.

The secretary for education information and research of the Awami League, Professor Abu Sayed, said : After achieving independence in 1971 we failed to meet the necessities of the people. During three years after independence, development work was limited to reconstructing the infra-structure. When we could give attention to the people's basic needs like education, medical coverage and housing, the whole political process was subverted. A real need is being felt today for a national consensus. Without a national consensus a social movement cannot be built up to address these problems.

— Development Features