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Literacy Priority

The country's literacy hopes must start purring at the announcement that its literacy rate will be raised to around 70% by the year 1990. One would want the run-up extended well into the 21st century and the percentage raised to 100%. That might look too ambitious judging particularly by a history of illiteracy and the absence of any serious initiative to reduce it to a substantial degree by the successive governments since before Bangladesh. This is not because of their poor finances which were however available for many an other project, but because literacy or education was not given the priority it deserves. Worse, the same attitude towards national literacy persists and neither the current 5-year plan nor even the one following it is to embark on universal primary education.

One thing that some third world countries including us have got unpardonably wrong is their very idea of development. That development is impossible with the literacy rate staying at 20-21% is yet to be hammered into the conscience or consciousness of most leaders in third world countries. The slide cannot be wholly blamed on political factors such as authoritarian or military rule. South Korea is a historic instance, in modern times, showing that the economy of a country can be taken full care of even in the absence of political pluralism which has now become an irresistible force practically in most of the hitherto regimented third-world societies.

The most remarkable fact about South Korea is not only the general literacy rate was lifted to around 90% over less than a decade. Higher education was so planned as to produce technocrats that would be deployed to rev up the economy. Even ministers in charge of key development sectors mostly came from the newly sprung class of technocrats who knew jobs and were capable of guiding the bureaucracy along lines lucidly thought out. Confusion in policy decision and direction, which is the bane of proper planning, particularly in the LDCs, the resultant messing up of priorities, and, as a last straw, lavish spending on cosmetic projects ignoring those essential to development explain their perpetual misery of some LDCs.

Most countries that have raised their literacy to between 60-90% have subsidised education; and such other sectors as agriculture. Examples of the latter include American farming or subsidised EEC Agriculture over which is raging a current row between those who would withdraw this support to farmers and those who would see it continued. As for education they have long since solved the problem and are now economically (through technological and industrial advancement) there where knowledge and education alone could place them.

To return to our position, recent reports have it that primary and secondary schools or colleges in the mofussil are in awful shape. Shortage of teachers at both primary, S.S. C. or H.S.C. levels, poor management, poor class-teaching, and even shaky school buildings in many cases have produced a situation of classic neglect and irresponsibility on the part of the authorities. Even in the cities the common complaint is the traditional style in teaching which meant considerable pains for teachers as well as pupils has long been scrapped. As a result students in top secondary classes, or even below, have to fall back on their private home based arrangements. Only the affluent families can afford this luxury. The poorer students, denied the teacher service they are entitled to in a class-room are at a great disadvantage. Teaching that should stimulate the creativity of young minds is now replaced by cramming and

problems for
coach
marks
ministration
Height 5'—
passed SSC or above
candidates who have
enrollees will be given to the
class VII passed Prefer-
Qualification
Education
2. Physical fitness