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Primary Education

This year's budget allocation for education is Tk 970.19 cr and the emphasis is on primary education. Long neglected, primary education is now being given increased importance in the nation's development plans. But the system of education handed down to us from colonial times was created to meet the administrative needs of the colonial masters and was not intended as the basis of human resource development over and above those requirements. As a result, the 'be all the end all' of our education services was the creation of English speaking clerks devoted to the service of the masters who enrolled themselves into a select class of elite and this we have perpetuated until today.

This basic concept of the purpose of education so firmly engrained into our psyche was propagated and extended throughout the period of Pakistani rule and as such the progress and development of education was restricted to strictly enforced parameters. Consequently we are left with a largely uneducated population incapable of earning their own living within the purview of a meaningful life under the remnants of a system that has long since lost its usefulness.

Embroiled in the day-to-day struggle for mere existence, nominally employed yet not employed or, indeed, employable, we now have a people awake to the value of an education for their children but unable to determine the way in which this can best be effected. Dependent totally on the planners at the helm for guidance they are, however, not totally convinced that the planners have their, or their children's, welfare at heart and are as a result sceptical. Primary education being of course at the root of any pragmatic programme for the development of education any planning without a proper concept of the end use of human resources will lead to nought in the same manner as efforts to extend or expand the existing system of education.

From the grass-roots up the redesigning and 'overhauling' of the education system is a must if education is to be placed on a proper footing in keeping with the rising expectations of the people and only then will primary education be meaningful. The existence or non-existence of buildings is of little importance. What is important is the quality of the teaching staff and the first step to be taken in any programme for the improvement of educational facilities in the training of such teachers willing to take on the arduous task of shaping young minds, for failure in this area will result in the failure of the whole scheme of education. Success in itself will be rewarding.

In our country the number of children between the ages of 6 and 10 years is multiplying rapidly, it now stands at around 20 million. Despite the official claim that 60% of these are enrolled we encounter a rising number of street children. Even if this figure is correct there remains at the very least 8 million who

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