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ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

Some of the best minds in the country have come together to form the 'National' Advisory Council on Education with President Hussain Muhammad Ershad as its Chief Adviser and the Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, who is also in charge of the Ministry of Education, as the Chairman. Everyone must admit that it is high time we set our educational sector in order. Over the past years it has been dominated by non-academic and negative activities of time-servers which cast a spell of despair over the whole nation. Violence, blood-letting, terrorism and everything contrary to congenial academic atmosphere reigned in the educational arena. A handful of trouble-makers, as it were, held some institutions and their students and teachers as hostage. This miserable state of affairs has been going on for long.

The National Advisory Council is entrusted with the task of reviewing the present educational environment, analysing the problems and arriving at effective solutions. The objective should be to reach a consensus following a thorough discussion on how to develop the minds of students, beginning from the primary, through secondary and up to the tertiary levels in order to get a properly educated manpower useful for the healthy growth of a democratic society.

In a country where nearly three-quarters of the population remains outside the educational system, the first consideration should be to work out models that could successfully reach the majority. The government has already activated the relevant authorities, in conjunction with international advisory bodies, to evolve the suitable methods for Bangladesh. Hopefully, we can get a good deal done within this year — the International Year of Literacy — for a speedy take-off towards our objective of "Education for All by the Year 2000".

The immediate need is to create functionally literate citizens capable of thinking independently and of distinguishing right from the wrong. The foundations for this have been laid to enable children to learn the three R's at the primary level. Secondary education then carries on the process of shaping the learner into a conscientious individual. And it is then that the questioning mind can seek out truth and take over moral and political responsibilities to participate in the continuous process of breaking old, ineffective modes of thought to give birth to a new society and thus take the nation forward in thought, word and deed.

There is a natural connection among truth, education and freedom, and the health of a nation can well be gauged when the three are put under honest scrutiny. Real education, according to one theory, develops the truth-seeking faculty in human beings known as reasoning that can help overcome the poverty of the intellect, a predicament that automatically follows our students specially at the tertiary level. The need of the hour, therefore, is to break the present faulty system that does nothing more than distributing certificates and to establish a new one that may fire the soul with the love of truth.