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PM for standard higher education

DHAKA, Nov 20 (BSS) : Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed today underscored the need for identifying the problems with a view to improving the pattern and standard of higher education.

Inaugurating an 11-day national training workshop on Academic Staff Development at the National Museum Auditorium here, the Prime Minister said we cannot allow deterioration of the standard of higher education as the overall development and progress of the country depended on it.

Education Minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam was the special guest at the function.

Presided over by Prof. Syed Ali Ahsan, Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), the inaugural function was also addressed by Prof. M. Shamsul Huq, member and Mr. Shahidullah, Secretary, UGC, and UNESCO representative Kabir Majumder.

Jointly organised by the UGC and the UNESCO 25 academic staff, 18 from the universities and seven from the colleges,

are participating in the workshop. 10 resource persons, including, two foreigners, will conduct it.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed said apart from providing education in different disciplines of knowledge one of the major responsibilities of higher education was to create skilled, honest, enterprising, conscious, thoughtful and hard working citizens to give leadership in all spheres of national life. But, he said, there were allegations that the qualitative standard of our education was not upto the international mark and various questions were being raised whether the current university education was effective.

Quoting Tolstoy he said, "Educational institution was the only medium to make men

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"civilised". The Prime Minister said, in this context, the responsibility of a university was to make civilised men more civilised.

Quoting Mansfield he said, "university is the torch of knowledge. There will be study and research of new knowledge there. The country and the society will be benefitted". But he said, today anarchy has become the syllabus, pistols, daggers and knives have replaced pens and books. The student hostels have turned into armories. Clashes and conflict are taking place, every now and then in the universities instead of study and search of knowledge, he added.

The Prime Minister said several thousand clashes took place in the campuses during the last seven years, causing death to 83 people and closure of 841 educational institutions. He said due to session jam it takes eight years to complete a three - year honours course. This wastage of youthfulness was an unbearable luxury for a poor country like Bangladesh he pointed out.

Referring to the professional improvement of the teachers, Kazi Zafar Ahmed said there were 3,000 teachers in the universities and 15,200 teachers in colleges. He said university education was being expanded and two more universities would be opened during the next financial year at present there are seven universities and 465 degree colleges in the country.

Referring to the deterioration of standard of education at the higher level, specially in the colleges, he said this was mainly due to lack of talented and highly trained teachers.

Pointing to the need for improvement of teacher-student relationship, the Prime Minister said this would help solve 80 per cent of the problems in the campus. He termed the teachers as ideals, guide, friends of the students and as the artisans for making men, he said once the reputation of our teachers had spread abroad. He said Atish Dipankar used to be described as the 'Eye of Asia.'

He quoted Alexander the Great as saying, 'I am specially indebted to my parents for my birth and to my teacher Aristotle for imparting me knowledge.'

Terming teaching as a great profession of all ages, he said in the modern age higher training in teaching was necessary to create a successful teacher

equipped with the latest technique of imparting knowledge. Education Minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam suggested establishment of an academy of higher education and research to deal with academic staff development.

He said the government was also thinking to have a provision in the affiliated universities for academic staff development.

Pointing to the failure of 75 per cent students in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations this year, the Education Minister said this shows that there might be some defects in the teaching pattern in the colleges and in higher education. He also pointed out that there colleges which give admission only to the talented students having brilliant results in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations. But, a large number of students there received compartmental in the HSC examinations this year, he added.

He emphasised the need for extensive programme for development of academic staff and said the new disciplines of knowledge which have emerged in the world in the recent years should be incorporated with the university syllabus here without further delay.

In his presidential speech, Prof. Ali Ahsan said the UGC would soon prepare a proposal for establishment of an academy for higher education and research and submit it to the government for consideration.