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NEED FOR TERRORISM-FREE EDUCATION

In a meeting held with the delegation of the Rajshahi University Teachers Association at her office on Friday Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia assured all possible government help in maintaining congenial academic atmosphere. The BNP government of Khaleda Zia means business. It went to the extend of suspending the activities of its student wing JCD in Dhaka University. It was a rare incident. In fact, the present government is firm to maintain peace and tranquillity in all educational institutions of the country.

In this connection, it has decided to punish the educational institutions which are plagued by student terrorism, where academic schedules are not maintained and where campus discipline has not been enforced. The punishment will come in the form of withdrawal of government grants and other facilities to such educational institutions irrespective of whether these are in private or public sectors.

The government has also decided to reward the educational institutions which are able to maintain an academic climate with extra financial assistance. These incentives should encourage the institutions bedevilled by campus violence to change for the better.

Education is the backbone of a nation. So the present government has rightly identified education as a priority sector. Education has been given highest allocation in the current budget.

The education programme for 1992-93 has been drawn up within the framework of the objectives and strategies of the Fourth-Five-Year Plan. The emphasis has been given on management and supervision of primary, secondary and mass education. The major objectives of primary education during the current plan are to provide educational facilities to all school-going children through compulsory primary education and integrated non-formal education. The government has already enacted law and issued notification declaring primary education compulsory.

According to official statistics, there are 18 million children of the age of primary education in the country and 70 per cent of them are enrolled in some schools. But the rate of drop-outs is very high. The authority is very much aware of it and steps are being taken to check the rate of drop-outs from the primary stage.

In rural areas, the spread of education depends mainly on poverty alleviation and rural development. At the same time, education of women is indispensable for overall development of society. The role of basic education is most effective in making women conscious about the usefulness of family planning. Sensing the urgency of the problems, tuition fee has been exempted for girls upto class VIII in rural educational institutions. Taka 50 crore would be spent to fund a three-year-long non-formal education programme aimed at building up an adult literacy and roping in the primary school drop-outs.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia described education as the yardstick of progress and said 'if we want to achieve quick progress, we will have to attach importance to it'. Everybody has a right to education, she said. The Prime Minister is true to her word.

Late President Ziaur Rahman had also special care for education. He used to call meritorious students at Bangabhaban and discuss their problems. However, at present, the government has a mind to spread education in every nook and corner of the country. But so long, terrorism stood against all the good wishes of the government.

Under the circumstances the suppression of Terrorist Offences Bill has been passed. It aims at suppressing all sorts of terrorist activities. Terrorism was eating up vitals of the country. The government had no option but to promulgate the Anti-Terrorism Bill. However, at present, law and order situation in all sectors including educational institutions has improved to a great extent. The peace loving people in all strata of society are happy.

But the opposition, specially Awami League is not happy. By opposing the law, the party is only strengthening the hands of terrorists. Will the people forgive them? Perhaps not.

Rajshahi University Teachers Association hailed the government's steps towards curbing terrorism and appreciated the enactment of anti-terrorism law at a time when terrorism made public life miserable.

It can be noted here that a few months back the national concern over the deteriorating law and order situation had been reflected in the fact that all parties in Parliament participated in a general discussion on the problem that went on even after midnight. The reality that so many members were present in the House during such a protracted debate showed the urgency of the need to seek out a solution. So the government did it. But opposition led by Awami League did not support this national issue. On the other hand, they have started negative politics once again.