

URBAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

We have been serious about the educational progress of our people for many years now. The current year's ADP (Annual Development Programme) for the education sector contains an allocation of Taka 7.82 billion out of the total ADP outlay of Taka 86.5 billion. That means 9 per cent of the ADP. Our government has also started the programme of compulsory primary education this year for the entire country. Over the years we have also succeeded in revising the pay-scale of primary school teachers to a level which may be considered satisfactory at the moment. Yet the state primary education in the rural areas is far from satisfactory. Here and there, even in the rural areas some K.G. (Kindergarten) schools are being operated. While parents do not have to pay tuition fees to the free primary schools in the villages, they have to pay quite substantial amounts of money as tuition fees when they send their children to K.G. Schools. Even then parents who can afford often send their children to these latter educational institutions.

In the cities, of course, children have to be sent to institutions of elementary education by paying tuition and other fees which are often quite high. It is pitiable that teachers in these urban schools charging high tuition and other fees are suffering from poor pay. They have no way of asking for adequate remuneration; because, apparently, no interest is taken about them at the government level. The situation calls for a remedy. Who else but the government is there to come forward with it? The fee collected from students and the pay allowed to teachers should have some relation. If quality education is assured by means of high tuition and other fees, teachers can, quite reasonably, expect to have adequate remuneration. Because they are the workers who ensure quality education.

As things are, teachers in most of the KG schools and "Preadet" schools and "colleges" are exploited very much. They have to accept a small pay not at all in keeping with their qualifications and the amount of labour they have put in. Often they are compelled to work beyond what teaching loads they have. Much office work is often allotted to them. Many of the educational institutions mentioned above are run as business establishments where employees are appointed and paid simply on the basis of bargaining. Little attention is paid to the consideration that teaching is a highly respectable and responsible job and that teachers should get good treatment from the people who run educational institutions.

The terms and conditions under which teachers in these educational institutions—and, for that matter, in all private educational institutions—work have to be carefully scrutinised for the purpose of the formulation of proper policies and rules and regulations. In the present state of affairs nobody is looking into these matters and the undesirable consequence is the suffering of the teachers.

Education in the private sector is nothing new in our country. In the past we saw that educational institutions were established and managed by private persons and agencies as institutions run for the purpose of social service. Profit motive in this matter was unknown.

Another noticeable matter is that our education system is already divided into a number of parallel tracks; namely the general system, the Madrasah system and the newly introduced KG system. A small number of the so-called KG schools claim to prepare their students for examinations managed by authorities in England (Senior Cambridge etc). How efficiently all these streams of education are running it is urgent to examine too. Above everything else, we think that the propensity of making education just an activity of making profit (or should we say making money in the name of education) should be stopped, particularly when the practice of exploiting teachers is involved.