

Modernise madrasa education

Experts want an education commission

UNB, Dhaka

Even though the Alia madrasa education system has been "modernised" with its integration into the mainstream education, educationists and analysts feel that it could not reach the desired goal of producing required skilled human resources due to faulty and imprudent plans.

Talking to UNB, Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, Prof Abul Barakat, and Dhaka Alia Madrasah Principal Prof Siraj Uddin Ahmad said students can neither properly learn science nor English nor even Arabic as the so-called modernisation of the Alia education has largely failed to attract students and ease their study load.

The educationists observe that formation of a madrasa education commission is imperative to bring the madrasa education under a single platform with a holistic approach combining science, English and Arabic education to turn madrasas into effective educational institutions.

There are now two types of madrasa education systems -- one Alia system regulated by the government under the Madrasa Education Board and another Qawmi system financed by donors and run independently.

According to Bangladesh Madrasa Education

Board, there are now 9,389 madrasas under it across the country with around 35 lakh students.

About the modernisation, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said madrasa students suffer from isolation due to their faulty curriculum which has no focus on mother language, history, culture and science.

"We've long been talking about modernisation of madrasa education. We should introduce a real, unified education system merging the existing Bangla, English and Madrasa system. The unified education should be based on the mother language," he said.

Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University's English department said there should not be two types of madrasa education. "We should bring the madrasa education under a single platform with its proper modernisation. We can follow Kolkata madrasa modernisation model which has turned very effective to produce very skilled human resources."

In the Kolkata model madrasa system, he said students from any religion can study in madrasahs, and they are nicely picking up modern education and becoming doctors, engineers and IT experts and getting good jobs.

The noted educationist observed that although a small number of madrasah students

here can get admitted to different public universities, very few of them are getting chance in Buet, medical and science-based subjects as they are not getting quality science education.

He said the government should form a commission immediately to streamline the madrasah education through discussion and dialogue with different stakeholders.

According to the findings of their research on madrasa education that was updated in 2015, Dhaka University Prof Abul Barakat said 50 percent of the Alia madrasa students opined that their education system is almost ineffective to get good jobs while 70 percent said their textbooks should be modernised further and 73 percent said their teachers are not well-trained."

He said they also found the degrees of both Fazil and Kamil not comparable to university ones as the curricula at the two levels place high emphasis on religious aspects.

Dhaka Alia Principal Prof Siraj Uddin Ahmad said textbooks should be redesigned with an approach of load-management as there is a huge unnecessary study pressure on madrasah students.

He bemoaned that most madrasa students

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cannot speak Arabic and write it correctly despite reading the subject for many years.

Contacted, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said now there is no big difference between general and madrasa education systems when it comes to curricula except the latter's additional Arabic and Islamic subjects.

"Still, we're taking various steps to modernise and improve Alia madrasa education further. We've set up a separate directorate for madrasa education to give more focus on it. We want the madrasa students to get educated properly with modern knowledge so that they can hold prestigious positions in the society," he said.