

Educational plunge

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According to news reports nearly ten thousand examinees have been expelled from different parts of the country during the present SSC examinations for alleged copying and cheating inside the exam halls. The number has surpassed all past records and has reached ominous proportions. Many teachers and invigilators have also been expelled for their involvement in supplying answers to the examinees. There are reports of demonstrations and strikes in support of demands for the right to cheat during exams.

The reports discussed above are said to be a tip of the iceberg only. The over-all situation prevailing in the education sector of the country is no better. Large-scale copying also takes place during the HSC examinations. Although adoption of unfair means in exams at the university level is still negligible, all our universities are plagued with a different kind of problem. They are embroiled in a vicious circle of session jams. Almost all the universities are one or two years behind schedule in holding their exams.

There are various reasons behind the frustrating situation obtaining in the education arena. One of the primary reasons is that we do not have a national education and science policy to guide this sector. For the lack of a policy the whole education system is moving aimlessly, without any sense of direction. After independence, the Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission report was submitted to the then administration with much fanfare. But nothing substantial came out of that endeavor. Later on some education ministers tried to formulate a national policy--again with no results.

It seems that our politicians and leaders use words like education-is-the-backbone-of-a-nation for political purposes only. Bangladesh has a claimed literacy rate of 23-24%, whereas in neighboring India it is 41% and in Sri Lanka it is almost double. During President Ziaur Rahman's administration, a massive illiteracy eradication drive was undertaken to do away with the age-long curse of the country. But, unfortunately, the present administration scrapped the project without assigning any reasons for it. Had it been pursued all these seven years, the country could have diminished one of the major hurdles, standing in the way of our economic progress.

In other parts of the world, literacy is synonymous with social and economic progress. Along with the developed countries, China and Cuba have proved what an educated mass can accomplish for the state. The present administration boasts of allocating the highest funds for the education sector in the yearly fiscal budgets. But excepting fattening the top-heavy administrative monolith this has not helped the overall situation substantially. It is easy to rule an uneducated populace, but an educated populace provides progress to the country. That is a far more practical reason to educate the people properly. Mass education and a national education policy may open up sluicegates of vast potentialities and put the country on the appropriate course ultimately.

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