

Extra school fee malpractice must be stopped

THERE has hardly been an end to warnings being sounded against schools charging from students, additional amounts — more than what the government has set — in fees for admission, readmission, monthly tuition and registration for public examinations. The education minister this time too, which is the latest in a series that has been taking place, for some years now, sounded such a warning against about 500 schools across the country which have realised additional charges in fees from students during their registration for the Secondary School Certificate examinations. But hardly any action has so far been forthcoming against the errant schools. The recurrence of the situation — schools charging additional money from students and the authorities concerned sounding warnings — at a regular interval suggests that the government has not taken up the issue seriously as it keeps warning the schools against such practice but never gets down to actually taking any action. This could also mean that the intended action, which has so far been referred to mostly as the dissolution of the management committees or governing bodies of the educational institutions, if there has been any, is far from adequate to tackle the menace. Yet, any such action being taken against the errant schools that financially burden students and make education expensive has not been heard of, at least, in recent times.

It now appears that the managers of national education are only interested in talking the talk and not walking the walk. The government, based on an intelligence report that half a thousand schools across the country have realised extra money from SSC examinees, has yet again planned to dissolve the management committees or governing bodies of such schools if they fail to return the additional amount in seven working days. The education minister, as a New Age report said on Thursday, has issued the order as many schools in November 2015 realised additional fees from students taking SSC examinations that began on February 1 and many schools in January charged excessive admission and readmission fees that are double the charges of the previous year. The minister is also reported to have asked the boards of intermediate and secondary education to send to the ministry lists of schools not refunding the additional amount by the deadline of seven working days. But such warnings, feeble or strong, has been sounded for many days now. This is time that the education managers walked the talk as to stop the malpractice as much not to make education expensive.

Under the circumstances, the government is well advised to come out of its rhetorical statements that sound like punitive measures and to actually get to taking action in a decisive manner against the errant schools. The situation has also stood the government where it should seriously think if mere dissolution of the managing committees or governing bodies of the schools would in effect be a deterrent to the malpractice and if it needs to do something more in the interest of all.