

তাৰিখ ... 19/8/78
পৃষ্ঠা ... 2

067

Education must be practically useful

By A Staff Reporter

It will not be possible to obtain people's participation locally for a mass-oriented education policy, nor effectively check high dropout rates at primary and secondary school levels unless the education can be made to look materially remunerative and practically useful.

This appeared to be the conviction of many of the members of the National Education Advisory Council (NEAC), at its concluding round of discussions of the first working session on Friday. Kazi Zafar Ahmed, the Minister for Education, who is the chairman of the NEAC, presided over Friday's round of discussions. The second working session begins Friday next at the Old Jatiya Sanghada Bhaban.

Friday's discussions were highlighted by a soul-searching analysis of the ailments of the country's education by Mr. Ataus Samad. The council also heard an informative paper by Mrs. Hosne Ara Shashed. Among those who participated in the discussions were Colonel Shamsul Islam of the Army

Education Corps, Dr. Walter W. Lah, Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, representatives of the Primary School Teachers Association, Mr. Abdul Khaleque, representative of the Secondary School Teachers Association and Moulana Abdul Mannan of the Bangladesh Jamiatul Mudarres sen.

Mr. Ataus Samad's thesis — the aim of education in our context today has to be one of survival, and the people who are keen on eking out an existence through some useful work or the other should be provided with that much of education required for a modest survival — generated a great deal of interest.

SURVIVAL

Mr. Samad argued that since the question of bare survival is the reality for the overwhelming majority of the people and material remuneration for work is the crucial question, the aim of any education policy should be to lend them a hand in doing the job a little better. "Let us teach them whatever we may teach them in a qualitatively different way. Let us teach them something that they may expect to find in their own ambience around which his entire life will be spun."

He felt that the nation ought to go for such education as would not only help people get settled in life individually, but also help increase job opportunities for others. For instance, today's just-trained television or fridge repair-man may be

Contd. on page 12 col. 8

The Bangladesh Times

তাৰিখ ... 19/8/78
পৃষ্ঠা ... 2

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Contd. from page 1.

the employer of a couple of apprentices six months later, he explained.

Mr. Samad pointed out that such a slant — a utility slant to education or the promise of materialistic return could go a long way in decreasing the rate of dropouts.

Mr. Ataus Samad said that such a practical-utility point of view made it imperative to cut down unnecessary formal education. Why not limit general qualification requirements for government jobs to the Higher Secondary Certificate level on the line of Western countries' school graduations? Mr. Samad drew the attention of the house to the case of commissioned officers of the Armed Forces all over the world.