

Interim education policy soon: Zafar

An 'interim' education policy will be announced at the earliest, Education Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed disclosed on Friday.

In an interview with ENA the Education Minister said the "Education Consultant Committee" would very soon be reorganised to assist him in the formulation of the proposed interim education policy.

Kazi Zafar proudly remembers his role in student politics, particularly in the 1962 education movement. He is obviously aware of the "challenge" he has accepted to "initiate education reforms reflecting the spirit of the education movement, pioneered by the student community of the early 1960s and supported by the people".

The Education Minister would like to find representation from all walks of life in the reorganised "education consultant committee" so that its suggestions and recommendations help frame a "pro-people education policy".

Kazi Zafar explained what he means by "pro-people education policy". First, education should be made available to the vast masses of the people as easily as possible. Secondly, cost of education should be as low as possible and within the reach of the commonman. Thirdly, education should be production-oriented so that education helps to build up a "work force capable of modernising and revolutionising agriculture and industry and of transforming in as a whole as a proud, self-reliant nation".

Kazi Zafar seems to have set a modest target. "I shall attempt to give just a touch of reforms in our anachronistic education system", he said.

He gave an idea of the "immediate" steps he has already undertaken or is contemplating to take up urgently.

First, the prices* of text books of primary classes are now under review with a view to bringing the prices down.

Secondly, a plan is underway to launch a country-wide a "movement with the involvement of the people" to remove illiteracy among the adult.

Thirdly, there is a thinking to "lighten the burden of books" of primary students. At the same time, a new course may be introduced from the earliest stage to acquaint the students with "our golden heritage and the development of our society in all fields—political, economic, cultural and social".

Fourthly, the Education Minister maintained that "we believe in the freedom of all religions, and so no obstruction will be allowed in the propagation of religious teachings. He pointed out that madrasahs looked after the education of religious teachings. He further said that madrasahs looked after the education of a big section of the population. He regretted that madrasah edu-

cated people were now "neglected" in the society. He said he would like to find "some reforms" in the madrasah syllabus in the line of "production-oriented education". He happily pointed out that a deputation from the madrasah Teachers' Association had already called on him and "enthusiastically supported our idea".

Fifthly, Kazi Zafar said, he would try to ensure that "all youngsters, whether their parents are rich or poor, get a uniform primary education.

Sixthly, the Education Minister said he would like to ensure job security of teachers by introducing some measures like service rules, provident fund, group insurance etc. He would also "try sincerely to look into and redress the genuine grievances of the teachers".

Seventhly, the Education Minister pointed out that a substantial portion of the allocation in the education sector during the last financial year remained unutilised. Besides, there were widespread allegation of misuse of funds and administrative mismanagement. He would attempt to streamline the administration and rationalise use of funds.

Lastly, Kazi Zafar said, "personally, I am in favour of reviving and revitalising the democratic institutions of the students".