

4

School drop-out now a serious problem in China

BEIJING, Oct. 20: Dropping out of school has become a serious problem in China when an increasing number of educated people are needed to build a modernised county, according to this week's "Beijing Review".

An investigation showed that about 685 or 3.14 per cent of the students in 33 middle schools in the Hedong district of Tianjin dropped out in 1985. The dropout rate in Beijing, China's political and cultural centre, is among the lowest in the country — about 1.2 per cent in 1984 and 0.9 per cent in 1985.

The dropout rate in urban areas is much lower than in the countryside.

Dropouts are chiefly students in their second and third years of junior middle schools. Some of them take temporary jobs. Some follow their parents in to business or sideline production. Some even make trouble in society and go astray.

Since China passed its compulsory education law last year and all middle schools improved their educational methods, the dropout rate has declined, but the problem is still serious in some rural middle schools.

The reasons why students drop out are many-sided and complicated, said Li Tailun, Director of the Shabaizhuang Middle School in Beijing and Tian Guoyu, Headmaster of the Beijing No. 20 Middle School.

Because of China's single-track education system, most schools are inclined to concentrate on students who will go on to further education instead of developing students' special skills, said Tian, adding. "Since the final goal of students is to enter college or university, there is sharp competition for the limited number of college

and university places, putting students under great psychological pressure, which adversely influences their studies. Those who lose confidence in themselves fall far behind."

Chinese schools and classes are divided into key ones and ordinary ones. The best students enter the key schools and the ordinary schools are left with the rest. Students in ordinary schools or backward classes feel looked down upon by their families and society. They lose their self-esteem and their desire for improvement, and may give themselves up as hopeless and fool around instead of doing their lessons. They start to cut classes and eventually drop out.

Both Li and Tian agreed that

another important factor leading students to drop out is the idea that studying is useless and only money is important.

"A teacher earns only about 100 yuan a month, but I can get more than 100 yuan a day selling tomatoes," one student said.

Many parents, especially uneducated ones in the countryside, only consider their immediate interests. They allow their sons or daughters to drop out to earn money, Li said.

Some people even say that money should be worshipped instead of knowledge. "What is knowledge worth?" they ask. Li thought this was the result of China's long-time discrimination against knowledge and intellectuals.

Need to enhance engg education stressed

KATHMANDU, The need to enhance engineering education in the national development was stressed at a three-day South Asian seminar which was closed here on Sunday.

About 500 engineers from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have exchanged views on the region's engineering education and discussed the common problems and solutions at the meeting.

The common view is that the role of engineering should not be ignored in the national development. At present, the engineering education must be enhanced to meet the basic needs of the nations in the region. For this, they should exchange experiences and share

technology. They noted that engineering should play an active part in solving the region's common problems like water and electricity sharing free from political influence.

To step up the education, the seminar recommended that informal engineering education should be provided through television and radio for other means. Short-term training was also suggested to un-grade the quality of engineering for particular purposes such as rural technology.

The seminar also suggested the exchange of technology with other regions to develop the region's engineering education.

—Xinhua