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Thoughts On Education

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BANGLADESH emerged as a sovereign and independent state in 1971. At that time our rate of literacy was about 20 per cent in the Republic. Now our rate of literacy is 38 per cent. Therefore, yearly rate of increase of literacy is less than 1 per cent in the Republic.

A comparative study shows that rate of literacy is 36 per cent in Pakistan about 46 per cent in India and 86 per cent in Sri Lanka. The Central Asian Republics have achieved cent per cent literacy, while Vietnam, a war-torn society, has made tremendous progress in this field.

Though right to education is a constitutionally recognized fundamental right of the people, no planned and effective measures for eradication of illiteracy and development of education were taken in the past. The programme for eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000 will not be successful, given the circumstances.

Bangladesh has a population of 120 million, which will reach 180 million in 2020. Necessary measures must be taken so that the population does not exceed 170 million in 2020.

In order to attain sustainable economic growth and to turn the Republic into a successful democratic polity a perspective plan for the years

1995-2020, which will include a sub-plan on education, can be adopted and implemented. If such a plan cannot be adopted, then a perspective plan, to be known as "plan on Education" for the said period, both for eradication of illiteracy and development of education, should be adopted and implemented, so that illiteracy is completely eradicated from the Republic by the year 2020. Such a plan is quite practicable.

The plan should envisage the provision for establishment of 1,25,000 primary schools, 7,000 high schools and 1500 colleges on government and 25,000 primary schools, 7000 high schools and 1000 colleges, on non-government levels respectively for educating the illiterate population and for development of secondary education. It will also include provision for establishment of the necessary number of vocational and polytechnic institutes as well.

The growing developmental needs of society demand that the plan include also the provision for establishment of at least 25 law, medical, agricultural, teachers', training and technological colleges and institutes. Developed university colleges can be upgraded into full-fledged universities, while a few new universities and research institutes both at govern-

ment and non-government levels must be established and the existing one modernised.

Needless to say that preference must be given to multi-storied buildings for these institutions. The communication and transport system should also be developed, while special attention must be given to the development of medical facilities as well as sports and culture in these institutions.

The legal mechanism relating to the compulsory free primary education must be strengthened and be made more comprehensive. Necessary legal measures should be adopted for development of secondary and higher education as well. The system of persuasion of the parents can be introduced and developed. Also the system of adult education along with the double-shift system of education needs to be introduced and practised in the respective areas. Special measures for the education of women as well as people of the tribal areas must be taken. The plan should also contain special provisions for absorbing the educated population as well.

Education is a profitable area of investment. The government must collect and manage a huge amount of

money. Unnecessary expenditures, both at home and abroad at government and non-government levels, must be avoided. The business community must come forward. The Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries can act a co-ordinating centre in this regard.

The officers and employees of government and non-government organisations can contribute to this programme as well. The big and mid-level farmers can be motivated to help in the materialisation of this national plan, for the implementation of which monitoring cells involving the government and non-government organizations at the higher, mid and lower level must be set up. Bangladesh radio and television and the daily newspapers can play a vital role in this regard.

Eradication of illiteracy and development of education, which will develop, consciousness and patriotism of the people, amount to development of human resources. Upon its success depends the fight for health economic, family, environmental and legal literacy depends.

The success of the plan depends much on concerted national efforts and sustainable economic growth. The sooner such a plan is adopted, and better for society.