

Literacy And Development

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The Acting President Mr. Justice Abdus Sattar expressed government's determination to remove the curse of illiteracy from this land by 1985. While addressing a conference of Bangladesh Literacy Society held on the occasion of World Literacy Day in Dacca on Tuesday, Mr. Justice Sattar rightly said that mass literacy was adopted as a national programme for social, political and economic development of a nation. He recalled the role of the late President Ziaur Rahman in this respect and stressed the need for both government and non-government efforts for making the literacy drive a success.

Two-fifths of the world population are illiterate and hence illiteracy has been identified as an international problem. The slogan of mass literacy in the quickest possible time is 'each one teach one' and its theme is 'education is the key to all development'. The paradox however is that neither the world literacy nor individual national literacy rate has made any spectacular advance. Despite monumental progress made in science and technology in the advanced countries, world literacy rate remains minimal with more than eighty crore people still uneducated. And the greater pity is that the developing countries constitute the sector affected worst by illiteracy.

The rate of literacy is very poor compared to the rate of population explosion. This represents no social or cultural correlations between literacy and population. This by all standards is a depressing position calling for a revolutionary programme aimed at least at a bare quantitative increase in literacy. It is universally acknowledged that education is the basic factor of progress. And the same remains very inescapably true of the entire developing world, including Bangladesh.

Nationally speaking, the government is serious about doing something substantial in promoting literacy. This is clear from

the address of the Acting President Mr. Justice Abdus Sattar at the World Literacy Day function on Tuesday in Dacca.

We share the accent the government places on a positive programme to achieve this end. The Acting President stressed the need of organisation and leadership to help achieve our goal quickly. And organisation would, of course, include willing and enthusiastic participation of all elements in society that are capable of contributing to the mass literacy field. And this pragmatic pursuit of the programme would be a direct implementation of the slogan of Literacy Dad, i.e. 'each one teach one'. As a natural concomitant of the national self-reliance programme and philosophy such a down to earth literacy programme should not only be feasible but also be able to show a tangible improvement in the mass literacy position of the country.

A word in this context is necessary: on the organisation side total dependence on self-service would, perhaps, not work satisfactorily. Leadership is indispensable in this respect. And leadership could come locally from the local administrative bodies as well as from local educated people. Since organisation is basic to the execution of the programme the element of official participation shall have to be quite sizeable and sustained. In countries like ours energy requires to be mobilised under some kind of leadership. It may be political, social, academic, cultural or just official. In any case it has to be there to make any programme or scheme work effectively and fruitfully.

To achieve the goal of increased literacy in an assured and systematic way, we should maximise the use of the present structure of primary education, particularly in the rural sector. Voluntary enterprise could go along with it. Both working simultaneously under proper local and official guidance can ensure speed and stable results.