

Save Education From Abuses

That 1,300 students have got themselves admitted to 350 colleges of four boards of the country on the production of fake mark-sheets is sensational according to the report carried in a popular Bangla daily. Whether it is sensational or not is less important to us. What is important is that, despite a similar revelation in 1997 when as many as 7,000 such students of Rajshahi Board were detected after their completion of examination, the same problem continues to plague our education. Forgery of both certificates and mark-sheets, involved in which, in some cases, are the college authorities and in others a section of board employees. None of them were arrested.

It is no longer a problem confined to a particular quarter. Gangs of varying skills of notoriety have joined forces to do this criminal job. Students not very bright or willing to take their studies seriously are lured into the trap because the opportunity apparently opens before them the door to a whole new world of possibilities of higher studies. What their meritorious and diligent peers earn by virtue of their own effort, these below-average students try to purchase by money. Because of the way education has been turned into a saleable commodity, thanks to a sharp decline in the morality and integrity of our teacher community and our guardians, both students and unscrupulous commercial-minded elements in society are likely to find no fault with this kind of illegal deals. Add to this the pollution of educational environment by politics. Like it or not, criminalisation is an art, albeit a dark one, and anyone bent on bringing perfection to this art in education is likely to possess as much subtle skill. A chairman of one of the four boards goes on record as saying that it is impossible to detect the forged documents unless those were tallied with back-up materials.

Clearly, there is no prospect of bringing an end to this malpractice without removing the cause. Too much of commercialisation of education has opened the floodgates of educational crimes. In a situation like this newer forms of crime will be invented and the educational atmosphere in the country will be vitiated more than ever before. It is to the four board authorities' credit that they have unearthed the crime before the imposters could cause them more trouble and for a longer period. But this is no guarantee that the authorities will always succeed in doing so. When they are yet to completely remove the bad elements within their staff, chances are that more such incidents will take place in future. The authorities will have to grapple with newer problems in addition to this. Already some of the boards have faced problems with the change of examination centres and the order of merit list. Both internal and external influences and collusion are found to be responsible for such developments. It shows the nation's future is at stake. A nation has no future if its education can be ruined. This looks to be true for Bangladesh.

It is time we made every effort to restore sanity and sanctity of education. The new education policy looks even more vulnerable to manipulation by teachers of questionable character. Cleaning the Augean stables should be at the top of the agenda. But that will be possible if politics is kept out of education and the genuine requirements of the teachers are met, even if that means they become among the highest paid staff of employees. This will make no room for below-par and mediocre degree holders in the teaching profession. We need as much to meet our educational challenge.