

Education trip

Merit should be the sole criterion

A report published in this newspaper yesterday gave an account of how an education trip to South Korea was arranged at the last moment for the school-teachers loyal to the immediate past government. Clearly, the objective of the trip was to increase the skills but the teachers were not selected on the basis of merit and four out of the 25-member team are "accompanying officials" having nothing to do with teaching.

It has further been reported that BNP supporters in the education sector were rewarded with foreign trips many times by the minister and the state minister. The problem with such a policy is that merit becomes the ultimate casualty. The country has an acute shortage of teachers, which makes it difficult to raise the standard of education in general.

Of course, attending training programmes abroad can benefit teachers, but what's the point -- if we don't view it from the party standpoint -- of selecting political elements whose credentials as teachers are very much doubtful? If loyalty to the party becomes the only criterion for judging a teacher's merit, the end-result will be further deterioration of the standard of education. And the education sector won't deliver, despite having the highest budgetary allocations.

The party and the individuals responsible for selecting the undeserving teachers failed to place the country's interest above party priorities. And there is reason to believe that this happened in all other important sectors as well.

The damage that has been done to the cause of good governance by this kind of doling out of political favour is colossal. Nobody expects the government departments and ministries to be reduced to places where ruling party leaders and activists will resort to grabbing opportunities of all types at any cost. The party in power must not be under the impression that it can do anything and everything to attain its selfish goals.

The caretaker government has to address all such issues in order to make sure that those getting benefits in gross