

## Education budget lamentable

### *Turning a blind eye to a priority sector*

**I**T is no wonder that Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid is lamenting the poor budgetary allocation for his ministry, with only Tk. 4000 crore allocated for educational development purposes, while other ministries have been given Tk. 16,000 crore to realise their development objectives. Terming the budgetary allocation for his ministry as insufficient, the minister has underlined that he cannot be expected to provide salaries of teachers, develop infrastructures, deliver high-quality education or build more educational institutions with the allocated amount.

A total of Tk. 31,618 crore has been allocated for the education sector, but the education ministry will get only Tk. 17,116 crore, with the rest of the budget going to the primary and mass education ministry. The two ministries together have received 10.71 percent of the total budget and 1.8 percent of the GDP, while last year, they received 11.7 percent of the total budget and 2 percent of the GDP. The UNESCO stipulates that the budgetary allocation for education should constitute at least 6 percent of the GDP and 20 percent of the total budget. That we have not only consistently fallen short of that goal, but have actually reduced our allocations from previous years, is a cause for major concern for a developing country like Bangladesh with a huge illiterate or semi-literate population. Investment in education, after all, is a prerequisite for sustained growth and development, and as the minister himself has pointed out, Bangladesh's vision to become a middle-income country cannot be realised by 2021 if the government continues to show reluctance to prioritise the education sector.

If the Education Policy 2010 is to be implemented, and long term grievances of teachers and educationists addressed, the government has to re-evaluate its priorities, and redirect its limited resources.